

# Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure: Combining Synchronicity with Diachronicity in *Sūrat al-Baqara*. Part Two

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## Sura Structure III: Chronological Markers

It has long been observed that Qur'anic style developed such that, generally speaking, the shorter verses of the initial period became progressively longer,<sup>1</sup> and that suras with short verses display a number of distinctive features that are not replicated in the rest of the corpus; frequently shifting rhyme patterns, oath introductions, and a very pronounced preoccupation with eschatological themes, for instance.<sup>2</sup> Recent studies have added other formal textual markers which have been shown to vary in accordance with mean verse length. In a 2011 study, Behnam Sadeghi demonstrated that, if passages were arranged such that mean verse length followed a smooth pattern of increase, this was accompanied by a similarly smooth trajectory in the frequency of use of three separate groups of multivariate markers: the 28 most frequent morphemes in the Qur'an (words such as *wa*, *inna*, or *alladhīna*), 114 other common morphemes (including *rabb*, *man*, and *thumma*), and a list of 3,693 relatively uncommon morphemes (words that occur more than once but fewer than twenty times in the entire corpus).<sup>3</sup> That is to say that, relatively speaking, groups of passages with similar verse lengths use the same morphemes with similar frequencies.<sup>4</sup> Sadeghi took this to corroborate a chronological trajectory in which it was possible to approximate up to five developmental phases within the Meccan period. The two phases he identified within the Medinan portion of the Qur'an showed a less discernible stylistic trajectory (with regard to the specific factors of Sadeghi's analysis), although he remained confident that both of them can at least be situated subsequent to the Meccan portion of the text.<sup>5</sup>

Nicolai Sinai, meanwhile, has observed that the type of introductory element used to open a sura varies in accordance with mean verse length, with oaths or eschatological

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*idhā* opening the suras with shorter mean verse lengths, vocatives or isolated letters opening the suras with longer mean verse lengths, and suras whose mean verse lengths tend more towards the middle of the statistical spread containing the elements *kitāb*, *n-z-l*, *b-r-k*, *h-m-d*, or *s-b-h* in their opening formulae.<sup>6</sup> Sinai has also demonstrated a shift in the frequency of occurrence of the divine name *al-rahmān*, the root *sh-r-k*, and references to the *munāfiqūn* ('hypocrites') that can, again, be mapped against an increase in mean verse length, and he investigates whether there is any link between mean verse length and formulaic density.<sup>7</sup> In sum, Sinai concludes that there is 'a clear correlation between the MVL of individual surahs and a small number of highly visible formal, terminological, and stylistic parameters'.<sup>8</sup>

Sinai also notes, however, that while the standard deviation of verse length within individual suras is usually less than that across the corpus as a whole, suggesting a degree of stylistic coherence even to the long suras,<sup>9</sup> the five suras whose coefficient of variation exceeds that of the Qur'an as a whole (Q. 85, Q. 103, Q. 53, Q. 73, and Q. 74) contain a number of passages that can plausibly be posited as later insertions.<sup>10</sup> A similar observation can be made about other suras which display a sudden protrusion in mean verse length.<sup>11</sup> With reference to Q. 84:25, for example, Sinai has pointed out that this verse is not only twice the length of the average verse in *Sūrat al-Inshiqāq* but it also contains the typically late Meccan or Medinan phrase *alladhīna āmanū wa-‘amilū’l-ṣāliḥāt* (*those who believe and do good deeds*).<sup>12</sup> This verse comes at the very end of the sura and it can, therefore, easily be removed without leaving any sort of a contextual or thematic gap. Sinai seems most swayed, however, by the observation that the addition of this verse nonetheless serves a very real function: it modifies a relentless message of damnation with mention of the contrasting reward that can be expected by the believers.<sup>13</sup> In another article, Sinai proposes that the couplet Q. 70:30–31 is a later insertion into a pre-existing text unit.<sup>14</sup> Again this is argued on three fronts: a sudden increase in mean verse length, the presence of distinctive vocabulary usually associated with later suras, in this instance the phrase *mā malakat aymānuhum* (*what their right hands possess*), and the fact that such an insertion might have served to soften an original Qur'anic recommendation to celibacy in verse 29. Q. 70:29 appears to praise those who *guard their private parts*, and Q. 70:30 qualifies this as *except with their spouses and what their right hands possess*.

The most comprehensive recent attempt to reclassify the corpus along diachronic lines, however, is that of the twentieth-century Iranian scholar, Mehdi Bazargan, whose division of the Qur'an formed the basis of Sadeghi's 2011 stylometric analysis of the text, mentioned above.<sup>15</sup> In a series of works published in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Bazargan proposed a division of the corpus in which he left 59 suras intact,<sup>16</sup> but broke the remaining 55 suras up into between two and five chronological blocks each. Bazargan's principal criterion for the division of the text was verse

length, but in the precise location of his textual breaks he was 'guided by considerations of thematic unity, rhyme patterns, [and] historical information'.<sup>17</sup> Accordingly he gave to his units such labels as 'describing mankind', 'People of the Book', 'matters of faith', or 'legal ordinances'.<sup>18</sup> The verses within each of these 194 blocks need not necessarily be consecutive—as will become apparent below, for example, *Sūrat al-Baqara* contains five separate passages deemed by Bazargan to belong to block 113—although each block only consists of material from a single sura. These blocks were then catalogued by Bazargan in accordance with a calculation based upon their mean (average) verse length,<sup>19</sup> mode (most frequently occurring) verse length, and height (percentage of verses that have the mode as their length).<sup>20</sup> In this way, Bazargan posited a chronologically redistributed presentation of the Qur'an that observed the possibility of many suras containing materials from more than one stylistic period.

Both Bazargan and Sadeghi caution against making unwarranted extrapolations from the data they provide. Sadeghi paraphrases Bazargan as follows, 'He stresses that his proposed chronology should not be taken as rigid because it is statistical in nature and because statistical methods sustain firm conclusions about averages of aggregates rather than individual items',<sup>21</sup> and himself states that 'readers must resist the temptation to take either Bazargan's chronological list or my own recasting of it in a more precise way than they are intended.'<sup>22</sup> The relatively small size of the samples, due to the relatively compact nature of the Qur'anic corpus (Sadeghi contrasts its 78,000 word-tokens to the 4.7 million word-tokens of Dickens),<sup>23</sup> means that the risk of sampling error, and hence imprecision, is comparatively high. In order to counteract this latter difficulty, at least, Sadeghi condenses Bazargan's 194 'blocks' into 22 'groups', which are then aggregated into seven 'phases'. Five of these phases are roughly labelled 'Meccan'—the phases consisting of Group 2 (blocks 17–34),<sup>24</sup> Group 3 (blocks 1, 35–65), Group 4 (blocks 66–82), Group 5 (blocks 83–91), and Groups 6–11 (blocks 93–131)—and two 'Medinan': Groups 12–19 (blocks 132–174) and Groups 20–22 (blocks 175–194). This means that Bazargan's *al-Baqara*, which consists of material from Groups 113, 139, 164, 183, and 192, for the most part falls within the diachronically re-arranged portions of the text that were found by Sadeghi to show a less discernible stylistic trajectory. This coincides with Sinai's finding that the coefficient of variation of the verses of *al-Baqara* suggests a certain level of homogeneity when compared to the corpus as a whole, to render the likelihood of accurately identifying chronological layers within *al-Baqara*—on the basis of Bazargan's, Sadeghi's, or Sinai's thus far investigated criteria—comparatively slim.

Yet Bazargan's work does nonetheless represent an important attempt to divide *al-Baqara* along chronological lines, and as such is a valuable and interesting foil to the purely thematic or stylistic divisions suggested by the authors focussed upon within Section I of this study. Regardless of the actual possibility of declaring with

any certainty, at the present time, that the specific elements of Block A preceded the specific elements of Block B, the *placement* of Block A (with its shorter mean verse length) prior to Block B (with its longer mean verse length) produces, in my view, a valid exploratory paradigm. Moreover, Bazargan may observe that, if the percentage of verses in *Sūrat al-Baqara* containing a specific number of words is plotted onto a graph, the curve that is produced is ‘relatively natural and regular’ (*munḥanā nisbatan munāẓam wa-ṭabī‘ī ast*),<sup>25</sup> not dissimilar to that of shorter suras plausibly assumed to have been revealed as unities, but he also remarks that the differences between mode and range in *Sūrat al-Baqara* are uncharacteristically large. This apparent anomaly can be reduced if the sura is broken up at the junctures he proposes.

Bazargan’s *al-Baqara* is initially divided into 20 sections: Q. 2:1–20; Q. 2:21–29; Q. 2:30–39; Q. 2:40–152; Q. 2:153–157; Q. 2:158; Q. 2:159–163; Q. 2:164; Q. 2:165–189; Q. 2:190–195; Q. 2:196–203; Q. 2:204–209; Q. 2:210–242; Q. 2:243; Q. 2:244–245; Q. 2:246–253; Q. 2:254; Q. 2:255–260; Q. 2:261–283; and Q. 2:284–286.<sup>26</sup> These sections are then assigned, in accordance with their average verse length, to blocks 113, 139, 164, 183, or 192 of Bazargan’s stylistically sequential units.<sup>27</sup> Interpreting the data from his diachronic scheme, it is possible to very tentatively posit the earliest layer of the sura as consisting of 38 verses: verses 1 to 20 (a reference to the Scripture, and a description of the righteous believers, the sealed disbelievers, and the hypocrites), 153 to 157 (advice to the believers to use steadfastness and prayer in order to overcome their fear, hunger, and losses), 159 to 163 (a warning to those who hide God’s proof and guidance, and to the disbelievers), 204 to 209 (the hypocrites make mischief in the land; do not follow in the footsteps of Satan, or slip back after clear proof has been provided), and 244 to 245 (a command to fight in God’s cause). An even smaller number of verses (a mere 16) make up the second layer of the sura: Q. 2:30–39 (the Adam story, which provides the background for aspects of Q. 2:204–209) and Q. 2:190–195 (a more detailed command to fight in God’s cause).

Onto this kernel Bazargan’s model adds first Q. 2:40–152 (the address to the Children of Israel, closing with the instruction to *turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque*), and then the fourth layer of the sura: Q. 2:21–29 (a command to worship God, a challenge to produce a comparable sura, a warning of hell and description of heaven, reference to the nature of God’s comparisons, and a plea for heed to be paid to God), Q. 2:158 (*al-Ṣafa and al-Marwa are among the waymarks of God ...*), Q. 2:165–189 (describing the fate of those who worship others besides God and providing various instructions: to follow the dietary laws and not to conceal God’s scripture, to be truly good, give fair retribution and proper bequests, behave appropriately during the fast, use property rightfully; closing with a statement about crescent moons), Q. 2:196–203 (appropriate behaviour during the pilgrimage), Q. 2:210–242 (challenging the desire of the Children of Israel for ever more clear signs, describing prophets as being sent to

judge between what was once a single community, and suffering as the initial lot of all believers, then various instructions concerning charity, fighting, intoxicants and gambling, the property of orphans, marriage, menstruation, making oaths in God's name, divorce, nursing infants, widows), Q. 2:254 (the instruction to give), and Q. 2:261–283 (various instructions: to spend, utter kind words, give good things, both openly and in secret, avoid usury). Verses 1 to 163, 165 to 242, 244 to 245, 254, and 261 to 283 of the sura are now complete.

The final layer to be revealed, in accordance with Bazargan's reading of the chronological markers, consists of the isolated verses 164 (*In the creation of the heavens and the earth ...*) and 243 (*Have you not considered those people who left their dwellings in thousands ...*), plus Q. 2:246–253 (the Tālūt narrative, closing with *Some of them He has raised in rank ...*), Q. 2:255–260 (from the Throne verse to the end of God's demonstration of resurrection to Abraham), and Q. 2:284–286 (*All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth ...* to the very end of the sura).

If one juxtaposes this paradigm with the data provided by Theodor Nöldeke in his nineteenth-century discussion of *al-Baqara's* chronological elements (see Table 1), it is immediately apparent that Bazargan's is a much more usable model for approaching diachronicity *within* a sura. Indeed, if the two schemes are plotted together, the inefficiency of Nöldeke's method in constructing a functional diachronic model of the sura becomes very apparent. It is easy to conclude from such a presentation of Nöldeke's data—as Emmanuelle Stefanidis does in her 2008 analysis of his proposed scheme—that Nöldeke 'seems to have originally thought, while composing his dissertation, that a chronological reordering of suras was a legitimate and achievable scientific enterprise, and gradually, during his studies, became aware of its limits'.<sup>28</sup>

Richard Bell's extensive 1930s fracturing of the sura into its component parts (see Appendix A below) nonetheless builds upon Nöldeke's basic scheme, and demonstrates what a thoroughly deconstructed re-imagining of the sura along quasi-historical lines might look like. Bell substantially refines Nöldeke's suggested framework by adding a number of stylistic criteria which he takes as indicative of the presence of insertions or duplicate material. Thus Bell posits the presence of hidden rhymes behind the current rhyme scheme of certain verses, subdividing them further, and suggests that the intrusion of an extraneous subject is evidence of an insertion. The repetition of the same rhyme-word or phrase in adjoining verses is taken as suggestive of the presence of duplicate material. Similarly, a differing treatment of the same subject in adjoining verses, often with repetitions of words or phrases, intimated to Bell that a certain verse was originally intended to replace the other.

