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The Unknown Known: Some Groundwork for Interpreting the Medinan Qur'an*

Nicolai SINAI

INTRODUCTION

As scholars have now amply demonstrated, the Qur'anic corpus exhibits firm links with a multitude of late antique traditions. Especially Syriac literature, which has been mined with renewed vigour over the course of the last decade or so, has turned out to be a veritable wellspring of intersecting material that appears far from running dry.¹ Its relevance is not confined to miscellaneous narratives but extends to Qur'anic eschatology, which constitutes the very epicentre of at least parts of the Qur'an.² In keeping with such findings, the Qur'an is now increasingly being described as a "text of late antiquity," as the title of a recent monograph puts it.³ This novel placement of the Qur'an is sometimes accompanied by an emphasis on "the struggles of the classical *mufasssirūn* to understand significant elements of the Qur'ān,"⁴ suggesting that even the earliest layer of the Islamic tradition approaches the Qur'an from across

* My translations of Qur'anic passages are free adaptations from JONES Alan (tr.) (2007), *The Qur'ān*, Gibb Memorial Trust [Cambridge]. Work on this article was supported by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (grant reference AH/M011305/1).

¹ E.g., GRIFFITH Sidney (2008), "Christian Lore and the Arabic Qur'ān: The Companions of the Cave in *Sūrat al-Kahf* and in Syriac Christian Tradition," in REYNOLDS Gabriel S. (ed.), *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*, Routledge, Abingdon, p. 109-137 and VAN BLADEL Kevin (2008), "The Alexander Legend in the Qur'ān 18:83-102," in REYNOLDS, *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*, p. 175-203; REYNOLDS Gabriel S. (2010), *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, Routledge, Abingdon; WITZTUM Joseph (2011), "Joseph Among the Ishmaelites: Q 12 in Light of Syriac Sources," in REYNOLDS Gabriel S. (ed.), *New Perspectives on the Qur'ān: The Qur'ān in its Historical Context 2*, Routledge, Abingdon, p. 425-448; EL-BADAWI Emran I. (2014), *The Qur'ān and the Aramaic Gospel Traditions*, Routledge, Abingdon.

² ANDRAE Tor (1926), *Der Ursprung des Islams und das Christentum*, Almqvist & Wiksells, Uppsala and SINAI Nicolai, "The Eschatological Kerygma of the Early Qur'an," in AMIRAV Hagit, GRYPEOU Emmanouela and STROUMSA Guy (eds.), *Apocalypticism and Eschatology in the Abrahamic Religions (6th-8th cent. C.E.)*, Peeters, Leuven (forthcoming).

³ NEUWIRTH Angelika (2010), *Der Koran als Text der Spätantike: Ein europäischer Zugang*, Verlag der Weltreligionen, Berlin.

⁴ REYNOLDS, *The Qur'ān and Its Biblical Subtext*, p. 200. The same point is already made in CRONE Patricia (1994), "Two Legal Problems Bearing on the Early History of the Qur'ān," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam (JSAL)* 18, p. 1-37; see also MADIGAN Daniel (2001), *The Qur'ān's Self Image: Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, p. 51, who speaks of a "gap in comprehension".

a significant cultural and linguistic gap. Hence, quite irrespective of whether or not one accepts the traditional dating and localisation of the Qur'an's emergence, it may well seem that the Qur'anic corpus is a text that, properly understood, is more solidly anchored in the world of late antiquity rather than belonging with the subsequent Islamic tradition, despite the latter's highly creative and sophisticated efforts at exegetical appropriation. The Qur'an, so it might appear, is a text that precedes Islam as we know it, and Islam a post-Qur'anic phenomenon.

I do not wish to dispute either the Qur'an's close connection to late antique, in particular Syriac, literature nor the view that a historical-critical understanding of specific Qur'anic passages must resolutely resist the temptation of projecting onto them later Islamic narratives and lexical explanations, which may well be products of popular storytelling, interpretive guesswork, or an attempt to harness scripture to certain theological and legal agendas.⁵ Yet it is worth counterbalancing all of this by insisting on the Qur'an's significant continuities with classical Islam. Apart from such obvious links as belief in the Last Judgement and a forceful emphasis on the unity of God, the most specific and significant such continuities are, in my view, the following ones: (i) an incipient demarcation of the Qur'anic Messenger's followers as a separate religious community; (ii) a strong insistence on the duty of obedience to the Messenger; and (iii) the notion that revelation is meant to function as a source of detailed behavioural guidance.⁶ I shall lead up to the proper subject of this article, the Medinan Qur'an, by briefly commenting on each of these three themes.

(i) The Messenger's followers as a separate religious community: Various Qur'anic passages implicitly or explicitly demarcate the Messenger's adherents, who are generally labelled "the Believers" (*al-mu'minūn*, *alladhīna āmanū*) par excellence, from their Biblically based sibling communities, the Jews and the Christians.⁷ It must be conceded that the Qur'anic presentation of Jews and Christians is "far from

⁵ This is not meant to deny that the Islamic tradition also contains important linguistic and literary insights from which contemporary historical-critical interpreters may benefit. Yet I would maintain that these insights are due to the extraordinary sophistication and concentration of interpretive attention built up throughout a centuries-long exegetical tradition, not to the fact that this tradition reliably preserves the way in which the Qur'anic proclamations would have been understood by their original audience.

⁶ Throughout this article, I shall use the expression "the Messenger" to refer to the human individual whom the text frequently addresses in the second person singular and whom four verses call "Muhammad" (Q. 3:144, 33:40, 47:2, and 48:29). My terminology is obviously derived from the Arabic title *al-rasūl*. For the sake of simplicity, I shall often use the expression "the Messenger" even when discussing passages in which the individual in question is addressed or referred to as "the Prophet" (*al-nabiyy*). I consider the underlying assumption that the Messenger is identical with the Prophet to be uncontroversial.