Quasi-historical contextual considerations complete Bell's methodological toolkit. Like Nöldeke, Bell attributes certain verses to specific events such as the Battle of

Table 1, showing how Bazargan's blocks sit with reference to Nöldeke's chronological reordering of <i>Sūrat al-Baqara</i>				
<i>al-Baqara</i>	Nöldeke describes individual sections as: <sup>29</sup>	Bazargan assigns to Block:		
1–20	very early Medinan ( <i>dhālika'l-kitāb</i> opening is typically late Meccan); possibly revealed at the beginning of 2/623	113		
21–29	Meccan, due to implied addressee of 21–29 (the idolaters) and subject matter of 30–39 (the Creation and the Fall of man)			183
30–39		139		
40–152	dated to 2/623 (contains references to change in <i>qibla</i> direction)		164	
153–157	dated to 3/625 (reference to Uḥud)	113		
158	detached verse, possibly connected to the minor Ḥajj of 7/628; fits better after the pericope 189–203			183
159–162	dated to 3/625 (through its supposed connection to 153–157)	113		
163				
164	Meccan, sura opening, probably originally attached to vv. 200b–202 and 204–206 (see below)			192
165–167				
168–171	Meccan, directed at the idolaters			
172–176	Medinan verses dealing with prohibited food			
177	dated to 2/624 (refers to change in <i>qibla</i> direction)			
178–186	dated to immediately before Ramaḍān 2/623 (sequence of legal verses displaying a high degree of parallelism, plus closing verse)			183
187	dated to a later period (more detailed, refers to exaggerated abstinence during the fast)			
188	fragment of a later revelation			
189				
190–195	undoubtedly Medinan but difficult to pinpoint with any more precision		139	
196–200a				
200b–202	possibly Meccan, from <i>mina'l-nās</i> to the end of <i>wa'llāhu sarī'u'l-ḥisāb</i> , attached to vv. 163–167 and 204–207			183
203	undoubtedly Medinan but difficult to pinpoint with any more precision			
204–207	possibly Meccan, attached to vv. 163–167 and 200–202	113		
208–209	could be concurrent with vv. 106 and 184ff, and thus similarly dateable to 2/623; v. 211 is explicitly directed at the Banū Isrā'īl; Nöldeke gives no specific analysis of vv. 212–214			
210–214				
215	must belong to a different period			183
216	possibly originally attached to vv. 244–245 to form a three-verse legal cluster and hence dateable (like vv.			

<i>al-Baqara</i>	Nöldeke describes individual sections as:	Bazargan assigns to Block:				
	178–186) to immediately before Ramaḍān 2/623; vv. 244–245 Nöldeke connects with certainty to vv. 243 and 246–256, and with possibility to vv. 258–260 (v. 257 is not specified here, although it is also not removed from Nöldeke's suggested text block 254–257)					
217	possibly a reference to the Nakhla Raid of 2/624					
219–220	originally one verse and stemming from a single period					
221	introductory marital ordinances, offer no references for chronological purposes					
222	currently stands detached; related in form to vv. 217–220					
223–237	introductory marital ordinances, offer no references for chronological purposes					
238–239	probably revealed before the institution of the prayer of danger, i.e. 4/625					
240–242	introductory marital ordinances, offer no references for chronological purposes					
243	connected to the legal ordinance formed by the amalgamation of 216 and 244–245, and hence dateable (like vv. 178–186) to immediately before Ramaḍān 2/623; connected with certainty to vv. 244–245 and 246–256, and with possibility to vv. 258–260 (v. 257 is not specified here, although it is also not removed from Nöldeke's suggested text block 254–257)					192
244–245	attached to 216 and hence dateable (like vv. 178–186) to immediately before Ramaḍān 2/623; connected with certainty to vv. 243 and 246–256, and with possibility to vv. 258–260 (v. 257 is not specified here, although it is also not removed from Nöldeke's suggested text block 254–257)	113				
246–253	connected to the legal ordinance formed by the amalgamation of 216 and 244–245, and hence dateable					192
254	(like vv. 178–186) to immediately before Ramaḍān 2/623; connected with certainty to vv. 243 and 244–245, and with possibility to vv. 258–260 (v. 257 is not specified here, although it is also not removed from Nöldeke's suggested text block 254–257)				183	
255–256						
258–260	possibly connected to 244–245, which is attached to 216 and hence dateable (like vv. 178–186) to immediately before Ramaḍān 2/623, and hence possibly also connected to vv. 243 and 246–256 (v. 257 is not specified here, although it is also not removed from Nöldeke's suggested text block 254–257)					192
261–281	impossible to date with any precision					
282–283	probably rather late				183	
284						
285–286	might equally well be either Meccan or Medinan					192

Badr or Ḥudaybiyya, dating them accordingly. Bell's hypothesis was also, however, based on the assumption that the collection and subsequent compilation of the Qur'an from scraps of wood or bone upon which it had been jotted down (as is attested in the *ḥadīth* record) resulted in the random juxtaposition of one series of verses with another. The surprising stability of the early manuscript record makes such a hypothesis from today's perspective seem increasingly unlikely, and the frequency with which Bell needs to adduce the explanation 'disconnected scrap' to justify the placement of a verse in a particular textual location casts considerable doubt on the functionality of this analytical scheme. Bell's thesis that stylistic repetition indicated the flagging of what was supposed to be replacement material is also highly questionable. It remains possible, however, that repetition might have been utilised as a stylistic technique in order to connect new sections of text to pre-existing material. Repetition could therefore remain indicative of the possible presence of diachronic layers, and serve to flag up areas of a sura that are worthy of further investigation. It is also worth observing that Bell's scheme does allow for breaks at many of the junctures of *al-Baqara* at which Bazargan posits a diachronic seam (all of them, in fact, bar Bazargan's suggested divides at vv. 163/164 and 164/165).

Although the rationale behind the precise location of the textual breaks Bazargan suggests within *al-Baqara* is not supplied, many of Bazargan's divisions imply their own logic, and it is possible to justify them as shown in Table 9 below. It should be noted that further areas for potential division within the sura investigated by Bazargan—in the text block Q. 2:165–189 and in the subsection Q. 2:210–242—were removed when the verse length calculation was completed; these have nonetheless been left visible in Table 2.

A number of features immediately become apparent when Bazargan's data is presented in this way. One of these is the apparent fusion of the tools of synchronic analysis with those of diachronic analysis in his scheme. Formulae of address, shifts in subject matter, the presence of opening formulae, changes in the rhyme scheme, and the presence of repeated material would all appear to have been utilised by Bazargan in defining the borders of possible textual units. It is also notable that, in contrast to the thesis proposed in 'Sura Structure II: Considerations of Rhyme' above, Bazargan seems to see the introduction of a  $-C\bar{a}C$  rhyme scheme as generally suggestive of the possibility of a new textual unit that may then extend *beyond* the presence of any unusual *khātimas*. Thus, for Bazargan, while he investigated the possibility that the  $-C\bar{a}C$  passage at Q. 2:165–167 could be self-contained, the MVL of the text units 165–167 and 168–189 were too similar to justify the bifurcation of this passage into two separate clusters, and he proposed a text unit running from 165–189. Similarly, the  $-C\bar{a}C$  passages at Q. 2:196–197 and Q. 2:200–202 are both subsumed by Bazargan within the unified text unit Q. 2:196–203. The  $-C\bar{a}C$  passage at Q. 2:204–207, meanwhile, is located within a larger unit Q. 2:204–209. In contrast, however,



Table 2, suggesting the possible rationale behind the extent of Bazargan's thematic blocks		
Q. 2:1–20	<i>Alif, lām, mīm. This is the Scripture ...</i>	closes with <i>inna'llāha 'alā kulli shay'in qadīr</i> , which is both formulaic, and the first departure from the prevalent <i>-ūn/-īn/-ūm/-īm</i> rhyme scheme of the sura
Q. 2:21–29	<i>People, serve your Lord ...</i>	opens with a formula of address, <i>yā ayyuhā'l-nās</i> ; closes with the formulaic <i>wa-huwa bi-kulli shay'in 'alīm</i> , echoing the closure in v. 20
Q. 2:30–39	<i>When your Lord said to the angels ...</i>	opens with <i>wa-idh</i> ; thematically linked unit on Adam; closes with a generic reference to the fate of the disbelievers
Q. 2:40–152	<i>Children of Israel, remember ...</i>	opens with a formula of address, <i>yā Banī Isrā'īl</i> ; thematically connected by past and contemporary references to this group; closes as it opens, with a command to 'remember'; originally broken down by Bazargan into:
40–103	<i>Children of Israel, remember ...</i>	opens with a formula of address, <i>yā Banī Isrā'īl</i> ; contains a series of <i>wa-lammā</i> and <i>wa-idh</i> observations; near-repeated material at the ends of vv. 102 and 103 suggestive of closure
104–123	<i>You who believe, do not say 'Regard us' ...</i>	opens with <i>yā ayyuhā'lladhīna āmanū</i> and an address to the Prophet and the believers; closes with an echo of v. 40 and a reference to Judgement Day
124–141	<i>When Abraham was tested by his Lord ...</i>	opens <i>wa-idh</i> ; section linked by references to Abraham; closes with a reference to Judgement Day
142–152	<i>The fools among the people will say ...</i>	section linked by references to the <i>qibla</i> ; closes with a command to 'remember'
Q. 2:153–157	<i>You who believe, seek help ...</i>	opens with a formula of address, <i>yā ayyuhā'lladhīna āmanū</i> ; thematically linked section on 'steadfastness'; closes with a verse that is not a divine aphorism or double divine epithet, but is nonetheless rhythmically satisfying
Q. 2:158	<i>al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa are among the waymarks ...</i>	outlier verse in terms of length; closes with double divine epithet
Q. 2:159–163	<i>Those who hide the clear proofs ...</i>	diptych contrasting those who repent and those who do not; closes with double divine epithet
Q. 2:164	<i>In the creation of the heavens ...</i>	outlier verse in terms of length; thematically self-contained 'signs' verse
Q. 2:165–189	<i>Yet there are some men who adopt rivals ...</i>	an amalgamated block which opens with a brief shift to a <i>-CāC</i> rhyme scheme and is closed by the introduction of the fighting theme in Q. 2:190–195; originally broken down into:
165–167	<i>Yet there are some men who adopt rivals ...</i>	brief shift to <i>-CāC</i> rhyme scheme
168–189	<i>People, eat what is allowable and good ...</i>	opens with <i>yā ayyuhā'l-nās</i> ; contains a number of subsequent <i>yā ayyuhā'lladhīna āmanū</i> clusters at vv. 172, 178, and 183; closes with a statement about 'goodness' ( <i>birr</i> ) which echoes v. 177
Q. 2:190–195	<i>Fight in the way of God against those ...</i>	thematically linked unit on fighting; opens and closes with chiasmic reference to God's cause ( <i>sabīli'llāh</i> )

Q. 2:196–203	<i>Fulfil the Hajj and the ʿUmra ...</i>	opens with shift to –CāC rhyme scheme; thematically linked unit on pilgrimage; closes with reference to Judgement Day
Q. 2:204–209	<i>Among the people are those whose speech ...</i>	opens with shift to –CāC rhyme scheme; diptych contrasting the false and the righteous; closes with a <i>yā ayyuhāʾlladhīna āmanū</i> verse that terminates in a double divine epithet
Q. 2:210–242	<i>What can they look for except that God should come ...</i>	an amalgamated block that opens with a question ( <i>hal yanẓurūn</i> ) and shift to the third person plural; contains a series of legal pronouncements, six introduced by <i>yasʾalūnaka</i> ; and closes with a ‘signs’ verse; originally broken down into:
210–214	<i>What can they look for except that God should come ...</i>	arguably a self-contained paragraph that opens with a question ( <i>hal yanẓurūn</i> ) and shift to the third person plural, and describes the trials the believers face in this world
215–218	<i>They ask you what they are to spend ...</i>	opens with <i>yasʾalūnaka</i> ; a pair of legal pronouncements; closes with a reference to the rewards that await the <i>muhājirūn</i>
219–242	<i>They ask you about wine ...</i>	opens with <i>yasʾalūnaka</i> ; a series of legal pronouncements; closes with a reference to the revelation
Q. 2:243	<i>Have you not considered those who left their dwellings ...</i>	opens with <i>a-lam tara</i> ; an ‘outlier’ long verse; thematically isolated from its surroundings
Q. 2:244–245	<i>Fight in the way of God and know that ...</i>	opening echoes Q. 2:190; thematically linked unit on fighting
Q. 2:246–253	<i>Have you not considered the notables ...</i>	opens with <i>a-lam tara</i> and two ‘outlier’ verses; thematically linked unit on Tālūt and previous messengers; closes with an ‘outlier’ long verse
Q. 2:254	<i>You who believe, spend some of that which We have given ...</i>	opens with <i>yā ayyuhāʾlladhīna āmanū</i> ; arguably a thematically disconnected verse about giving; relatively short when compared to its immediate neighbours
Q. 2:255–260	<i>God. There is no god but Him ...</i>	opens with ‘outlier’ long verse; includes Abraham material, but possesses no obvious thematic coherence; penultimate verse is an outlier in terms of length
Q. 2:261–283	<i>Those who spend their possessions in the way of God ...</i>	opens with <i>mathaluʾlladhīna</i> and a simile; contains four <i>yā ayyuhāʾlladhīna āmanū</i> pronouncements; penultimate verse an extreme outlier in terms of length; unit closes with a formulaic description of God as <i>ʿalīm</i>
Q. 2:284–286	<i>All that is in the heavens ...</i>	closes with three non-contextually specific verses

the single –CāC verse at Q. 2:175 is not highlighted by Bazargan at all, and the presence of –CāC *khātimas* in verses 211–212 is concealed within a proposed unit Q. 2:210–242.<sup>30</sup>

Particularly notable in Bazargan’s approach to the subdivision of *al-Baqara* into diachronic parts is his separation of a small number of individual verses from the fabric of the sura: Q. 2:158, Q. 2:164, Q. 2:243, and Q. 2:254.<sup>31</sup> These all occur in the second half of the sura, where there is indeed a higher frequency of the weaving

together of apparent chronological layers in Bazargan's scheme. The scarcity of instances at which Bazargan posits such narrow protrusions within the stylistic layers that make up the sura suggests that this was a hermeneutic he utilised with extreme caution; it does nonetheless raise the distinct possibility that, alongside his diachronic reordering of the corpus, Bazargan was exploring a thesis of how the long Medinan suras may have been compiled. There are overlaps with the structures proposed by both Nöldeke and Bell in the unicums Bazargan proposes; there are also instances where these coincide with synchronic analyses of the corpus. It is worth investigating each of these in turn.

The first of Bazargan's structural unicums, Q. 2:158 (*al-Ṣafā and al-Marwa are among the waymarks of God. It is no sin for those who are performing the Ḥajj or 'Umra to the house to move round the two of them. Those who do good voluntarily—God is thankful and knowing*), is labelled by Bazargan as a 'legal' verse. It is noticeably longer than the verses that immediately precede it. Further to this, however, Q. 2:158 can easily be argued to exist in parallel to its surrounding material: Q. 2:155.5–157 and Q. 2:159–162 form a typical positive/negative dichotomy, into which it can be posited Q. 2:158 was later inserted. The end-rhyme throughout is in *-ūn/-īn/-ūm/-īm*, although Q. 2:158 itself closes with the double divine epithet *fa-inna'llāha shākirun 'alīm* which could be taken to suggest a minor internal border. By separating Q. 2:153–163 into three groups, Bazargan creates three clusters with a mean verse length (utilising Bazargan's scheme of word-counting)<sup>32</sup> of 11.6 (10–17–12–10–9), then 24, then 12 (20–11–13–8–8), rather than a single unified group with a mean verse length of 12.9. This enables Bazargan to observe the spike in verse length exhibited by Q. 2:158, and theoretically date it to a later period of revelation (Block 164 as opposed to Block 113).<sup>33</sup> Although Q. 2:158 is not significantly longer than the verse that follows it, the combination of its own thematic integrity and the parallelism in its surrounding material could be read as sufficient justification for its being singled out in this way. Moreover, Q. 2:158 is similarly isolated by both Nöldeke and Bell (see Table 3 below). Bell posits that it, along with verses 159–160, formed two unconnected fragments of uncertain date, written on the reverse of verses 155–157, and inserted into a pre-existing passage consisting of Q. 2:153–154 and 161–162. Nöldeke proposes that verses 159–162 are connected to verses 153–157, that verses 163–167 are significantly earlier, and that verse 158 is both detached and late. The case for Q. 2:158 being somehow structurally separate would appear to be a very strong one.

When it comes to synchronic analyses of the corpus, Robinson also notes the thematically isolated character of Q. 2:158.<sup>34</sup> Zahniser, too, remarks upon its obvious disjuncture from the verses that immediately precede or follow it: verses 153 to 163 are identified by Zahniser as a transitional hinge, connecting the two halves of *al-Baqara* together, and verse 158 is singled out within this block as an 'isolated verse'.<sup>35</sup> Reda reads the textual markers somewhat differently. Although she too

acknowledges the apparent thematic disjuncture between the text block 153–157 and Q. 2:158, she highlights the existence of lexical and thematic links between verses 152 and 158 (also observed by Zahniser), and on these grounds proposes a quasi-inclusio formed by these two verses, producing a text unit that runs from 152–158. The theme of ‘suppressing scripture ... a form of ingratitude’ then connects verses 158 through to the end of 162. The hinge quality of verse 158 is thus observed by Reda, but by including Q. 2:152 within this subsection, Reda downplays any suggestion of its ensuing isolation.<sup>36</sup> It seems that, in Reda’s understanding of *al-Baqara*’s structure, verses 152 and 158 become a ring that serves to anchor verses 153–157 into the corpus. This is not expressly stated, however, and the compositional theory that would have to undergird such a structural hypothesis requires explicit justification. The competing hypothesis that the command to remember acts as a structural *Leitwort* in the Children of Israel section of the sura (thus verses 40, 47, 122, and 152), and the direct address to the believers as a structural *Leitwort* in the section that follows (thus verses 153, 172, 178, 183, 208, 254, 264, 278, and 282), creating a firm structural border between verses 152 and 153, is very firmly established. Bazargan’s apparent hypothesis that verse 158 might be a unitary topical insertion into a semi-formed but still evolving sura seems more immediately plausible.

**Table 3, showing various proposals for diachronic reordering that involves isolated verses**

		Bazargan	Bell	Nöldeke
Q. 2:158; 164	Section 1	Q. 2:153–157, Q. 2:159–163	Q. 2:153–154, 161–162	<b>Q. 2:163–167</b>
	Section 2	<b>Q. 2:158</b> ; 165–189	Q. 2:155–157	Q. 2:153–157, 159–162
	Section 3	<b>Q. 2:164</b>	<b>Q. 2:158</b>	<b>Q. 2:158</b>
	Section 4	x	Q. 2:159–160	x
	Section 5	x	<b>Q. 2:163–165a</b> , 170–171	x
Q. 2:243; 254	Section 1	Q. 2:244–245	Q. 2:246	Q. 2:216, 244–245
	Section 2	<b>Q. 2:254</b>	Q. 2:247–251	<b>Q. 2:243</b>
	Section 3	<b>Q. 2:243</b> ; Q. 2:246–253; Q. 2:255–260	<b>Q. 2:243</b> ; Q. 2:258–260	<b>Q. 2:246–256(7)</b> <sup>37</sup>
	Section 4	x	Q. 2:244	Q. 2:258–260
	Section 5	x	Q. 2:245	x
	Section 6	x	Q. 2:252–253	x
	Section 7	x	<b>Q. 2:254</b>	x
	Section 8	x	Q. 2:255, Q. 2:256–257	x

The second verse to be posited as a structural unicum by Bazargan is Q. 2:164:

*In the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of night and day; in the ships that run on the sea with what benefits men; in the water that God sends down from the sky to revive the earth after it has died off, dispersing all kinds of beasts with it; in the turning about of the winds and of the clouds, kept under control between heaven and earth: [in all these] there are signs for people who understand.*

This verse can again be argued to be thematically self-contained.<sup>38</sup> It is situated immediately prior to a three verse cluster rhyming in –CāC, and it follows Q. 2:163 (*Your God is One God; there is no god except Him, the Merciful and Compassionate*), a verse that can easily be read as suggestive of closure. By separating it out, Bazargan is able to create a one verse unit that resides in Block 192, ‘long verses to do with matters of faith and the People of the Book’, followed by a longer section (Q. 2:165–195) in Block 183, ‘exhortation and good news; legal ordinances’. Q. 2:164 is, however, fully integrated by Nöldeke within a unit spanning verses 163–167, and by Bell within a textual block 163–165a which originally ran, he posits, straight into verses 170–171. Neither Bell nor Nöldeke concur with Bazargan’s suggestion that verse 163 (*Your God is One God; there is no god except Him, the Merciful and Compassionate*) connects to the preceding material: they both see it as opening a minor textual unit rather than closing one. Similarly, neither Robinson nor Reda perceive any structural significance in verses 163/164/165. Zahniser, however, views verse 164 as the beginning of ‘a clearly defined thematic unit’ that runs through to 171, following on from the ‘elaborate hinge’ of verses 153–162;<sup>39</sup> while Q. 2:163 is not posited by Zahniser as an isolated verse per se, its plausibility as a section opener is questioned: ‘v. 163 begins with the conjunction *wa*. Major divisions of suras do not usually begin with a conjunction.’<sup>40</sup>

This statement of Zahniser’s is interesting, as a similar objection could be raised regarding Q. 2:165, which introduces Bazargan’s posited unit 165–189 (Block 183), and opens *There is a kind of man who ... (wa-mina’l-nās man ...)*. However, Bazargan similarly proposes 204–209 (Block 113), which also opens *There is a kind of man who ... (wa-mina’l-nās man ...)*,<sup>41</sup> as a thematic unit; the thesis that initial *wa* does not usually introduce a major thematic unit does not appear to translate into Bazargan’s diachronically-informed thematic units. Moreover, Bazargan’s proposed unit 204–209 is further marked by a brief switch to –CāC *khātimas*, something that can similarly be observed regarding his proposed unit 165–189.<sup>42</sup> Bazargan’s hypothesis of what might or might not indicate structural divide in *al-Baqara* is clearly carefully thought out and worthy of further consideration; the difficulty is in imagining how these discrete pieces might have moved from a state of

quasi-independence or fluidity into their current *al-Baqara* locations. Bazargan does not state whether the reader is to consider the initial *wa-* of verse 165 as a section-opener within *al-Baqara* as it is currently structured, or whether he had some other compositional model in mind, and, as was stated with regard to Reda above it is extremely difficult to assess the plausibility of a structural scheme if the compositional theory that undergirds it has not been explicitly spelt out.

This potential pitfall is particularly evident in the third verse Bazargan selects for isolation, Q. 2:243, dealing with *jihād*: *Have you not considered those who left their dwelling in thousands, in fear of death? God said to them, 'Die!' and then He brought them to life. God is bounteous to people, but most of them are not grateful.* This, again, is longer than the verses that follow it: 28 words, when compared to the 9 and 16 words of the next cluster (Q. 2:244–245). This enables Bazargan to posit the earliest of *al-Baqara*'s layers, Block 113 ('describing mankind; *jihād*'), as a possible statistical home for Q. 2:244–245, and to reveal further statistical layers between Q. 2:243 (in Block 192) and the material that precedes it (Q. 2:210–242, which Bazargan places in Block 183). The argument for the self-containment of Q. 2:243 is strengthened by the closing quality of Q. 2:242 (*Thus God makes His revelations clear for you, so that you may understand*). Further evidence is suggested by the presence of the opening formula (as identified by Robinson and Zahniser) *a-lam tara* at the outset of Q. 2:243, and the formulaic reference to man's ingratitude at its close. The repetition in Q. 2:244 of the command to fight in the way of God (*qātilū fī sabīli'llāh*), familiar from verse 190 where Bazargan again proposes it as a unit-opener, implies that Q. 2:244 could indeed be the beginning of a discrete text unit.

Verse 243, moreover, is again detached by both Nöldeke and Bell from the verses that immediately precede and follow it. Nöldeke would appear to consider it to have been a later insertion into a pre-existing legal ordinance that consisted of the verses now numbered Q. 2:216 and Q. 2:244–245 (see Table 1 above). Bell proposes an original unit consisting of verse 246, to which verses 247–251 were later added, and which accrued verse 243 among a number of disconnected scraps (see Appendix A), although Bell connects the context of Q. 2:243 to that of verses 258–260 (this is also raised as a possibility by Nöldeke).<sup>43</sup> Synchronic analyses of the sura's structure, meanwhile, coincide in unanimously identifying Q. 2:243 as the opener of a text unit that runs, variously, to verse 283 (Robinson and Zahniser),<sup>44</sup> verse 284 (Farrin), or verse 286 (Reda).

There certainly seems to be a strong suggestion that Q. 2:243 might reside in some sort of tension with the surrounding material. To bestow this tension with diachronic significance, however, is problematic. The situation is significantly complicated by the presence of matching *a-lam tara* formulae at the outset of verses 243 and 246.

While the possibility, raised by Bazargan,<sup>45</sup> that all three *a-lam tara* formulae in *Sūrat al-Baqara* (verses 243, 246, and 258) stem from the same chronological period is not inherently implausible,<sup>46</sup> in such a scenario it seems more likely that two verses with parallel openings and near parallel references to abandoning/being driven from home (243 and 246) were later expanded by the addition of verses 244–245, rather than that two verses from the very earliest layer of the sura (244–245) were somehow incorporated between two later stylistically similar and lexically overlapping verses (243 and 246). The hypothesis that verse 243 might have accrued the pre-set text unit 244–245 begs the question of why these latter verses might have been floating around awaiting incorporation anyway, or, if they were moved from elsewhere, what happened to the gap that was left behind. It certainly is not out of the question that a great deal of flexibility resided in the editorial aspect of sura formation, but a scenario in which pre-existing blocks were expanded by later revelations is more straightforward to reimagine *ex post facto* than one in which every textual block existed in an equal state of openness to editorial adjustment.