⁷ Fred Donner, whose work on communal identity in the Qur'an and early Islam is briefly referenced later in this paragraph, would presumably reject this equation. For more detailed comments, see Appendix 1.

uniform,”⁸ and according to Fred Donner the Qur'an actually provides “no reason to think that the Believers viewed themselves as constituting a new or separate religious confession”.⁹ Nevertheless, a considerable number of Qur'anic passages articulate a highly critical and even polemical attitude towards Jews and Christians. For instance, the divinity of Christ, arguably the core belief of mainstream Christianity, is rejected and branded as unbelief (*Q.* 4:171-172, 5:17, 5:72-77, 5:116-118, 9:30-31), while the “Children of Israel” are accused of serial disobedience to God (*Q.* 2:47-66) and Jewish law is demoted to the function of a divine punishment for Jewish wrongdoing (*Q.* 4:160-161, 6:146; see also 16:118).¹⁰ One passage accuses both Jews and Christians of virtually deifying their leadership, the “rabbis and monks,” who are themselves harshly reproached (*Q.* 9:30-34). There is also an explicit drawing of intercommunal borders. The most unequivocal case is probably *Q.* 5:51, which bluntly admonishes the Believers not to take the Jews and Christians as friends. It is true that this verse is exceptionally severe¹¹ and that it stands in evident tension with an earlier pronouncement in the same sura that permits limited commensality and intermarriage with the People of the Scripture (*Q.* 5:5), which would entail much more permeable intercommunal boundaries.¹² Still, that the Messenger's followers at some point during the Qur'an's genesis began to form a separate religious community also emerges from *Q.* 2:62, 5:69, and 22:17, all of which list “the Believers”

⁸ RUBIN Uri (2003), “Jews and Judaism,” in MCAULIFFE Jane Dammen (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, 6 vol., Brill, Leiden [2001-2006], vol. III, p. 21-34, quoting p. 22.

⁹ DONNER Fred M. (2010), *Muhammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge (Mass.), p. 69. See also his earlier article *id.* (2002-2003), “From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Islamic Community,” *Al-Abhath* 50-51, p. 9-53. Although Donner's hypothesis is captivating, I am ultimately unconvinced that it holds true. See Appendix 1 for additional comments.

¹⁰ A different assessment is articulated by *Q.* 3:93, according to which the Israelites themselves forbade certain foods, despite the fact that they were licit to them. See also *Q.* 10:59, although this verse does not specifically refer to Jewish dietary prohibitions. – For a survey of the Qur'anic presentation of Jews and Christians see RUBIN, “Jews and Judaism,” and GRIFFITH Sidney H. (2001), “Christians and Christianity,” in MCAULIFFE (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. I, p. 307-316. The weight of some of the polemical passages just referenced is noted in DONNER, *Muhammad and the Believers*, p. 77 and *id.*, “From Believers to Muslims,” p. 24-28; see also Appendix 1.

¹¹ *Q.* 5:57 formulates a weaker demand, requiring demarcation only from those Scripturalists who mock the religion of the Believers.

¹² See FREIDENREICH David M. (2011), *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law*, University of California Press, Berkeley, p. 140, who speaks of “a partially porous boundary between believers and People of the Book by allowing food exchange across this border”. For a detailed analysis of the opening section of *Q.* 5, which also comments on the tension between 5:5 and 5:51, see SINAI Nicolai, “Processes of Literary Growth and Editorial Expansion in Two Medinan Surahs,” in BAKHOS Carol and COOK Michael (eds.), *Islam and its Past: Jāhiliyya and Late Antiquity in Early Muslim Sources*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (forthcoming).

alongside the Jews, Christians, Magians, and Sabians (whoever the latter may be).¹³ Moreover, *Q.* 3:110 explicitly refers to the Believers (*cf.* the vocative “O you who believe” in 3:102) as a community that is implied to be distinct from the “People of the Scripture” (*ahl al-kitāb*), i.e., from Jews and Christians:

You [plural] are the best community brought forth for mankind.
 You enjoin what is commonly accepted,
 you forbid what is rejected,
 and you believe in God.
 Had the People of the Scripture believed, it would have been better for them.
 Some of them are believers, but most of them are profligate.¹⁴

As illustrated by the final segment of the preceding quotation, the Qur’an does allow that some Jews and Christians could, or actually do, “believe in God and what has been sent down to you [plural]” (*Q.* 3:199); as the text says elsewhere, these are to be counted “among the righteous” who will not be “treated ungratefully” in the hereafter (*Q.* 3:113-115; see also 5:66, 5:82-86, and 7:159).¹⁵ Yet it seems clear enough that in order to qualify as a proper “Believer,” a Jew or Christian would have to purge his beliefs and practices in accordance with unequivocal Qur’anic requirements (e.g., by renouncing the divinity of Christ) and, above all, to accept the prophetic authority of the Messenger and the Qur’anic revelations.¹⁶ The fact that, as implied by *Q.* 3:199 and 5:82-86, some of the Messenger’s Jewish or Christian

¹³ On the identity of the Sabians, see DE BLOIS François (1995), “The ‘Sabians’ (*Ṣābi’ūn*) in Pre-Islamic Arabia,” *Acta Orientalia* 56, p. 39-61. On Donner’s own treatment of *Q.* 2:62 and 5:69, see Appendix 1.

¹⁴ Both *Q.* 3:104 and 2:143 likewise label the Qur’an’s addressees an *umma* but do not explicitly mark them off from the Scripturalists.

¹⁵ Verses presupposing the real existence or at least the possibility of believing Jews and Christians are a key exhibit in Fred Donner’s argument that the Believers did not originally possess a distinct confessional identity but were an ecumenical movement based on monotheism, belief in the Day of Judgement, and pious behaviour that included Jews and Christians as full members (see Appendix). – The Qur’an seems to vacillate on the question whether such believing Jews or Christians really exist or are simply an abstract possibility. The latter is suggested by *Q.* 5:65-66 (“Had the People of the Scripture believed and been god-fearing ... / Had they observed the Torah and the Gospel ...”). Donner’s translation of this verse (“From Believers to Muslims,” p. 20) renders *wa-law anna ahla al-kitābi āmanū wa-ittaḡaw* and *wa-law annahum aqāmū* as real or indicative conditionals (“If the People of the Scripture believe and are pious ...”) rather than as unreal or counterfactual conditionals (“Were the People of the Scripture to believe and be pious ...”). However, the particle *law* would seem to point towards a counterfactual construal. A similar counterfactual occurs in *Q.* 3:110 (cited above), where it is however followed by an explicit admission that some of the People of the Scripture are indeed believers.

¹⁶ This becomes particularly clear in the explicit statements about the Messenger’s mission to the Scripturalists in *Q.* 5:15-16 and 5:19, which form a ring around two brief units criticising the Christian belief in the divinity of Jesus as well as Jewish and Christian claims to superiority (“We are the children of God and the ones beloved to him”). The assertion that the Messenger has been given the mandate to “provide clarity to” (*bayyana*, used in 5:15 and 5:19) the Scripturalists implies that he, rather than, say, the Christian ecclesiastical hierarchy or Rabbinic scholars, is to be the ultimate judge of the content of God’s revelation.

contemporaries were prepared to submit to these demands does not call into doubt that they thereby came to join a distinct Qur'anic *umma*. All things considered, then, the emergence of Islam as an independent member of the family of Biblically based religions is visible already in the Qur'an.¹⁷

(ii) **Obedience to the Messenger:** About twenty verses enjoin the Qur'anic audience to obey "the Messenger," who is often bracketed together with God in the phrase "God and His / the Messenger" (e.g., *Q.* 3:32.132, 4:13.59.69, 5:92 etc.).¹⁸ That obedience to the Messenger (who is called "Muhammad" in *Q.* 3:144, 33:40, 47:2, and 48:29) equals obedience to God is explicitly and categorically stated in *Q.* 4:80.¹⁹ *Q.* 33:21 even calls the Messenger an "exemplar" (*uswa*) to the Believers,²⁰ implying that they are not only to obey but also to emulate him. While the Qur'an does not explain whether and how obedience to, and emulation of, the Messenger continues to be obligatory after his future demise (envisaged in *Q.* 3:144), the foregoing passages do anticipate the notion of a normative practice of Muhammad, which was of course an important factor in the post-Qur'anic emergence of the hadith canon.

(iii) **Revelation as a source of detailed behavioural prescriptions:** While some Qur'anic passages display what has been described as a "minimalist" attitude towards law,²¹ a significant amount of material—much of which is found in suras 2, 4, and 5—displays a marked interest in the detailed regulation of human behaviour, not only regarding ritual questions (dietary taboos, pilgrimage, ablution before prayer etc.) but also pertaining to wider issues of social life (e.g., marriage, divorce, and inheritance). The rationale behind such prescriptive material is set out in a number of passages insisting that the revelations imparted to the Messenger, like previous revelations, are meant to function as a source of "adjudication" (*h-k-m*) of concrete practical issues and communal disputes (*Q.* 3:23, 4:59-61.65, 5:41-50, 24:48.51).²²

¹⁷ To avoid misunderstanding, this is not to claim that Muhammad's followers are consistently demarcated as a distinct religious community throughout the *entire* Qur'an.

¹⁸ On the bracketing together of God and the Messenger, see MARSHALL David (1999), *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers: A Qur'anic Study*, Curzon, Richmond, p. 165-170, building on WELCH Alford T. (1983), "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself: The Koranic Data," in VRYONIS Richard G. Jr. and HOVANNISIAN Speros (eds.), *Islam's Understanding of Itself*, Undena Publications, Malibu, p. 15-52, at 38-40. On the injunction to obey the Messenger see already HOROVITZ Josef (1926), *Koranische Untersuchungen*, de Gruyter, Berlin, p. 40-41.

¹⁹ For further verses demanding obedience to the Messenger or condemning opposition and disobedience to him see Figure 1 (in Appendix 2), column 8.

²⁰ The same expression is applied to Abraham "and those with him" in *Q.* 60:4.6.

²¹ LOWRY Joseph E. (2007), "When Less is More: Law and Commandment in *Sūrat al-An'ām*," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9, p. 22-42.

²² The significance of *Q.* 5:41-50 is underlined in GOITEIN Shlomo Dov (1968), "The Birth-Hour of Muslim Law," in *id.*, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*, Brill, Leiden, p. 126-134. W. Montgomery Watt

Both this understanding of what revelations are there for and the ‘halakhic’ character of many Qur’anic commands evidently foreshadows the prominent position of religious law in classical Islam. To make such an assertion is not to overlook that many specific rules of Islamic law are not directly derived from scriptural proof texts and that some even ignore or contradict pertinent Qur’anic statements.²³

What is relevant in the present context is that these key points of continuity between the Qur’an and later Islam are primarily characteristic of suras and passages that are traditionally associated with the Medinan stage of Muhammad’s career: in the absence of these parts of the corpus, the link between the Qur’an and the subsequent Islamic tradition would form a considerable historical puzzle. Due to their legal importance and their emphasis on the authority of Muhammad, allegedly Medinan verses and their distinctive phraseological and stylistic features are bound to have an instinctively familiar ring for most students of Islamic religious literature. In this sense, they constitute a thoroughly “known” quantity. On the other hand, despite its significance as the major link between the Qur’anic event and classical Islam, the Medinan Qur’an has proven relatively recalcitrant to scholarly analysis. For instance, it contains far less sustained narrative than the suras traditionally dated to the Meccan period, thus frequently failing to offer a good initial grip for a comparison with Biblical and post-Biblical traditions —an operation that often forms a crucial stepping stone on the way to a rich appreciation of what a given Qur’anic passage would have meant to its original audience. Moreover, many supposedly Medinan texts are apt to strike a casual reader as disparate, fragmentary, and

considers the “idea that one of the functions of a prophet is to mete out justice” to be articulated in two further passages, namely, in *Q.* 10:47 (“Each community has a messenger. When their messenger comes, judgement is passed between them (*quḍīya baynahum*) in equity, and they are not wronged.”) and *Q.* 42:10 (“Whatever you [plural] differ about, judgement on it (*hukmuhu*) belongs to God ...”); see WATT W. Montgomery (1956), *Muhammad at Medina*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, p. 229. Yet there are reasons to be sceptical about Watt’s construal of these two verses. Read in context, *Q.* 10:47 is most plausibly taken to refer not to the meting out of earthly justice but to God’s punishment of those who do not heed their messenger’s preaching. Similarly, *Q.* 42:10, when read in context, is likely to refer to doctrinal disputes (as exemplified, for instance, by the preceding verse’s criticism of those who believe that there are “protectors,” *awliyā’*, other than God). This is also corroborated by *Q.* 42:10’s overlap with verses like *Q.* 2:113 and *Q.* 3:55. – Note that the programmatic statements referenced in the main text tie in with the fact that some Qur’anic prescriptions explicitly style themselves as responding to inquiries emanating from the audience. See, for instance, *Q.* 4:127: “They consult you [singular] about women. Say: ...” (*yastaftūnaka fī al-nisā’i; qul: ...*). The responsa formula *yastaftūnaka* recurs in *Q.* 4:176. More common is the formula “they ask you about ...” (*yas’alūnaka ‘an*), which introduces quasi-legal prescriptions in *Q.* 2:189.215.217.219.220.222, 5:4, and 8:1. Another instance in which a Qur’anic adjudication explicitly presents itself as responding to a dispute in the audience is *Q.* 58:1.