A further level of structural complexity to this series of verses is created by the echoing of the expression *fight in the way of God* in Q. 2:244 (*wa-qātilū fī sabīli'llāh*) and Q. 2:246 (*nuqātil fī sabīli'llāh*), an expression that is already familiar from Q. 2:190 (*wa-qātilū fī sabīli'llāh*).<sup>47</sup> Indeed, that God is both *samī'* and *'alīm* is regularly stated throughout the sura: in addition to Q. 2:244, this phrase is found in verses 127, 137, 181, 224, 227, and 256. The concept of God's 'multiplying' man's investments (*fa-yuḍā'ifahu lahu aḍ'āfan kathīratan*) is expressed in Q. 2:245 and in Q. 2:261, where *God multiplies for those whom He wills (Allāhu yuḍā'ifu li-man yashā')*.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the identical collocation in Q. 2:245, Q. 57:18, and Q. 64:17 of the expression *who is it that will lend God a fair loan (man dhā'lladhī yuqriḍu'llāha qarḍan ḥasanan)*<sup>49</sup> with the concept of resultant increase (*fa-yuḍā'ifahu lahu*)<sup>50</sup> strengthens an impression of the universal quality of these two verses.<sup>51</sup> Thematic overlaps in this section of the sura are highlighted by Reda, who describes verse 243 as 'story', in contrast to verses 244–245's 'injunction to fight and spend', but at the same time classifies verses 243–244 as 'God as Master over Life and Death; Fighting' as opposed to verse 245's theme of 'spending'.<sup>52</sup> Reda observes the basic integrity of the unit 243–245, at the same time demonstrating that its integrity can be justified in a number of ways, which may or may not complement one another. To conclude, therefore, the most likely scenario would seem to be that verses 244–245 operated as a sort of refrain, hearkening back to familiar Qur'anic vocabulary and concepts, but nonetheless contemporary with verses 243 and 246; the dip in verse length does not here signify any sort of diachronic layering. After all, Q. 2:252, whose thematic integrity within Bazargan's block 246–253 is nowhere questioned, also consists of a mere nine words, and there is no precedent for a verse to be removed on the grounds

of a sudden dip in verse length alone; corroborating factors must also be at play. The corroborating factors in this instance strongly indicate textual cohesion. The Qur'an should here be permitted to switch its stylistic and thematic register for reasons other than diachronic development.

If we turn our attention to the fourth and final unicum proposed by Bazargan, this is again a shorter verse in the middle of a cluster of longer verses. The 'legal' verse Q. 2:254, *You who believe, spend some of that which We have given you as provision, before a day comes on which there will be neither bargain nor friendship nor intercession. The unbelievers are the wrong-doers*, consists of 25 words; less than half the length of the verses that immediately precede and follow it in the corpus. By separating it out, Bazargan is able to distinguish discrete statistical layers within this segment of the sura: Q. 2:246–253 and Q. 2:255–260 reside in his Block 192; Q. 2:254 in his Block 183. Bell similarly classifies Q. 2:254 as an unconnected scrap, and Farrin posits it as the opener to his unit Q. 2:254–284. This verse is not singled out by Nöldeke, however, nor does it stand in a position of structural importance in any of the synchronic treatments of the sura besides Farrin's. While Zahniser observes the presence of a formula of address in Q. 2:254, commenting that 'these formulas do represent interruptions in the flow of the discourse and can help in discerning transitions between major units', he does not in any way suggest that there might be a major unit present in this particular area of the sura.<sup>53</sup> In the section of her thesis in which she discusses the Biblical technique of alternation, Reda proposes that verse 254 exhibits a degree of thematic isolation. However, she first classifies it as a single verse developing the theme 'Spending' within an alternation 'God as Master over Life and Death; Fighting'/'Spending' that runs from 243–186, only to then propose a broader text unit 254–257 under the title 'Spend; Belief (Throne verse)' within an alternation 'Story and Other Ideas' that runs across the very same span of verses.<sup>54</sup> Reda moreover subsumes the verse without mention in her initial, structural breakdown of the sura.<sup>55</sup> However illuminating a phenomenon alternation may prove to be in other ways, the degree of apparent subjectivity here makes it seem unusable as a tool for the structural breakdown of the sura.

Returning to Bazargan, if it is assumed (as it was for the cases of Q. 2:158 and Q. 2:243–245 discussed above) that his underlying hypothesis was one in which sudden shifts in verse length could indicate the presence of parenthetical insertions into pre-existing text units, it can be observed that Q. 2:254 connects, via its comparable verse length, to the section of the sura commencing with Q. 2:261 (*Those who spend their possessions in the way of God are like a grain that produces seven ears, in each of which are a hundred grains ...*). This is a connection that may plausibly have been interrupted by the interpolation of Q. 2:255–260. This seems immediately convincing on a certain level; the thematic and lexical connection



between Q. 2:254 and Q. 2:261 is very clear. A number of objections that could be raised are easily surmountable. The presence of an *a-lam tara* opening formula at Q. 2:258, subsumed within the textual unit Q. 2:255–260, for instance, is not a cause for pressing concern. As was already argued in ‘Sura Structure I: Thematic and Chiasmic Approaches’ above, indicators of opening and of closure are by no means intended to be taken in any sort of universal way, and that a new textual unit might contain such an indicator in its midst rather than at its outset seems perfectly plausible. Similarly, the creation of a unit that spans from Q. 2:255 to Q. 2:260, extending by one verse the structure suggested by the rhyme patterns within this section of the sura, could be taken to imply that, just as Q. 2:266 was above argued to extend its preceding unit beyond the *baṣīr* indicator of closure in Q. 2:265, it is possible that Q. 2:260 was attached to the *al-qadīr* indicator of closure at Q. 2:159.

Extrapolating further, however, this would require Q. 2:254 and Q. 2:261–283 to have originally run on from the larger text unit Q. 2:210–242, which itself might once have continued relatively uninterrupted from verse 165. Indeed, in exceedingly loose terms, one begins to see how Table 1 might indicate an *al-Baqara* that consists of a diachronically (or stylistically) composite first section Q. 2:1–163, followed by a further section residing primarily in Bazargan’s Block 183 (the present Q. 2:165–242), to which Q. 2:243–286 (residing primarily in Bazargan’s Block 192) might have been appended. While each of these proposed junctions would require careful scrutiny before any final pronouncement as to their viability could be made, the potential for the rough division of the sura into these three panels begins to seem intriguing. This is a paradigm that is worthy of further exploration.

#### **Sura Structure IV: Exploring the Potential for Synthesis**

The purpose of this essay has been to highlight a number of aural cues that could feasibly be taken to suggest the possibility of textual divide within *Sūrat al-Baqara*: the traditional changes in subject matter, but also the indicators provided by chiasmic structures, the presence of inclusios, changes in rhyme pattern, and Bazargan’s emphasis on shifts in genre and average verse length. As has been made evident, there is a degree of overlap between the various posited systems (see Table 4);<sup>56</sup> the amount of disparity has, however, perhaps been even more striking.

The largest measure of consensus resides in the placement of six major thematic divides at Q. 2:20/21, Q. 2:39/40, Q. 2:121/122, Q. 2:152/153, Q. 2:242/243, and Q. 2:253/254, and the presence of a formula of address, here at five out of six of these junctures is an immediately apparent feature. This is perhaps unsurprising, in light of the observations made by Zahniser in his 2000 essay.<sup>57</sup> Indeed, the probable location of structural borders at these six points is not an important discovery. The possible

<b>Table 4, showing the suggested borders—both internal and structural—in <i>al-Baqara</i></b>								
<b>Robinson 1996</b>	<b>Farrin 2010</b>	<b>Zahniser 2000</b>	<b>Reda 2010</b>	<b>borders as defined by rhyme</b>	<b>Bazargan 1976/7</b>			
Q. 2:1–39	1–5	Q. 2:1–39	1–20	Q. 2:1–20	Q. 2:1–20			
	6–20		21–29					
	Q. 2:21–39		30–39	Q. 2:21–110	Q. 2:21–29			
Q. 2:40–121	Q. 2:40–103	40–48	Q. 2:30–39					
	104–121	49–74	75–123	40–103				
Q. 2:122–152	122–133	122–141		124–151	Q. 2:111–120			
	134–141	142–152	Q. 2:121–124		104–123			
	Q. 2:142–152		124–151	Q. 2:125–148	124–141			
153–162	Q. 2:153–177	153–157	152–242	149–164	Q. 2:153–157			
163–242		158			Q. 2:163–242	168–176	Q. 2:158	
		159–162					(165–167)	Q. 2:159–163
		178–242		Q. 2:163–242		177–195		Q. 2:164
								190–191
						(192)	193–195	

Robinson 1996	Farrin 2010	Zahniser 2000	Reda 2010	borders as defined by rhyme	Bazargan 1976/7
163–242	178–242	Q. 2:163–242	152–242	(196–197)	Q. 2:196–209
				198–200	
				(201–202)	
				203	
				(204–207)	
				208–213	Q. 2:210–242
				Q. 2:214–232	
				Q. 2:233–237	
Q. 2:238–253					
Q. 2:243–283	243–53	Q. 2:243–283	243–286	Q. 2:238–253	Q. 2:243
	Q. 2:254–284			Q. 2:238–253	Q. 2:244–245
				Q. 2:238–253	Q. 2:246–253
				Q. 2:254–258	Q. 2:254
				Q. 2:254–258	Q. 2:255–260
				Q. 2:259–266	Q. 2:261–283
				267–268	
	(269–270)				
271	Q. 2:261–283				
Q. 2:272–285					
Q. 2:284–286	Q. 2:285–286	Q. 2:284–286	243–286	Q. 2:272–285	Q. 2:284–286
Q. 2:284–286				Q. 2:285–286	
	Q. 2:284–286	Q. 2:285–286	Q. 2:284–286	243–286	Q. 2:286
Q. 2:286					

function of rhyme patterns and variations in average verse length as indicators of structural divide is, however—in my view—a tangible development. Thus Q. 2:21, marked by the first occurrence within *al-Baqara* of the formula of address *yā ayyuhā'l-nās*, is confirmed as a border on the basis of four different criteria. Farrin places a major border here in accordance with the particular logic of Ring Theory, arguing that verses 21–39 (ring B), addressed to unspecified people, is marked by the mention of the Fire. Reda also places a minor border here, on the basis of a shift from the theme ‘Classification of humanity into three groups’ to ‘Direct address to humankind’.<sup>58</sup> There is moreover a shift in the rhyme pattern at this juncture, with verse 20, in the midst of a series of *-ūnl-īnl-ūml-īm fāṣilas*, terminating in *qadīr*. This was argued in ‘Sura Structure II: Considerations of Rhyme’ above to indicate closure. Bazargan’s chronological paradigm, meanwhile, places Q. 2:1–20 in Block 113, and Q. 2:21–29 in Block 164.

Q. 2:39/40 meanwhile, which introduces to the sura the formula of address *yā Banī Isrāʾīl*, may not be a border that is accentuated by rhyme, but all four of the sura-as-unity studies utilised for the purposes of this essay coincide in defining this juncture as a border on the basis of the presence of a formula of address here. Robinson, Farrin, and Zahniser add to this criterion the presence of a sizeable thematic unit, focussing on the Children of Israel, indicating a section break; Reda further corroborates this with the observation that verse 40 forms an *inclusio* with verse 122, an *inclusio* that is strengthened by the presence of an additional, central repetition in verses 47–48. Bazargan’s paradigm for the separating out of diachronic layers within *al-Baqara* also places a structural border at this juncture, with verses 40–152 comprising the entirety of Bazargan’s Block 164.<sup>59</sup>

In the midst of this unified block of Bazargan’s, however, is Robinson’s and Zahniser’s suggested break at the beginning of Q. 2:122, *Children of Israel! Remember My blessing which I bestowed upon you*. Both of these scholars view the presence of the formula *yā Banī Isrāʾīl*, and the clear thematic integrity of the material that follows, as indicating a major structural divide at this juncture of the sura; Zahniser adds to these two criteria mention of the presence of a wrap-up unit in the preceding verses, indicating incipient closure. Reda, however, views the repetition of the formula of address *yā Banī Isrāʾīl* in verses 40 and 122 as forming an *inclusio*. There is no case, according to her logic, for verse 122 to be posited as opening a structural unit; Reda places her section break at 123/124. Bazargan, similarly, although he does not observe Reda’s suggested *inclusio* of verses 40 and 122, posits a thematic break at 123/124. The disparity between the Robinson/Zahniser model, and the Reda/Bazargan scheme, is further complicated by the presence of a *naṣīr* indicator of possible closure at the end of verse 120. There are therefore indicators of closure at the end of verses 120, 121, and 123. The precise placement of the structural border here remains in doubt.