²³ See CRONE, “Two Legal Problems Bearing on the Early History of the Qur’ān.”

repetitive; Western scholars have generally found it easier to appreciate the “passionate agitation” of the suras customarily regarded as early Meccan.²⁴

It seems justified, then, to call the Medinan Qur'an an “unknown known”. The objective of the present article is to lay (or, perhaps, relay) some groundwork for a more in-depth study of this part of the Qur'an. While such a study would above all have to consist in a detailed literary and intertextual analysis of specific Medinan texts, the challenge addressed in the present article is a much more basic one. It is undeniable that the ultimate origin of the distinction between a Meccan and a Medinan part of the Qur'an is in traditional Islamic scholarship, which preserves various attempts of subdividing the suras into the two categories *makkī* and *madanī* as well as traditions assigning specific Qur'anic passages to particular situations in Muhammad's life.²⁵ Consequently, any attempt to deploy the notion of “Medinan” suras and passages in the historical-critical study of the Qur'an must give rise to two crucial questions. Firstly, is it at all feasible to delimit a Medinan portion of the Qur'an if we bar ourselves, as I think we must, from doing so on the basis of extra-Qur'anic traditions of uncertain provenance? Secondly, even if it is possible to put forward a defensible set of criteria that would allow us to extricate a body of Medinan passages and suras, on what basis are we entitled to consider the latter to have been promulgated in the West Arabian town that has come to be known as Medina?

In what follows, I shall confine myself to the former question and bracket the latter. Although I am personally disinclined to dismiss the Hijazi origin traditionally ascribed to the Islamic scripture,²⁶ I shall here use the label “Medinan” simply as a convenient tag attached to a specific body of Qur'anic material. Thus, the primary aim of this article is to show that the Medinan Qur'an does indeed constitute a relatively well-defined subcorpus of the Islamic scripture, and to offer some preliminary considerations of its relationship to the remainder of the Qur'an. I should also acknowledge that much of what I have to say about the Medinan Qur'an is far from original; my reason for saying it nonetheless is the aspiration of placing the claims in question on a more stable foundation than earlier scholarship has perhaps been able to do.

²⁴ NÖLDEKE Theodor and SCHWALLY Friedrich (1909), *Geschichte des Qorāns*, vol. I: *Über den Ursprung des Qorāns*, Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Leipzig, p. 99.

²⁵ See ROBINSON Neal (2003), *Discovering the Qur'an: A Contemporary Approach to a Veiled Text*, 2nd ed., SCM Press, London, p. 69-72 and 61-64.

²⁶ For some evidence that might *prima facie* point in the opposite direction, see CRONE Patricia (2005), “How Did the Quranic Pagans Make a Living?,” *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies (BSOAS)* 68, p. 387-399 and SHOEMAKER Stephen J. (2003), “Christmas in the Qur'an: The Qur'anic Account of Jesus' Nativity and Palestinian Local Tradition,” *JSAI* 28, p. 11-39.

THE MEDINAN CONSTELLATION: AN INNER-QUR'ANIC PROFILE

We may begin our attempt to isolate a “Medinan” corpus of Qur’anic texts with the observation that much of the Islamic scripture has a pronouncedly detached and timeless quality: a divine speaker alternatively addresses an individual messenger or the latter’s audience, which is composed both of followers and “unbelieving” opponents; in doing so, narratives from the distant past are told, flashforwards to the eschatological future are presented, and polemical debates are conducted. Very few concrete details about the Messenger, the audience, and their position in time and space are given or may be inferred. Yet from certain parts of the Qur’an a much more definite setting emerges, defined by references —albeit highly allusive ones— to specific events, places, conflicts, and groups of agents. This setting I propose to call the “Medinan constellation,” for the simple reason that some of the suras in question imply that the Qur’anic Messenger and his adherents reside in a settlement called *al-madīna*, “the town” (*Q.* 9:101.120, 33:60-62, 63:8); one passage uses the name “Yathrib” for what appears to be the same place (*Q.* 33:12-13). The present section will attempt to draw up an inner-Qur’anic profile of this Medinan constellation, as a first step towards circumscribing a Medinan portion of the Qur’an.

It appears that the Messenger and at least some of his followers were not always resident at *al-madīna* but rather sought refuge there after having been “expelled” (*akhraja*) from their previous abode by the Unbelievers (*Q.* 2:191, 3:195, 9:13, 22:39-40, 60:1, 60:8-9). This ties in with a fair number of references to a group among the audience who are called “the Emigrants” (*al-muhājirūn*) or “those who have emigrated” (*alladhīna hājarū*) and to another group “who have sheltered and helped” the former and who are sometimes more concisely termed “the Helpers” (*al-anṣār*) (*Q.* 2:218, 3:195, 8:72-75, 9:20-22, 9:100, 9:117, 16:41, 16:110, 24:22, 33:6, 59:9). According to *Q.* 22:40-41 and 60:1, the Messenger and his followers were ousted on account of their religious convictions (see also *Q.* 60:8-9). A fuller retrospective portrayal of the Messenger’s situation prior to his expulsion is found in *Q.* 8:30 *sqq.*:

³⁰ [Recall] when those who disbelieve were plotting against you [singular] to bring you to a halt or to kill you or to expel you; they were plotting, and God was plotting; and God is the best of plotters.

³¹ When Our signs were recited to them they said, “We have heard. Were we to wish, we would say something like this. These are only fables of the ancients.”

³² [Recall] when they said, “O God,
if this is the truth from You,
rain down stones from the sky upon us
or bring a painful torment upon us!”

³³ But God would not punish them while you [singular] were among them;
nor will he punish them if they seek forgiveness.

³⁴ Yet why should God not punish them,
given that they bar access to the Inviolable Place of Prostration
although they are not its proper protectors?
Its proper protectors are those who fear God,
but most of them do not know.

Thus, the Messenger used to be “among” (*fī*, *Q.* 8:33) the Unbelievers, preaching God’s signs to them (*Q.* 8:31) and threatening them with a divine punishment that, despite the Unbelievers’ mockery, had failed to occur prior to the Messenger’s departure (*Q.* 8:32-33). Many sections of the Qur’an obviously match this pre-expulsion situation very well. For instance, *Q.* 6 and 16 present the Messenger engaged in polemical disputations with an unbelieving audience that revolve, among other things, around God’s “signs” (see *Q.* 6:4.21.25 etc. and 16:10-18 etc., corresponding to *Q.* 8:31) and in the course of which the Messenger’s admonishments get dismissed as “fables of the ancients” (see *Q.* 6:25 and 16:24, corresponding to *Q.* 8:31). In any case, the fact the Believers and the Unbelievers were, apparently, once cohabitants of the same place also explains why some passages imply the existence of kinship links between them (*Q.* 9:23-24, 9:113) and why the Believers need to be exhorted “not to take the Unbelievers as friends” (*Q.* 3:28, 4:89.144, 60:1; *cf.* also 60:4, where Abraham and “those with him” are held up as an example because of their categorical dissociation from their unbelieving compatriots).

Apart from the current abode of the Messenger and his community, a second place looms large in the Medinan constellation. This is a sanctuary designated as the “Inviolable House” (*al-bayt al-ḥarām*; *Q.* 5:2.97), “the Ancient House” (*al-bayt al-‘atīq*; *Q.* 22:29.33), or simply “the House” (e.g., *Q.* 2:125).²⁷ Other verses (*Q.* 2:144.149.150.191.196.217, 8:34, 48:27) speak of “the Inviolable Place of Prostration” (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*), a phrase that is reasonably taken to refer to the same place. This sanctuary, towards which the Qur’anic community is instructed to pray (*Q.* 2:144, 2:149-150), is a pilgrimage destination (*Q.* 2:158.196-200, 3:96-97, 5:1-2.94-97, 22:30-37), but also appears to be inhabited on a permanent basis

²⁷ See also the oath by *al-bayt al-ma’mūr* (“the house frequented [by pilgrims]”? “the house solicitously attended to”?) at *Q.* 52:4.

(*Q.* 9:17-19, 22:25).²⁸ At least in its present wording, one verse equates the sanctuary with the Ka'ba (*Q.* 5:97). Elsewhere it is connected with a place called 'Arafāt (*Q.* 2:198) and the "valley of Makka" (*Q.* 48:24-25), while another verse locates it *bi-bakka*, "at / in Bakka" (*Q.* 3:96-97).²⁹ Three passages connect the sanctuary with Abraham, who is said to have raised the "foundations" of the House, to have received divine instructions about the pilgrimage rites to be performed there, and to have prayed for those of his descendants inhabiting it (*Q.* 2:126-129, 14:35-37, 22:26-29). The rites associated with the sanctuary involve not only prayer (*Q.* 8:35, 14:37, 22:26) but also circumambulation (*Q.* 2:158, 22:26.29) and animal sacrifice (*Q.* 2:196, 5:2, 22:32-33.36-37).

According to some verses, the sanctuary is presently occupied by the Unbelievers, who "turn away from," or bar access to, it (*yašuddūna 'ani al-masjidi al-ḥarāmi*; *Q.* 8:34-35, 22:25). That the main victims of this "turning away" were the Qur'anic community emerges from *Q.* 48:25 and 5:2, both of which have *šaddūkum*, "turned you [plural] away". There are thus two chief grievances against the Unbelievers, namely, that of having expelled the Messenger and his followers and that of denying them access to the sanctuary. The two are explicitly linked in *Q.* 2:217, where "bar-ring access to the Inviolable Place of Prostration" and "expelling its inhabitants from it" appear side by side. Furthermore, *Q.* 2:191 enjoins the Believers to "expel" their enemies "from where they expelled you" and then specifies the circumstances under which it would be permissible to do battle at the Inviolable Place of Prostration; evidently, expulsion of the Unbelievers entailed the risk of combat operations in the immediate vicinity of the sanctuary. In sum, it seems highly likely that the place from which the Messenger and his adherents were expelled before arriving at *al-madīna* was none other than the sanctuary.

At some point, the Believers' lack of access to the sanctuary seems to have changed. Both *Q.* 48:25 and 5:2 employ the past tense when referring to the Unbelievers' turning the addressees away from the sanctuary, while *Q.* 48:27 triumphantly declares that God has now fulfilled the Messenger's vision (*ru'yā*) that the addressees would "safely enter the Inviolable Place of Prostration, shaving your heads and cutting short [your hair] (*muḥalliḳīna ru'ūsakum wa-muqaṣṣirīna*)," which in view of its

²⁸ I take the verbs *'amara* and *'akafa* to imply permanent residence. This is confirmed by Abraham's statement in *Q.* 14:37, "I have made some of my descendants dwell (*askantu min dhurriyyatī*) in a valley where there is no sown land close by Your Inviolable House," and by *Q.* 2:196, which mentions "those resident at the Inviolable Place of Prostration" (*ḥādirī al-masjidi al-ḥarāmi*).

²⁹ I would be inclined to explain the form *bakka* instead of *makka* as resulting from assimilation of the initial consonant to the preceding preposition *bi-*, but within the context of the present article the correctness of this derivation is immaterial.

partial overlap with *Q.* 2:196 implies performance of the pilgrimage rites. The pilgrimage instructions given in *Q.* 2:158.196-203, 5:1-2, and 22:27-37 likewise suggest that the Qur'anic community now has at least an imminent prospect of accessing the sanctuary. Interestingly, *Q.* 5:2 still envisages the Unbelievers as being present during the pilgrimage, as the verse enjoins the audience not to let themselves be provoked by their "hatred for a people [that has arisen] because they barred you from the Inviolable Place of Prostration". Finally, *Q.* 9:17-22 and 9:28 reflect a complete takeover of control by the Qur'anic community over the sanctuary, which is now declared off-limits to those who "associate" other beings with God (*al-mushrikūn*).