The next consensual major structural divide to have been identified in this study is located at the address to *yā ayyuhā'lladhīna āmanū* at Q. 2:153. Robinson, Farrin, and Zahniser place a textual divide at this point; Bazargan also locates a border here, between Block 164 (Q. 2:40–152) and Block 113 (Q. 2:153–157).<sup>60</sup> Reda, however, disagrees. On the grounds that the repeated reference to remembrance and to prayers in verses 152–153 and in verses 238–239 form an *inclusio*, she places her major structural divide at verses 151/152. Yet the argument that formulae of address do not mark any sort of structural border (despite their serving as sura openers in Q. 4, 5, 22, 33, 49, 60, 65, 66, 73, and 74) and that major section units can be opened with 'and' (a situation that is not reflected in any of the sura openings within the corpus)<sup>61</sup> is not a straightforward hypothesis to rationalise. Indeed, both of the final remaining structural divisions upon which this study has indicated a degree of scholarly consensus—the borders at Q. 2:242/243 and at Q. 2:253/254—co-occur, respectively, with a shift to the second person formula of address, *a-lam tara* (see also Q. 105:1),<sup>62</sup> and with the presence of a formula of address: *yā ayyuhā'lladhīna āmanū*.<sup>63</sup>

The insights and correspondences Reda highlights are very real steps along the process of understanding sura structure, and as such have tangible value, but they are not an end in themselves. Reda's failure to acknowledge the presence of diachronic layers in the sura—she explicitly states that she approaches the sura as a final editorial product,<sup>64</sup> be that one that was created by divine or by human hands—causes fault lines in her argumentation that ultimately, I would argue, undermine her conclusions to a critical degree. Indeed, the principal conclusion to have emerged from this study is that the most pressing issue in any discussion of *al-Baqara*'s structure is the need to envisage some sort of compositional process through which a series of lexically, stylistically, and thematically distinct clusters of verses were compiled into *Sūrat al-Baqara* as we now have it. While the identification of possible structural markers that might indicate the opening or the closure of thematic units within the long suras shows a definite trajectory of scholarly refinement, the utilisation of such markers will remain subjective until such a compositional process has been plausibly conjectured. Farrin's hypothesis—that verses were arranged in accordance with a complex circular plan of minor correspondences spanning hundreds of verses—would appear, in my view, to be very unlikely. The 'wastage' implicit in such an ordering system impacts our understanding of the importance of the Qur'an to its emerging community on a word-by-word level, and I am not at present convinced that this is a fruitful avenue of enquiry through which to explore the wider compositional structure of the long Medinan suras. Nöldeke's and Bell's paradigm, on the other hand, in which disparate scraps were spliced together in an almost random order, is clearly untenable.

To conclude, therefore, a hypothetical extension of Bazargan's model seems to me to be a feasible starting point from which to explore the potential mechanics of how the long suras might have been compiled. Such a conceptualisation is necessary in order to begin the process of the contextualisation of structural markers, and thereby remove some of the subjectivity with which this aspect of Qur'anic scholarship has been shrouded. In 'Sura Structure III: Chronological Markers' above, it was argued that Bazargan's data suggested a rough division of *al-Baqara* into three panels: Q. 2:1–163, Q. 2:165–242 (to which Q. 2:164 was later appended), and Q. 2:243–286. It is possible to further refine this suggestion. *Sūrat al-Baqara* may in fact have grown incrementally, within three discrete compositional rings. The first of these will have emerged from an original address to the Children of Israel, plausibly opening with the present Q. 2:40. The second of these will have emerged from an original address to mankind, plausibly opening with the present Q. 2:168. The third of these rings will then have emerged from a persuasive plea to the community to fight in God's cause, plausibly opening with the present Q. 2:243. While it has been proven to be relatively straightforward to think of the short suras as single performative acts or sermons,<sup>65</sup> to my knowledge this is not a paradigm that has as yet been translated into the long suras.

It seems intuitive, however, to assume a certain element of declamatory cohesion across the entire period of Muḥammad's prophethood. The way the community expected to be addressed, and the extent to which they anticipated any later modification to prior revelatory material, will have remained constant despite any change in the community's geography. The compositional rules that have been established for the Meccan part of the corpus should hold, in some shape or form, for the Medinan. If it seems extremely unlikely, on account of its sheer length, that *al-Baqara* might represent an original address to the community delivered *ex nihilo*, the most plausible alternative paradigm is that a number of already circulating addresses were expanded, linked, and edited into a coherent whole, and that this process took place over a relatively short period of time. The same process will then have been repeated with the next of the long suras to have been compiled. At the same time, it is important to bear in mind the very distinct likelihood that older suras will have been circulating during this process of the evolution of *al-Baqara*. Their stylistic and thematic integrity was maintained, such that we now have within the corpus a number of suras of overlapping yet distinct form, but at the same time these older suras remained open to additions and insertions, some of which have been systematically catalogued by scholars such as Sinai, as was described in the opening pages of Part Two of this article. It would appear, therefore, that Muḥammad was permitted, if not expected, to simultaneously uphold and modify earlier revelations. He was permitted, if not expected, to simultaneously deliver new material and repeat old. This should be emphasised in any attempt to envisage how the longer suras might

have evolved: pre-existing textual blocks will presumably have been pieced together, expanded, and modified in import via the use of insertions, but there would appear to be little doubt that their basic textual integrity will simultaneously have been maintained. They will also have slowly accrued into a definable corpus, in this case one labelled *Sūrat al-Baqara*, to be followed, by the indications of MVL alone,<sup>66</sup> by *Sūrat al-Mujādala* and then by *Sūrat al-Nisā'*, just as the Meccan suras slowly accrued into a definable corpus.

The presence of numerous lexical and thematic links to the remainder of the sura in the opening (Q. 2:1–39) and closing material (Q. 2:284–286) suggests that these sections were appended to the growing sura at a relatively late stage of the compositional process; the relative homogeneity of Q. 2:40–152 (Bazargan's Block 164) further indicates the possibility of a break between the opening of the sura and what I would term the first of the sermon groups. In addition, the question of how the legal material was added into the developing sura is particularly needful of further conceptualisation and thought. However, the idea that, loosely speaking, *al-Baqara* might have grown organically in a direction that is to some extent still reflected in the ordering of the sura as we have it—an earlier panel (Q. 2:40–163 or Bazargan's Block 164) accrued a later panel (Q. 2:165–242 or Bazargan's Block 183), which was then appended to an even later panel (Q. 2:243–283 or Bazargan's Block 192)—seems imminently plausible in compositional terms. More plausible, indeed, than the counter-thesis that *al-Baqara*'s verses merely display a tendency to get relatively longer as the sura progresses.

A number of passages highlighted in the course of this study can be adduced in support of such a hypothesis of incremental growth. The first of these is the presence of apparently stylistically early material in Q. 2:244–245. It was argued that thematic and lexical links to the surrounding material invalidate Bazargan's proposition that these verses might represent an earlier diachronic layer within their surrounding text unit. The alternative proposition was put forward that these verses serve, rather, as a sort of refrain, utilising largely familiar Qur'anic language in order to anchor a new revelation into the community's evolving sense of identity. This blend of the familiar and the unfamiliar is, I would argue, an important compositional technique in the later suras.

The second indication that the sura might well have grown incrementally, utilising pre-circulating addresses to the community, is the cluster of structural openers and closers in verses 120, 122, and 123. A potential compromise between Reda's structural hypothesis, Bazargan's thematic paradigm, and the considerations of rhyme would be afforded by the counter-suggestion of a rhyme-informed minor structural break at 120/121, followed by an extended wrap-up unit to this section of the sura: verses 121–123. However, that an original address

to the community opened *wa-idhi'btalā Ibrāhīma rabbuhu bi-kalimātin*, the initial words of verse 124, is very hard to conceptualise. There is no precedent for a sura to commence with an initial *wa*, other than when this introduces an oath; there is no reason why an independent address to the community would depart from the prevailing pattern. A process of incremental growth seems much more likely. Thus a new address containing the Abraham material from verses 124–141 and the *qibla* material from verses 142–150 will have been appended to the close of a pre-existing address, producing a text unit Q. 2:122–152 which opened and closed with a command to remember, and blending the familiar and the unfamiliar, as was argued with reference to Q. 2:244–245 above. When the final version of the sura was compiled, the overlapping material (verses 122–123) was not duplicated. Such a compositional paradigm would allow for the significance of rhyme as a closing device, and it would acknowledge the function of formulae of address as opening devices, as is attested in a number of Qur'anic suras.

There is, moreover, some evidence that repeated formulae of address can likewise be posited as closing devices in Qur'anic material, and do not serve merely to open textual blocks. After all, Q. 60 opens and closes with an address to the believers with reference to whom they should take as allies: *yā ayyuhā'lladhīna āmanū lā tattakhidhū ... awliyā'* in Q. 60:1 becomes *yā ayyuhā'lladhīna āmanū lā tatawallaw ...* in Q. 60:13, the final verse of the sura. There is arguably also evidence of a compositional ring in the command to be mindful of God at the opening and towards the close of Q. 33: *yā ayyuhā'l-nabiyyu'ttaqi'llāh* in Q. 33:1 becomes *yā ayyuhā alladhīna āmanū'ttaqū'llāh* in Q. 33:70.<sup>67</sup> The application of this paradigm to Q. 2:120–123, however, creates something of a compositional conundrum of verse 121, *Those to whom We have given the Scripture and who recite it correctly: those believe in it. Those who do not believe in it: those are the losers*. This is, of course, in its opposition of the believers and the disbelievers, a typical wrap-up verse. Yet it resides between the rhyme indicator of closure in verse 120 and the formula of address indicator of either opening or closure in verse 122.<sup>68</sup> The near repetition at the close of verse 120 of the verse 107 *khātima* (*wa-mā lakum min dūni'llāhi min waliyyin wa-lā naṣīr* becomes *wa-mā laka mina'llāhi min waliyyin wa-lā naṣīr*) adds to a sense of there being a hypothetical paragraph break at this juncture of the sura. In the presence of 121, therefore, we encounter an anomaly requiring explanation in the paradigm that is being proposed.

One response to this apparent structural anomaly would be to explore the possibility of diachronicity at this juncture of the sura, and bracket verse 121 as a potential insertion. The statement contrasting the behaviour of the believers with the fate of the disbelievers would then have been added into the fabric of the sermon or the evolving sura as a postscript. This addition will have taken place after the rhyme/repetition border of verse



120, and the circular reference to the Children of Israel of verse 122, were already established. It would not displace familiar material, but reside in parallel to it.

Indeed, I would argue that the potential diachronic element to how *Sūrat al-Baqara* manifests its apparent structural markers has been critically under-explored. One example is provided by Reda's suggested inclusio of verses 152–153 and verses 238–239, mentioned above. On the one hand, it is in fact perfectly possible that an original address to the community that opened *yā ayyuhā'lladhīna āmanū*, in what is now verse 153 of the sura, was only prefaced by a command to 'remember' when the sura as we now have it came to be compiled, rendering the repeated command *fa'dhkurū* in verses 152 and 239 coincidental, and of no structural significance whatsoever. On the other hand, the hypothesis raised in Part One of this article, that the purpose of –CāC *fāṣilas* might feasibly be emphatic, and that this emphasis might be chronological in nature,<sup>69</sup> would render verses 165–167 later insertions. The pre-canonical sermon underlying this panel of the sura (Bazargan's Block 192) would then open with the generic address to mankind, *yā ayyuhā'l-nās*, of verse 168, and not with the atypical opener *wa-mīna'l-nās man ...* Verse 164, of course, was raised as a possible later addition in 'Sura Structure III: Chronological Markers' above: isolated as such by Bazargan, its plausible separation from the preceding material was also observed by Zahniser.

Despite the Qur'an's references to its own diachronicity, literary and thematic studies of the Medinan suras do not engage with the process through which a number of discrete revelations might have been united into the textual whole whose structural borders they strive to identify. This failure to distinguish possible diachronic layers within *al-Baqara* places the integrity of existing structural breakdowns of the sura at substantial risk. The next step in any exploration of the structure of *Sūrat al-Baqara* must be, I would argue, a rigorous assessment of its internal textual borders. To this should be added a careful evaluation of its possible insertions, and a detailed investigation of its editorial techniques. All of this must, however, be anchored in a plausible compositional paradigm, and connected to the textual evidence of the remainder of the corpus as we have it. If there is to be real progress in understanding the structure of the long Medinan suras, the synchronic and the diachronic need to be combined.

Appendix A, Showing Richard Bell's Diachronic Breakdown of *Sūrat al-Baqara*

Q. 2:1–29 (Introduction)	Q. 2:1–2 Q. 2:4–5 (Q. 2:3)	believers	Verses 3 and 4 are duplicate verses; verse 3 being the later of the pair. (Bell may accordingly be suggesting that verse 3 was intended as a replacement for verse 4.)
	Q. 2:6–7	unbelievers	
	Q. 2:8–9 Q. 2:14–15 (Q. 2:13) Q. 2:16–18 Q. 2:26	pretended believers	This section on the hypocrites, Bell argues, originally ran from the end of verse 9 directly to verses 14–15; verse 13 was intended to replace verses 14–15. Verses 16–18 may be the original continuation of verses 14–15; verse 26 belongs to the same time as verse 17.
	(Q. 2:10–12) Q. 2:19–20 Q. 2:27		Verses 10–12 are a later insertion, meant to displace verses 9 and 13; verses 19–20 were added at the same time. Verse 27 was possibly also added at this time.
	Q. 2:25		Verse 25 is an even later addition.
	Q. 2:21–22 Q. 2:28–29	SCRAP	Verses 21–22 are unrelated to the surrounding material; written on the back of verses 19–20. They were originally continued in verses 28–29.
	Q. 2:23–24	SCRAP	Verses 23–24 are unrelated to the surrounding material; written on the back of verse 25.
	Q. 2:30–39	Adam	Bell sees this passage as composite, but added to the sura already as a fully formed set piece. Verse 39 was possibly appended to the narrative at this time.
	Q. 2:40–129	Q. 2:40a, 41–42 (Q. 2:40b) Q. 2:43–44	Children of Israel
Q. 2:47–53 Q. 2:63–66		Probably earlier than verses 40–44 due to their recognition of the privileged position of the Children of Israel; verse 53 once ran directly into verse 63.	