In line with the injunction to expel the Unbelievers "from where they expelled you" (*Q.* 2:191), the Believers' takeover of the sanctuary was apparently preceded by an extended military struggle. A handful of passages recall, in a highly allusive manner, God's assistance in what seem to be specific combat situations, sometimes in connection with place names like Badr or Ḥunayn (*Q.* 3:13, 3:121-128, 3:152-155, 3:166-168, 8:7-19, 8:42-44, 9:25-27, 48:18-26), and *Q.* 33:9-27 comments at length on an unsuccessful attack of "the confederates" (*al-aḥzāb*) on Yathrib; one may well describe all of these passages as constituting a veritable Qur'anic subgenre of battle-field reminiscences. Other verses summon the addressees to combat the Unbelievers and promise them assistance and eschatological reward, or chide them for their reluctance to fight.³⁰ We also encounter Qur'anic pronouncements on the division of spoils, on captives, on the performance of prayer during military campaigns, and on the question under what circumstances it is licit to fight during the sacred months or at the Inviolable Place of Prostration (*Q.* 2:191-194, 2:217-218, 4:101-103, 8:41, 8:67-71, and 9:36). *Q.* 57:10 distinguishes between those prepared to fight before and after *al-faṭḥ*, which is best rendered as God's "decisive intervention" and would here and in *Q.* 8:19 seem to refer to some sort of military victory, as may also be the case in *Q.* 48:1.18-19, 61:13, and 110:1.³¹ That the Qur'anic community is led in this fight by the Messenger is implied, *inter alia*, by *Q.* 48:10.18, where the Believers are said, in what is clearly a military context, to have sworn allegiance (*bāya'a*) to the Messenger.

³⁰ See *Q.* 2:190-194, 2:216-217, 3:139-151, 3:157-158, 3:169-171, 4:71-79, 4:84, 4:89-91, 4:95-96, 8:38-40.45, 8:55-66, 9:1-16, 9:36, 9:38-57, 9:81-96, 9:111, 9:119-123, 47:4-6.20-21.31.35, 48:11-17, 61:4.11.

³¹ That *faṭḥ* has the same meaning in *Q.* 48:1 as in 57:10 seems likely on account of the later reference in *Q.* 48 to the Messenger's and his followers' safe performance of the pilgrimage to the sanctuary (v. 27). The word is also used in an eschatological context (see *Q.* 32:28-29), but this does not seem to be the case in *Q.* 57:10 and, arguably, in the other three passages listed in the main text. On the etymology of the word see JEFFERY ARTHUR (2007), *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān*, Brill, Leiden (originally published: Oriental Institute, Baroda, 1938), p. 221-222.

While most of the fighting is apparently done against pagans,³² *Q.* 9:29 states that Jews and Christians are also to be fought until they have been made tributaries. More concretely, *Q.* 59:2-4 recall how God “expelled (*akhraja*) those who have disbelieved from among the People of the Scripture from their houses” because “they opposed God and His Messenger”.³³ In this context, too, we find comments on the conduct of war, which retrospectively permit the destruction of palm trees (59:5) and underline the Messenger’s entitlement to distribute spoils taken from the exiled Scripturalists (59:6-8). Another, or perhaps the same, act of expulsion figures in *Q.* 33:26-27.

Thus, at least during some stage of the Messenger’s activity, the Medinan settlement appears to have been inhabited by Jews and/or Christians. Such cohabitation is also implied by *Q.* 5:57-59, according to which the Believers are mocked by the Scripturalists when the Believers “call to prayer”. The Islamic tradition, of course, identifies the Medinan Scripturalists as Jews, a claim confirmed by the so-called “Constitution of Medina,” according to which the Medinan *umma* at some point included a number of Jewish tribes.³⁴ Some scriptural support for this scenario is perhaps provided by examining Qur’anic vocatives, i.e., second-person addresses formed with the particle *yā*, “O ... !”: apart from a dozen direct addresses of the Scripturalists in general (e.g., *Q.* 3:64.65.70 etc., and *Q.* 5:15.19 etc.), some verses contain vocatives specifically addressed to the Jews (*Q.* 62:6) and Israelites (*Q.* 2:40.47.122, 20:80), yet there are no vocatives addressing only the Christians. That relations with the Jews were more fraught than with the Christians is also reflected by *Q.* 5:82-86, where the Jews are accused of enmity towards the Believers while the Christians are credited with a much friendlier stance. Thus, rivalry with the Jews does appear to have been more significant than with the Christians. However, the reference to Christians submitting to the prophetic authority of the Messenger in *Q.* 5:83-84, if taken at face value, implies that there must also have been some presence of Christians in the Medinan milieu.

The composition of the population inhabiting the Medinan settlement was clearly complex. So far, we have encountered Emigrants, Helpers, and Scripturalists. A fourth group are “those who have committed hypocrisy” (*alladhīna nāfaqū*; *Q.* 3:167,

³² For a reassessment of the question whether or not the Unbelievers/Associators are pagans, and if so, pagans of what kind, see HAWTING Gerald R. (1999), *The Idea of Idolatry and the Emergence of Islam: From Polemic to History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge; CRONE Patricia (2010), “The Religion of the Qur’anic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities,” *Arabica* 57, p. 151-200; and *ead.* (2012), “The Quranic *Mushrikūn* and the Resurrection (Part I),” *BSOAS* 75, p. 445-472.

³³ The phrase “those who have disbelieved from among the People of the Scripture” recurs in *Q.* 98:1.6 and 2:105.

³⁴ See LECKER Michael (2004), *The “Constitution of Medina”: Muḥammad’s First Legal Document*, Darwin Press, Princeton, p. 135-181.