	Q. 2:54–61a Q. 2:67–74		Verses 54–61a were possibly intended as a less friendly substitute for verses 51–53; Bell breaks verse 61 at <i>sa'altum // wa-ḍuribat</i> although this is not consistent with the prevailing rhyme pattern. He posits an original continuation into verses 67–74, which he sees as a substitution and expansion of verse 51.
	Q. 61b		The end of verse 61, from <i>wa-ḍuribat</i> , Bell considers to be a late hostile addition.
	Q. 2:75–82 Q. 2:88–96 Q. 2:98 (Q. 2:97, 99)		Bell proposes an initial unit, verses 75–82, which continued into verses 88–96, then into verse 98. Verses 97 and 99 (encouragement for the Prophet) are a later substitute for verse 98.
	Q. 2:101, 100 (Q. 2:102)		Bell suggests that verse 100 originally followed verse 101. Verse 101 was much modified, and later replaced by verse 102. That verse 102 is a replacement is indicated, for Bell, by the repeated rhyme word <i>ya'lamūn</i> at the close of both verses.
	Q. 2:104–129		The reference to <i>zakāt</i> in verse 110 may indicate that this is a later addition; the concluding-sounding rhyme phrase at the end of verse 109 may corroborate this.
	Q. 2:45–46	SCRAP	Bell sees this as addressing the believers; as a consequence, he perceives no obvious referent for the <i>hā</i> in <i>wa-innahā</i> , and concludes that this verse has been taken out of context.
	Q. 2:62	SCRAP	Written on the back of verse Q. 2:61b; no connection with the context.
Q. 2:130–141	Q. 2:135a, 139 Q. 2:140a Q. 2:141	Muslim independence	Bell sees the beginning of verse 135 (to <i>tahtadū</i> ) as belonging in context to verse 111, and as originally running straight into verse 139, verse 140a (which Bell divides at <i>naṣārā // qul</i> ), and verse 141.
	(Q. 2:136, 138)		Verses 136 and 138 were later substituted for verse 139.
	Q. 2:137 (Q. 2:135b, 130–134)		Verse 137 Bell considers a later addition, which in itself was then discarded in favour of verses 130–134, at the same time that the rest of verse 135 was added (from <i>qul</i> onwards).
	(Q. 2:140b)	SCRAP	The material following the central <i>qul</i> of verse 140 Bell takes as unconnected to the rest of the verse or the passage.
Q. 2:142–152	Q. 2:142–143	the change of <i>qibla</i>	Bell suggests that both the opening part of verse 143a (as far as <i>shahīdan</i> : a discrete verse in Flügel) and the end of that verse (from <i>wa-mā kāna'llāh</i> ) might be later additions, but he does not remove them.

	Q. 2:148		Verse 148 was probably contemporaneous with verse 142, although Bell does not suggest that they were connected.
	Q. 2:144a Q. 2:149 Q. 2:145		Bell breaks verse 144 at <i>tarḍāhā // fa-walli</i> , and posits the original presence of verse 149 at this juncture, followed by verse 145.
	(Q. 2:150–152)		Verses 150–152 were intended to substitute verse 149. Note the identical opening phrase to verses 149 and 150.
	(Q. 2:144b)		Bell takes the material from <i>fa-walli wajhaka</i> onwards as a substitute for verses 150–152.
	Q. 2:146–147	SCRAP	Bell describes these two verses as contextually unrelated to the surrounding material.
Q. 2:153–167, 170–171	Q. 2:153–154, Q. 2:161–162		Bell posits this as an original passage dealing with those slain at Badr consisting of verses 153, 154, 161, and 162.
	Q. 2:155–157	those slain at Badr	An expansion added after Uḥūd.
	Q. 2:165b–167		An expansion of uncertain date. Bell breaks verse 165 at <i>li'llāhi // wa-law yarā</i> . He notes the contrasting rhyme in –CāC in these three verses.
	Q. 2:158; Q. 2:159–160	SCRAP	Verse 158 and verses 159–160 Bell considers to be isolated fragments of uncertain date, written on the reverse of verses 155–157.
	Q. 2:163–165a	SCRAP	Bell considers verses 163–165a to have been written on the reverse of verses 165b–167, connects this passage to verse 28–29, and notes the recurrence of the term <i>andād</i> in verses 22 and 165a.
	Q. 2:170–171	SCRAP	Bell considers verses 170–171 to have been the original continuation of verse 165a.
Q. 2:168–286	Q. 2:168–169		Bell designates verses 168–169 and 172–176 as a subsection dealing with food. The original legislation is presented in verses 168–169.
	(Q. 2:172–174)	Legislation: food	Verses 168–169 were revised and intended to be replaced by verses 172–174, although the connection of verse 174 is not certain (see verse 175 below).
	Q. 2:176		Verse 176 Bell sees as a later addition.
	Q. 2:175	SCRAP	Bell observes that this verse terminating in <i>nār</i> is out of rhyme. He concedes the possibility of a connection to the preceding via an understanding of the ‘concealment’ of verse 174 as referring to food restrictions.

Q. 2:177	Legislation: <i>qibla</i>	An original version of verse 177 Bell connects to the change of the <i>qibla</i> , with the material from <i>wa'bna sabīl ... wa-ḥīna'l-ba's</i> as one suggestion for what constituted the later addition.
Q. 2:178a, Q. 2:179	Legislation: retaliation	Verses 178–179 are designated a subsection dealing with retaliation. Bell breaks verse 178 at <i>bi'l-unthā // fa-man</i> , and considers the original unit to consist of verses 178a and 179.
(Q. 178b)		Verse 178b was then intended as a substitution for verse 179.
Q. 2:180–181	Legislation: wills	The subject matter in verses 180–182 shifts to wills.
Q. 2:182		Verse 182 was a later addition, revising what precedes.
Q. 2:183–184	Legislation: fasting	Bell designates verses 183–189 as dealing with fasting, although he removes verses 186, 188, and 189 as contextually unrelated fragments. He posits verses 183–184 as the original core, with the possible removal of the rhyme phrase of verse 183.
(Q. 2:185)		Similarity of form, and repetition of certain provisions, indicate that this was intended as a substitute for verse 184.
Q. 2:187		Bell views this as a much later insertion, written on the back of verses 188, 189, and possibly also 190.
Q. 2:186	SCRAP	Bell flags this verse as unconnected to the preceding, written on the back of verse 185.
Q. 2:188	SCRAP	Another unconnected verse.
Q. 2:189	SCRAP	Another unconnected verse.
Q. 2:190, Q. 2:194	Legislation: fighting	Verses 190–194 are to do with fighting. Verse 190 is the supposed original, which Bell dates to before Ḥudaybiyya. Verse 194 possibly followed directly after verse 190 at that point.
Q. 2:195		A later addition, most likely to belong to the period between Badr and Uḥud.
Q. 2:191, Q. 2:193		The much later addition of verses 191 and 193 Bell dates to the time of the final expedition against Mecca.
(Q. 2:192)		Verse 192 was intended as a substitute for verse 193. Bell posits that this was written on the back of verses 194–195.

Q. 2:196a, Q. 2:203		Verses 196–207 Bell labels as dealing in general terms with pilgrimage, but he ultimately describes this as a passage which is now so mixed in subject matter and rhyme that its original order is ‘inextricable’. Tentatively, however, he posits an original unit consisting of the opening part of verse 196 (which he breaks at <i>li’llāhi // fa-in</i> ) and verse 203.
(Q. 2:198–199)	Legislation: pilgrimage	Verses 198 to 199 were then substituted for verse 203 (or they may have merely been added, with no substitution having taken place).
Q. 2:197, Q. 2:200–202		Subsequent to Badr, a section consisting of verses 197 and 200–202, all rhyming in -CāC, was inserted.
Q. 2:204–207		Verses 204–207 were probably written on the back of verses 200–202, and can be dated to between Badr and Uḥud.
Q. 2:208a, Q. 2:216, Q. 2:218?	Legislation: appeal for unity	The next section Bell forms of verses 208–214, 215–216, and 218, and labels ‘appeal for unity’. The original passage he proposes as the opening address from verse 208, verse 216, and possibly also verse 218.
(Q. 2:208b–209 Q. 2:214)		The bulk of verse 208, along with verse 209 and (possibly) 214, were a later replacement for verses 216 and (possibly) 218.
Q. 2:213		A later addition.
Q. 2:210	SCRAP	Out of context and out of rhyme with its surroundings (terminates <i>umūr</i> ), unplaceable.
Q. 2:211	SCRAP	Out of context and out of rhyme with its surroundings (terminates <i>al-‘iqāb</i> ), unplaceable, dated before the complete break with the Jews.
Q. 2:212	SCRAP	Out of context and out of rhyme with its surroundings (terminates <i>ḥisāb</i> ), might be Meccan.
Q. 2:219 a, b, c	Legislation: answers to questions	Verses 215, 217, and 219–222 are a series of answers to questions, many of which were not intended to be part of the Qur’an and now display rhyme phrases which were added later. The earliest strata of this section consisted of the main body of verse 219, with the rhyme phrase (from <i>ka-dhālika</i> onwards) being a later addition.
(Q. 2:215)		Verse 219 b and c (from the second <i>yas’alūnaka</i> to <i>ka-dhālika</i> ) were then replaced by verse 215, minus the rhyme phrase which Bell thinks may have been added later.

(Q. 2:217 a, c, Q. 2:220a)		Verse 217 parts a and c (Bell posits that the central passage, from <i>wa'l-masjid</i> to <i>minhu</i> , and the rhyme phrase were both added later) formed an original verse concluding in the opening part of verse 220 ( <i>fī'l-dunyā wa'l-ākhirā</i> ). This was intended to displace verse 219. It is unclear in Bell whether it was also intended to displace verse 215, already posited as a replacement for parts b and c of verse 219.
Q. 2:220b		The part of verse 220 that runs from <i>yas'alūnaka</i> to <i>la-a'natakum</i> was another subsequent addition (with the rhyme phrase being a further, late addition).
Q. 2:221		Verse 221, minus its rhyme phrase ( <i>wa-yubayyinu ...</i> ), may belong to the same period.
Q. 2:222		Bell suggests in his <i>Commentary</i> that this may be part of the same textual block as the preceding verses.
Q. 2:223	Legislation: intercourse, divorce, and widows	Running from verse 223–242 Bell posits a relatively loose section, dealing with marital intercourse, divorce, and widows. He first mentions verse 223, seemingly as an isolated verse. Verse 223 is earlier than verse 222, he argues, as it makes no exceptions to the permissibility of marital intercourse.
Q. 2:226–227 Q. 2:241–242		Verses 226–227 Bell views as having, originally, run straight into verse 241 and, feasibly, verse 242.
Q. 2:224–225		An isolated pair of verses Bell connects, in a vague sense, with verses 226–227, on account of the similar rhyme phrases.
(Q. 2:228), Q. 2:229–237		Verse 228 Bell views as a substitute for verses 226–227. No diachronic restructuring is posited for verses 228–235. Verse 236–237, however, Bell suggests as having been written on the back of discarded scraps.
Q. 2:238–239	SCRAP?	Verses 238–239 are declared to be out of context, and are presumably therefore to be considered a scrap.
Q. 2:246	Legislation: duty of fighting	Verses 243–257 Bell designates a lengthy passage designed to illustrate the duty of fighting. The oldest section, he posits, is verse 246, which was possibly written on the back of the unconnected scraps 243, 244, and 245.
Q. 2:247–251		Verses 247–251 were possibly revealed before Uḥud and written on the back of older, unconnected fragments: verses 252, 253, 254, 255, and 256–257.
Q. 2:243	SCRAP	An unconnected scrap, reference unknown, but connected in context to verses 258–260.
Q. 2:244	SCRAP	An unconnected scrap, Medinan in date.

Q. 2:245	SCRAP	An unconnected scrap, Medinan in date.
Q. 2:252, Q. 2:253?	SCRAP?	These two verses may have originally been together and in this order.
Q. 2:254	SCRAP?	May be complete in itself; the originality of the rhyme phrase Bell disputes.
Q. 2:255, Q. 2:256–257?	SCRAP?	Verses 255 Bell considers to be complete in itself. Verses 256–257 may connect to it, but are probably separate.
Q. 2:258–260	SCRAP	Bell attaches this scrap to the subsequent block, but suggests its context as verse 243.
Q. 2:261–262 and 264–265, Q. 2:263, Q. 2:266, Q. 2:267	Legislation: contributions	Verses 261–274 form a block dealing with contributions. Bell is not clear on the chronological order of the various segments he proposes, but it would appear that he imagined verses 261–265 as the initial core of this subsection. Within this block, Bell suggests verse 263 as a later addition. He then appends verses 266 and 267.
Q. 2:268a, 268b, 269a, 269b, 270.		Bell's next block comprises verses 268–272a, although Bell divides these verses into fragments, removing rhyme clauses and bifurcating verses. From verse 268 he detaches <i>wa'llāhu wāsi'un 'alīm</i> , tentatively creating two verses closing <i>bi'l-faḥshā'</i> and <i>wa-faḍlan</i> which can then be read with a verse 269 segmented into two after <i>man yashā'</i> . These verses were written on the back of verse 267. Bell also creates a verse division in Flügel's unified verses 270–271 where the Cairo edition does (at <i>anṣār</i> ).
Q. 2:268c		<i>Wa'llāhu wāsi'un 'alīm</i> Bell proposes as a later addition.
Q. 2:271, Q. 2:272a		Verse 271 Bell places on the reverse side of the scrap that recorded verse 270. The opening phrase of verse 272 (divided at <i>man yashā' // wa-mā tunfiqū</i> ) was originally the concluding part of verse 271. Bell connects verse 271 to verse 267, with a possible time lapse.
Q. 2:272b, Q. 2:274 (Q. 2:273)		The second part of verse 272, from <i>wa-mā tunfiqū</i> onwards, goes together with verse 274, Bell suggests. He then divides verse 272 again, at <i>min khayr // fa-li-anfusikum</i> , and proposes verse 273 as a replacement continuation for the final part of verse 272.
Q. 2:275a, Q. 2:276–277	Legislation: borrowing and the recording of debts	Verse 275 to the end of the sura Bell labels as predominantly dealing with borrowing and the recording of debts. He divides the material into a number of sub-sections. An original unit of verse 275a (to <i>mina'l-mass</i> ) led into verses 276 and 277, he posits.



Q. 2:275b	The rest of verse 275 (from <i>dhālika bi-annahum</i> ) was written on the back of verses 276–277.
Q. 2:278–281	Difficult to date, but probably later than verse 275b.
Q. 2:282 a, c, Q. 2:283	Also late were verses 282 and 283. Bell proposes the exception clause ( <i>illā an takūna ... idhā tabāya<sup>c</sup>tum</i> ) in verse 282 as a subsequent insertion.
Q. 2:284	Verse 284 Bell seems to consider an isolated fragment, Medinan, of uncertain context.
Q. 2:285a and Q. 286b	Bell sees the beginning of verse 285 (as far as <i>min rusulihī</i> ) as connected with the end of verse 286 (from the first occurrence of <i>rabbānā</i> ).
Q. 2:282b	Later insertion, added at the same time as 285b and 286a.
Q. 2:285b	Introduced into the sura at the same time as the exception clause in verse 282. Bell suggests it may have been the original ending of verse 61.
Q. 2:286a	Introduced into the sura at the same time as the exception clause in verse 282, context uncertain.

## NOTES

1 That the stylistic trajectory moves from the shorter verses to the longer is demonstrated by Behnam Sadeghi with specific reference to Sura 74 (Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ān</sup>', p. 283; see also Sinai, 'The Qur'an as Process', p. 415, and 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology'). I am deeply indebted to Professor Sadeghi, both for kindly sending me the relevant pages of Bazargan's *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qur<sup>ān</sup>*, and for the extensive and detailed comments he provided on an earlier draft of this article. For Meccan material, Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology', omits from his analysis of the pattern of mean verse length and standard deviation Q. 52:21; Q. 53:23.26–32; Q. 69:7; Q. 73:20; Q. 74:31 and 56; Q. 78:37–40; Q. 81:29; Q. 84:25; Q. 85:7–11; Q. 87:7; Q. 89:15–16, 23–24, and 27–30; Q. 90:17–20; Q. 95:6; Q. 97:4; and Q. 103:3. By removing these 'outlier' verses, he argues that it is possible to draw a more representative trajectory of stylistic development from one sura to the next.

2 There are a plethora of summaries of the main differences between the Meccan and the Medinan parts of the corpus, but for the particular categorisation of stylistic shifts provided above, see Sinai, 'The Qur'an as Process', pp. 410–412; 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology'; and 'The Eschatological Kerygma'.

3 Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ān</sup>', p. 228. Sadeghi provides a bibliography of similar studies carried out on the works of other authors (Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ān</sup>', pp. 221–222), and discusses the example of Plato and Dickens in more detail at pp. 219, 221–222, and 285–286.

4 It is important to note that, while style may vary smoothly across a series of phases, Sadeghi is not claiming that it varies smoothly *within* these phases. For the results of his analysis, see Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ān</sup>', pp. 271, 274, and 279.

5 See Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ān</sup>', p. 228. His precise statement reads as follows: 'the first half of Bazargan's chronology is broadly confirmed. Its second half, consisting of Groups 12–22, which happen to correspond to Medina in the traditional reckoning,

remains largely unconfirmed, although it is at least clear that it comes after the first half.’ The difficulty with the Medinan portion of the Qur’an, as Sadeghi sees it, lies in the relative similarity between mean verse lengths, and the more even stylistic profiles of the blocks, from the late Meccan to the late Medinan periods (see Sadeghi, ‘The Chronology of the Qur’ān’, pp. 242, 246, 290, *et passim*). A similar trend is discernible in Dickens (see Sadeghi, ‘The Chronology of the Qur’ān’, pp. 285–286). For the details of Bazargan’s chronology, see the further discussion below.

6 Sinai, ‘Inner-Qur’anic Chronology’.

7 Sinai, ‘Inner-Qur’anic Chronology’.

8 Sinai, ‘Inner-Qur’anic Chronology’.

9 Although Sinai stresses that ‘the long surahs located at the beginning of the Qur’an (the paradigmatic example being Q 2), whose structure and editorial history is still poorly understood, may well turn out to be redactionally composite’, he also remarks that ‘it should be noted that even Q 2 has a CV [coefficient of variation] (namely, 66.14%) that is lower than that of the Qur’an as a whole [namely, 75.85%].’ The figures are rounded to two decimal points (Sinai, ‘Inner-Qur’anic Chronology’). Across the Meccan portion of the Qur’an, Nora K. Schmid has illustrated that average sura length increases with average verse length (measured in syllables per verse), while short verses are statistically much more likely to be collocated with other short verses than not, suggesting to Schmid the literary unity of these texts (see Schmid, ‘Quantitative Text Analysis’).

10 These are Q. 85:7–11, Q. 103:3, Q. 53:23 and 26–32, Q. 73:20, and Q. 74:31 and 56: seventeen verses in total.

11 Sinai mentions Q. 52:21, Q. 69:7, Q. 78:37–40, Q. 81:29, Q. 84:25, Q. 87:7, Q. 89:15–16, 23–24, and 27–30, Q. 90:17–20, Q. 95:6, and Q. 97:4. For a detailed discussion of some of these passages, he refers the reader to Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition*, pp. 201–203; Sinai, ‘An Interpretation of Sūrat al-Najm’; and Sinai, “‘Weihnachten im Koran’”.

12 This phrase is, moreover, collocated with *lahum ajrun ghayru mammūn*, a pairing of concepts that also occurs in verse 8 of Q. 41. This suggests to Sinai that Q. 84:25 might be more or less contemporaneous with Q. 41, itself a late Meccan sura. See ‘Inner Qur’anic Interpretation’, forthcoming.

13 A similar argument is made by Sinai for Q. 37:112–113: while there is no protrusion in verse length at this juncture, this couplet occurs after the refrain *innahu min ‘ibādīnā’l-mu’minīn* (*verily he was of Our believing bondsmen*) which marks the close of the Moses and Aaron pericope (Q. 37:114–122) and the Elijah pericope (Q. 37:123–132), and the terms *dhurriyya* (‘progeny’) and *zālim* (‘ungodly’) also occur with relation to the story of Abraham in Q. 2:124. On these grounds, Sinai posits Q. 37:112–113 as a later insertion into Q. 37, in which sura it served the dual purpose of clarifying the identity of the ‘patient son’ of Q. 37:101–107 as Ishmael, and asserting the wrongfulness of some of Abraham’s descendants (see Sinai, ‘Inner Qur’anic Interpretation’). It should be noted, however, that the preceding Noah pericope also continues beyond the boundaries of this closing refrain with the additional remark *and We drowned the rest*. It is also worth observing that this same opening formula ‘[insert prophet’s name here] was one of the messengers’ is utilised for Elijah (Q. 37:123–132), Lot (Q. 37:133–138), and Jonah (Q. 37:139–148), but not for Noah (Q. 37:75–82), Abraham (Q. 37:83–113), or Moses and Aaron (Q. 37:114–122). The pairing of Abraham with Isaac (Q. 37:112–113), moreover, balances the pairing of Moses with Aaron (Q. 37:114–122) in the verses of the sura that immediately follow Sinai’s suggested addition. This does not negate Sinai’s observation that Q. 37:112–113 are ‘removable from their context without generating a non sequitur’, but it questions whether their removal can be justified on structural grounds.

14 See Sinai, 'Eschatological Kerygma'.

15 Sadeghi takes as a given the location of the breaks between the 194 blocks into which Bazargan divides the Qur'an's 119 suras: as he explains, 'increasing precision is a long-term goal, and this essay represents only the beginning of the journey' (see Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur'ān', pp. 237–238). In addition to the works of Theodor Nöldeke and Richard Bell, which will be discussed below, Tilman Nagel also investigated the division of the Qur'an into compositional layers in his 1983 volume, *Der Koran: Einführung—Texte—Erläuterungen*. The example he provides is that of *Sūrat al-Muzzammil* (Q. 73) which, as Nagel explains it, has traditionally been considered to be an entirely Meccan sura with the exception of three Medinan verses: Q. 73:10, Q. 73:11, and Q. 73:20. Nagel agrees with the tradition's assessment of Q. 73:20 'on account of its length and its complexity' ('durch seine Länge und Unübersichtlichkeit') (see Nagel, *Der Koran*, p. 32). Nagel questions the rationale behind the inclusion of verses 10 and 11 in this statement of the sura's chronology, stating that 'it is not immediately apparent why verses 10 and 11 should have originated in Medina' ('Es ist nicht recht einzusehen, warum die Verse 10 und 11 in Medina entstanden sein sollen') (Nagel, *Der Koran*, p. 33). Instead he posits the presence within the sura of three sections, thematically connected but nonetheless stylistically separated. Verses 1–14, Nagel argues, belong to the Early Period, 'in form and content' (Nagel, *Der Koran*, p. 32). Verses 15–19, meanwhile, he sees as a distinct pericope, on account of the 'agitated, disjointed style' ('erregte, abgerissene Ausdrucksweise') of this section of the sura (see Nagel, *Der Koran*, p. 32). Verse 20 is then viewed as a much later addition, in line with the traditional view.

16 These being suras 1 (block 43), 8 (block 143), 11 (block 118), 12 (block 130), 13 (block 168), 21 (block 94), 25 (block 102), 27 (block 114), 29 (block 126), 32 (block 109), 36 (block 88), 37 (block 58), 42 (block 138), 45 (block 116), 47 (block 142), 48 (block 170), 49 (block 173), 50 (block 87), 54 (block 71), 56 (block 40), 57 (block 161), 58 (block 181), 59 (block 156), 60 (block 184), 61 (block 144), 62 (block 150), 63 (block 152), 64 (block 117), 66 (block 186), 67 (block 104), 71 (block 77), 72 (block 95), 76 (block 85), 77 (block 25), 80 (block 32), 81 (block 15), 83 (block 62), 84 (block 31), 90 (block 49), 92 (block 21), 93 (block 17), 94 (block 16), 95 (block 38), 97 (block 69), 98 (block 99), 99 (block 54), 100 (block 44), 101 (block 57), 104 (block 33), 105 (block 51), 106 (block 28), 107 (block 22), 108 (block 12), 109 (block 34), 110 (block 179), 111 (block 47), 112 (block 7), 113 (block 48), and 114 (block 18); Sadeghi suggests the addition of Sura 96 (forming a restored block 35) to this (see Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur'ān', p. 235).

17 Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur'ān', p. 232.

18 Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qur'ān*, vol. 2, pp. 2–3. In Sadeghi's 2011 article, Sadeghi divides eighteen of Bazargan's posited blocks in half, and assesses the degree of statistical conformity between the two halves of each of these blocks. The results of this investigation are extremely encouraging: despite Bazargan's partial reliance on thematic concerns, his chronological blocks would appear to possess a high degree of stylistic uniformity. See Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur'ān', pp. 257–263.

19 Bazargan calculated the mean verse length by dividing the total number of words by the total number of verses in each posited block (Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur'ān', p. 231).

20 Sadeghi provides the specific equation on p. 231.

21 Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur'ān', p. 215. He explicitly warns that, 'The claim is not that the passages in one cluster all came after those in the preceding clusters, but that only on average they did so. In addition, the chronology of the passages *within* a cluster is indeterminate' (Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur'ān', p. 228).

22 Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān', p. 237.

23 Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān', p. 286.