59:11) or, much more frequently, “the Hypocrites” (*al-munāfiqūn*; see, for instance, *Q.* 4:61.88 etc., 9:64.67 etc., 66:9).³⁵ The fact that the Hypocrites were residents of the same settlement as the Messenger emerges explicitly from *Q.* 33:60, which portrays them as “being neighbours” of him (*jāwara*). A near-synonym of the term “the Hypocrites” seems to be the phrase “those in whose hearts is sickness” (*alladhīna fī qulūbihim maraḍ*), which sometimes occurs together with the former expression (*Q.* 8:49, 33:12.60). Reproaches directed against the “Hypocrites” include mockery of the Believers’ religious commitment (*Q.* 8:49), defeatism (*Q.* 33:12), failure to dissociate themselves from the Unbelievers (*Q.* 4:138-139, see also 4:141) and from “those who disbelieve from among the people of the Scripture” (*Q.* 59:11), and undermining the authority of the Messenger (*Q.* 4:61). Unlike the Unbelievers, the “Hypocrites” seem to have paid lip service to the Messenger’s divine mission (*Q.* 63:1). Thus, the expression “the Hypocrites” —the Greek equivalent of which is familiar from, although used differently in, the New Testament³⁶— is unlikely to have designated a distinct group. Rather, the designation functions as a term of opprobrium for those inhabitants of *al-madīna* who were, for whatever reason, perceived to lack the existential commitment that the Qur’anic revelations required of their addressees. Tensions with the Hypocrites seem to have escalated from verbal polemics to physical violence: *Q.* 33:60-62 threaten them with expulsion from the Believers’ settlement and a subsequent state of war, and *Q.* 9:73 and 66:9 instruct the Messenger to “strive against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites,” thus assimilating the latter to outright enemies of the Qur’anic community.³⁷

A final group that figures in the Medinan constellation are the *a’rāb*, traditionally understood as bedouin, whom two verses (*Q.* 9:101.120) distinguish from “the people of *al-madīna*” and describe as being located “in your [plural] surroundings” (*ḥawlakum*). The *a’rāb* are thus best understood as inhabitants of the wider region

³⁵ For a brief comment on the question whether the term derives from Ethiopic or is originally Arabic see AMBROS Arne in collaboration with PROCHÁZKA Stephan (2004), *A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic*, Reichert, Wiesbaden, p. 273.

³⁶ See Matthew 6:2, 7:3.5, and the series of woes against the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 13. Closer to the Qur’anic use of the term is Ignatius, *Letter to the Magnesians*, ch. 3, which casually equates disobedience to the bishop with hypocrisy: “It is therefore fitting that you should, after no hypocritical fashion (*kata mēdemian hypokrisin*), obey [your bishop]”. The invective “hypocrite” (Syriac: *nāseb b-appē*) continues to be used in late antique Syriac literature; see, for instance, VÖÖBUS Arthur (1979) (ed. and tr.), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac*, 2 parts in 4 vol. (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium, 401-402 and 407-408), Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, Louvain, p. 129 (Syriac text), line 17. Somewhat similarly to the Qur’an, the term is here applied to members of the Christian community who fail to live up to the standards of behaviour expected of them.

³⁷ See also *Q.* 4:88-89, although this couplet is much more difficult to make satisfactory sense of: if v. 89 continues to talk about the Hypocrites, like the preceding verse, and if the Hypocrites are elsewhere assumed to be resident at *al-madīna*, why does v. 89 apparently require them to emigrate “in the path of God”?

around *al-madīna*, who at some point appear to have come under the control of the Messenger and his followers. Whether their lifestyle was indeed nomadic or not is difficult to assess on the basis of the Qur'an alone.³⁸ In any case, the *a'rāb* come in for mostly critical remarks (*Q.* 9:90.97-98.101, 48:11, 49:14), although *Q.* 9:99 clarifies that some of them are indeed believers.

It may be instructive to conclude this profile of the Medinan constellation by briefly comparing it to the pre-expulsion setting sketched in *Q.* 8:30 *sqq.*, cited above. As we have seen, the Medinan constellation has the Associators or Unbelievers reside in a different place than the Messenger and casts them as his and his adherents' military opponents. By contrast, the pre-expulsion constellation that is summarily described in *Q.* 8:30 *sqq.* places the Messenger in close proximity to the Associators, who are not fought but harshly polemicised against. I have also claimed, although not demonstrated in full detail, that this pre-expulsion setting constitutes a plausible context for the Qur'an's extended polemics against those who fail to acknowledge the unity of God or the reality of the Day of Judgment.³⁹ Hence, whether or not one accepts the traditional Hijazi framework for the emergence of the Qur'an, many portions of the corpus suggest one of two very different contextual settings. The basic configuration of these two settings clearly bears a recognisable resemblance to Mecca and Medina as portrayed by traditional Islamic sources, although this does not of course constitute proof for the historical accuracy of the full-blown traditional narrative.⁴⁰

Before progressing any further in the argument, there is a qualification to be made and an objection to be considered. To begin with the qualification, not all suras can be neatly allocated either to the Medinan constellation or to the pre-expulsion setting that the tradition associates with Mecca. For instance, some texts contain neither references to the Medinan constellation nor disputes with the Unbelievers, although this does not undermine the distinctness of the Medinan setting just profiled. More

³⁸ This aspect of the Medinan constellation has an interesting historical parallel in the epigraphic record of Ḥaṭrā (destroyed in 240 CE), which contains references to a region called '*rb*' and the inhabitants thereof, who are designated as '*rby*'. The term '*rb*', a similar use of which is found in the Old Syriac inscriptions in and around Edessa, is plausibly taken to refer to the regions surrounding the respective town; see MACDONALD Michael C. A. *et al.* (2015), "Arabs and Empires before the Sixth Century," in FISHER Greg (ed.), *Arabs and Empires before Islam*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 11-89, at p. 34-44, who argues against a default understanding of the '*rby*' as nomads.

³⁹ Given that the Messenger's arguments against his unbelieving interlocutors show considerable parallels to the admonishments that many suras ascribe to earlier messengers such as Noah, Abraham, and Moses (HOROVITZ, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, p. 8-9, 11, 18), one is tempted to assume that the latter's confrontation with the leaders or notables (*al-mala'*) of their peoples (e.g., *Q.* 23:24.33.46) also reflects an important aspect of the pre-expulsion constellation.

⁴⁰ One might, for instance, claim that the overlap is simply due to the fact that the Islamic tradition's portrayal of Meccan and Medina amplifies and is ultimately derived from the inner-Qur'anic data that I have reviewed above.

alarming is the fact that at least one sura, *Q. 22*, contains *both* clear references to the Medinan constellation (22:25, 22:38-41) and an extensive paraenetic engagement with the Unbelievers (starting at v. 42). As a matter of fact, we will have occasion to notice more cases of such Medinan/non-Medinan hybridity below. I shall put off consideration of possible explanations for this until the end; at the present juncture, I would merely like to point out that the general trend to which sura 22 constitutes an exception is clear enough: most suras containing references to the Medinan constellation do not contain paraenetic engagements with the Unbelievers. A trend is not refuted by a counterexample, although one must of course endeavour to explain how the counterexample is possible.