24 Sadeghi excludes Group 1 (Bazargan's blocks 2–16) from his conclusions on three grounds: its small size (a mere 415 words), its relatively exposed position at the beginning of the proposed trajectory of stylistic development, and the extremely high proportion of Meccan sura introductions—which, Sadeghi posits, may represent their own distinct stylistic register—within its verses. Bazargan's block 1 (Q. 96:1–5), which is placed at the beginning of his diachronic trajectory for historical rather than stylistic reasons, is returned by Sadeghi to its statistically-informed location between blocks 36 and 37. See Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān', pp. 235, 283, and 287.

25 Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān*, vol. 2, p. 1. See Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān', pp. 230–232 for a clear explanation of Bazargan's concept of the 'characteristic curve' of a sura.

26 As Sadeghi observes (see Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān', p. 236), Bazargan would appear to have been working from a copy of the Qur'an whose verse numbers coincide (as far as Sura 79) with the Flügel edition; these have been adjusted throughout to accord with the standard Cairo edition of the text. Further to the divisions listed above, there are instances where several consecutive units were re-amalgamated due to their similar verse length. Thus Bazargan originally proposes potential divisions at verses 103/104, 123/124, and 141/142 within the Children of Israel section of the sura, and three further divisions within the Community of Believers section of the sura (at 167/168, 214/215, and 218/219) (see Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān*, vol. 2, pp. 2–4). Bazargan would seem to remove entirely from his statistical calculations the short, and thus, he posits, possibly interpolatory, verse 192. This will be discussed in more detail below (see Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān*, vol. 2, pp. 5–7).

27 It should be noted that Bazargan first put thematically coherent text units of more or less similar verse length together into these five blocks, and then made the statistical calculations by which these text units would be assigned to their chronological blocks (see Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān*, vol. 2, pp. 3–4). Bazargan's blocks 113, 139, 164, 183, and 192 coincide with Sadeghi's groups 8, 13, 17, 21, and 22 (see Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qur<sup>ʿ</sup>ān', p. 238).

28 Stefanidis, 'The Qur'an Made Linear', pp. 7–8. The *broad* parameters of Nöldeke's scheme have, however, largely been corroborated by subsequent research and continue to function as a working paradigm.

29 I have adjusted Nöldeke's Flügel verse numbers to match those of the standard Egyptian edition.

30 As has been stated at various junctures within this essay, stylistic indicators of textual divide within *al-Baqara* require assessment on an incidence-by-incidence basis: any interruption in the flow of discourse can indicate the presence of a transition, although this does not mean that every interruption does so. The tentative thesis that the sudden intrusion of *-CāC fāṣilas* within *Sūrat al-Baqara* served to acknowledge the presence of new material within a pre-existing textual block is certainly plausible; where this sits within the overlapping thesis that the mean verse length of thematically defined blocks might be utilised in order to discern diachronic layers in the text remains to be fully ascertained.

31 Outside of Bazargan's discussion of the units into which he breaks *al-Baqara*, within his statistical analysis of the sura's blocks Bazargan raises one further occasion of diachronic fracturing, at Q. 2:192 (*If they desist—God is Forgiving and Merciful*). Bazargan removes this verse from his statistical analysis of Block 139, without seemingly placing it in another Block. He argues that this verse is an explanatory interpolation within the textual unit that runs

from Q. 2:190–195 (see Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qurʾān*, vol. 2, p. 5). Although Q. 2:192 is significantly shorter than the verses that surround it, Bazargan's thesis that average verse length can indicate chronology only in large aggregates of text holds sway: no suggestion is made that this shorter verse might be earlier than the longer verses that abut it, nor is the verse relocated to another Block. Bazargan simply removes it from his statistical analysis. Bazargan also exercises editorial judgement with regard to Q. 2:257 (*God is the protector of those who believe. He brings them out of the darkness into the light. Those who do not believe—their protectors are idols. They bring them out of the light into the darkness. Those are the companions of the Fire, in which they will dwell for ever*). In Bazargan's copy of the Qur'an, this verse is broken up into two short verses (numbered Q. 2:258–259, just as in the Flügel edition). Bazargan points out that, at 9 and 15 words respectively, these two verses distort the statistical curve of the textual block within which their surrounding material has been placed. Bazargan's solution here is to combine these particular verses into one. Although he does not cite the existence of a textual precedent for this, he cannot have been unaware of the fact that other editions of the Qur'an do list these two verses as one (see Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qurʾān*, vol. 2, p. 7). Nöldeke includes verse 192 within a supposed text block presenting 'a conglomerate of ordinances, all relating to the sacred territory of Mecca' that he runs from verses 189–200a (to *aw ashadda dhikran*) (see Nöldeke, *History*, p. 147). Bell suggests Q. 2:192 as a substitute for verse 193, intended to replace it.

32 For Bazargan's method of word-counting, see Sadeghi, 'The Chronology of the Qurʾān', p. 231.

33 It should be borne in mind that Bazargan's calculations are enacted across all the verses in a particular group, not on a unit-by-unit basis as is being done here. The mean verse lengths provided above are for illustrative purposes only.

34 Robinson, *Discovering the Qur'an*, p. 211.

35 Zahniser, 'Major Transitions and Thematic Borders', pp. 34–38, 46.

36 Reda El-Tahry, 'Textual Integrity and Coherence', pp. 94–97.

37 Nöldeke describes this cluster as comprising verses 246–256, but he does not remove verse 257 from the smaller unit 254–257. It seems likely that he intended to suggest verse 257 as a closer to the unit 246–257, as is specified for verse 186 and the preceding unit 178–185. See Nöldeke, *History*, pp. 149–150, and cf. p. 146.

38 Bazargan, for instance, classifies it as 'matters of faith' (see Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qurʾān*, vol. 2, p. 7).

39 Zahniser, 'Major Transitions and Thematic Borders', pp. 34 and 42.

40 Zahniser, 'Major Transitions and Thematic Borders', p. 51, n. 47.

41 This formula also opens verses 8 and 207.

42 It may be worthy of note that verse 200, which also contains the phrase *wa-mina'l-nās man ...*, although it does not *open* with it, also terminates in a *-CāC khātima*. This particular section of *al-Baqara* is unusual for its heavy use of enjambment. At first glance, it seems as if it might be possible to posit an insertion of verses terminating in *-CāC khātimas* that bifurcated an original verse 200a/203.

43 It is worth observing, however, that both Nöldeke and Bell nonetheless suggest that verse 243 sits at the beginning of a thematic unit. Nöldeke proposes a unit that spans verses 243–260; Bell designates verses 243–257 in generic terms as a passage designed to illustrate the duty of fighting. He nonetheless labels verses 243, 244, 245, 252–253, 254, 255, and 256–257 as possessing no internal connectivity or, one must assume, directionality.

44 Zahniser points to the presence of an *a-lam tara* formula at Q. 4:44 in Islahi/Mir's breakdown of *Sūrat al-Nisā'* (see Zahniser, 'Major Transitions and Thematic Borders', p. 30).

45 For the suggestion that verses with similar verse lengths might have originally been unified, see Bazargan, *Sayr-i taḥawwul-i Qurʾān*, vol. 2, p. 2.

46 Nor is it inconceivable that the ‘older’ stylistic layer (Blocks 113, 139, and 183) of the *yā ayyuhāʾlladhīna āmanū* part of the sura might be exemplified, in part, by a series of verses which open with plural imperative commands.

47 According to Bazargan’s calculations, all three of these verses reside in different blocks. Q. 2:190 is in Block 139; Q. 2:244 is in Block 113; and Q. 2:246 is in Block 192.

48 For a comparable example of the layering of unifying elements, see Klar, ‘Re-examining Textual Boundaries’.

49 Note that in Q. 64:17 this is in fact the near-variant *if you make a good loan to God (in tuqrīdūʾllāha qarḍan ḥasanan)*. The form IV verb *aqrāda* only occurs in the Qurʾan within the expression *give God a good loan (yuqrīduʾllāha qarḍan ḥasanan)*, and only in suras considered to be Medinan, thus Q. 2:245, Q. 5:12, Q. 57:11, Q. 57:18, and Q. 64:17, with the exception of Q. 73:20, itself considered to be a Medinan interpolation within a Meccan sura.

50 In Q. 57:18 this is *yuḍāʾifahu lahum*, in Q. 64:17 *yuḍāʾifahu lakum*.

51 One section of Q. 2:244–245 is unusual, however: the statement, *It is God who withholds and God who gives abundantly (waʾllāhu yaqbiḍu wa-yabṣuṭu)*.

52 Reda El-Tahry, ‘Textual Integrity and Coherence’, p. 119.

53 Zahniser, ‘Major Transitions and Thematic Borders’, p. 31.

54 Reda El-Tahry, ‘Textual Integrity and Coherence’, p. 119.

55 Reda El-Tahry, ‘Textual Integrity and Coherence’, pp. 97–104.

56 The fact that the majority of rhyme’s borders do not fall on major structural divides I would not see as an immediate cause for concern. That the majority of Qurʾanic suras developed in a piecemeal fashion—be that through the presence of a variety of authors, or due to a gradual process of revelation—is almost universally accepted. Suras in their final forms represent evident wholes, but I would argue that this does not carry with it any requirement for stylistic (or thematic) *uniformity* within them. On the contrary, it has—in my view—been illustrated above that *Sūrat al-Baqara* exhibits a blend of unifying and distinguishing features. The overlapping presence of a number of layers of structural indicators should not occasion alarm.

57 See Zahniser, ‘Major Transitions and Thematic Borders’, pp. 30–31.

58 Reda El-Tahry, ‘Textual Integrity and Coherence’, p. 145.

59 In Bazargan’s terms, the border is between Block 164 and Block 139, and the relative scarcity of *al-Baqara* verses to reside in Bazargan’s Blocks 164 and 139 is worthy of immediate note. The latter block consists of a mere sixteen verses: Q. 2:30–39 (the Adam story), and Q. 2:190–195 (a command to fight in God’s cause). Block 164, meanwhile, sits in *al-Baqara* as a single unified entity, encompassing verses 40–152 alone.

60 It should nonetheless be noted that the major structural divide between predominantly earlier material and predominantly later material occurs, for Bazargan, at verses 163/164/165.

61 The distinction between section openers and diachronic layers should be made explicit here. Diachronic layers may indicate the presence of insertions into pre-existing structural blocks, and are not required to be conceptualised as potential section openers.

62 Cf. *a-lam nashraḥ* (Q. 94:1), *a-raʾayta* (Q. 107:1), *hal ...* (Q. 76:1 and Q. 88:1), and *ʿammā tasāʾalūn* (Q. 78:1): it was clearly considered acceptable practice to open a sura with a question.

63 Cf. Q. 4:1, Q. 5:1, Q. 22:1, Q. 33:1, Q. 49:1, Q. 60:1, Q. 65:1, Q. 66:1, Q. 73:1, and Q. 74:1.

64 Thus she approaches *al-Baqara* as 'a whole compositional unit' (Reda El-Tahry, 'Textual Integrity and Coherence', p. i). The sura was compiled into its final form, she writes, by 'a single author or multiple redactors' in accordance with a 'compositional schema' or 'preconceived plan' (Reda El-Tahry, 'Textual Integrity and Coherence', p. 3). The onus to establish the stages of this developmental process or define the incremental stages of this plan is thereby removed.

65 This thesis has been convincingly argued by scholars such as Angelika Neuwirth and Devin Stewart. See, for example, Neuwirth, 'Structural, Linguistic and Literary Features', esp. p. 111; Stewart, 'Wansbrough, Bultmann, and the Theory of Variant Traditions'.

66 See Sinai, 'Inner-Qur'anic Chronology'.

67 Similarly, the question of the hypocrites (*al-munāfiqūn*), raised in Q. 33:1, is returned to in the sura's final verse, Q. 33:73. There is also a suggestion of a compositional ring in Q. 68, which opens and closes with a reference to the Prophet's being a madman (*majnūn*); in Q. 59, which opens and closes with the statement that God is Almighty and Wise (*wa-huwa'l-ʿazīzu'l-ḥakīm*); in Q. 42, which opens and closes with the statement that God possesses all that is in the heavens and the earth (*lahu mā fī'l-samāwāti wa-mā fī'l-arḍ*); and arguably with the reference to *rabb* at the opening and close of Q. 37. Similarly, the fate of those who tell lies (*al-kādhībīn ... kadhīban ... kadhhibā ...*) marks the opening and the close of Q. 29; mention of the Book (*al-kitāb*) marks the opening and close of Q. 13; the command to worship (*ʿabada*) marks the opening and close of Q. 11. The majority of Qur'anic suras, however, would appear to deliver a linear message.

68 It should be noted that the *fāṣilas* at the close of Q. 60 run *mu'minīn—rahīm—al-qubūr*: there is no non-rhyming *fāṣila* prior to the formula of address in that instance. The situation at the close of Q. 33 is however much more complicated. The closure of the ring that is suggested by the repetition of the command to be mindful of God does not occur at the very end of the sura; the preceding verse also opens with the formula of address *yā ayyuhā'alladhīna āmanū*; and the entire sura rhymes, not predominantly in the masculine plural, but predominantly in *CaCūīCā*. I would hesitate, on these grounds, to attempt to utilise Q. 33 as a parallel for Q. 2 in this matter.

69 See 'Sura Structure II: Considerations of Rhyme' above.

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