To move on to the objection, the foregoing profile of the Medinan constellation might be accused of illegitimately conflating a multitude of discrete Qur'anic references by regarding them as so many facets of one cohesive setting rather than considering the possibility that we could be faced with manifestations of two or more separate settings. I do appreciate the methodological validity of the concern, and it is indeed possible to query whether unspecific denunciations of the Hypocrites, general injunctions of the Qur'anic community to militancy against the Unbelievers, or historical reminders of Abraham's foundation of the House must necessarily be viewed as manifesting the full set of circumstances that I have just surveyed. Nonetheless, the different aspects of the Medinan constellation that have been rehearsed in this section do very plausibly add up. Moreover, many of them exhibit close textual links by virtue of appearing in the same sura or even the same sura section. Good examples for this are suras 8 and 9, in which most facets of the Medinan constellation make some appearance and which therefore support my assumption that the different themes covered in this section are mutually complementary details of an overarching picture. However, a proper assessment of how closely the different constituent aspects of the Medinan constellation are linked in specific suras would be quite impossible within the scope of this article. I leave it to future critics to undertake such an assessment in order to prove me wrong.

STYLISTIC AND LITERARY FEATURES OF THE MEDINAN TEXTS

If we were to catalogue all suras cited in the foregoing attempt to profile the Medinan constellation, the resulting set would be entirely contained in the list of suras that Gustav Weil and Theodor Nöldeke propose to date to the Medinan period.⁴¹ In fact, the number of suras from Weil's and Nöldeke's list of Medinan texts that have not yet made any appearance at all is very small (*Q.* 58, 64, 65, and 110), although there are a few additional suras from the Weil-Nöldeke list of Medinan texts that despite having been cited in the last section afford at most an extremely fleeting glimpse of the Medinan constellation. This applies, for instance, to *Q.* 62, which was only quoted on account of its direct address of the Jews in v. 6, and to *Q.* 66, one verse of which mentions the Hypocrites (v. 9). Nonetheless, a substantial core of Weil's and Nöldeke's inventory of Medinan suras is composed of texts that feature key facets of the Medinan constellation as just outlined. For a quick overview of this link, the reader is asked to refer to columns 4 and 5 in Figure 1, found in Appendix 2.

The link just pointed out is, of course, not coincidental: a principal criterion by which Weil and Nöldeke decided whether to assign a given sura to the Medinan period was precisely whether it mentioned or presupposed some aspect of the Medinan constellation. Where this was the case, Weil and Nöldeke generally assumed to be confronted with Qur'anic references to historical events to which they had independent and largely unproblematic access by means of extra-Qur'anic traditions, such as the *sīra* literature. In the current scholarly debate, this manner of proceeding would rightly be perceived as naively positivistic. Hence, one might worry that so far our attempt at isolating a distinct Medinan body of texts has achieved relatively little: all we have shown is that a certain number of suras disclose complementary facets of what appears to be a cohesive political and military setting, while other suras, for whatever reason, do not. This, one may well object, hardly suffices to mark out the texts in question as constituting a proper subcorpus of the Qur'an.

On the other hand, the profile of the Medinan constellation that has just been drawn up, on a purely inner-Qur'anic basis, offers us at least an initial handle. However, rather than simply mapping this Qur'anic material onto the *sīra* literature, as Weil and Nöldeke arguably do, what we now need to examine is whether at least

⁴¹ WEIL Gustav (1844), *Historisch-kritische Einleitung in den Koran*, Velhagen & Klasing, Bielefeld, p. 67-80; NÖLDEKE Theodor (1860), *Geschichte des Qorāns*, Verlag der Dieterichschen Buchhandlung, Göttingen, p. 121-174; NÖLDEKE and SCHWALLY, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, vol. I, p. 164-234. Nöldeke's list of Medinan suras, here re-arranged in their canonical order, is as follows: 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 22, 24, 33, 47, 48, 49, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 98, 110. The only difference between Weil and Nöldeke consists in Nöldeke's inclusion of sura 64.

a significant number of the suras that have so far appeared on our radar display significant further commonalities. Giving Weil and Nöldeke the benefit of the doubt, I shall look at the full list of texts that they deem to be Medinan rather than at the slightly less comprehensive list of suras in which the Medinan constellation is conspicuous. As it will turn out, at least some of Weil's and Nöldeke's Medinan texts, despite lacking clear references to the Medinan constellation, have significant other commonalities that make their inclusion into the Medinan Qur'an defensible.

To begin with, it can be demonstrated that the suras in question are stylistically relatively homogeneous —indeed, much more so than the Qur'an as a whole. This emerges from consideration of two important parameters of Qur'anic style, mean verse length and formulaic density. I shall begin with verse length, which fluctuates massively across the Qur'anic corpus yet is considerably more consistent within most suras. As I have argued elsewhere, the Qur'anic proclamations are likely to have displayed a gradual increase of mean verse length over time.⁴² Although this result will be invoked further below, there is actually no need to do so at this juncture. Instead, we can simply observe that almost all of the suras that Weil and Nöldeke class as Medinan are characterised by a consistently high mean verse length.⁴³ In order to show this, let us rearrange the Qur'an's suras in the order of increasing mean verse length, measured in transcription letters.⁴⁴ Figure 2, also found in the Appendix, plots the 61 suras with the highest mean verse length (see also column 2 of Figure 1). As it turns out, most of the suras that Weil and Nöldeke would class as Medinan, which are marked with the letters "Md" in Figure 2, end up occupying the right fringe of the resulting spectrum and have a mean verse length between 100 and 180 transcription letters. To be sure, three of Nöldeke's Medinan suras show a slightly lower mean

⁴² See SINAI Nicolai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology," in ABDEL HALEEM Muhammad and SHAH Mustafa (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, Oxford University Press, Oxford (forthcoming) as well as SADEGHI Behnam (2011), "The Chronology of the Qur'an: A Stylometric Research Program," *Arabica* 58, p. 210-299. Both publications endeavor to show that the Qur'anic corpus exhibits a robust covariance between mean verse length, on the one hand, and various other lexical, literary, terminological, and stylistic features. Such convergence raises an explanatory challenge: it is too conspicuous to be accidental, so there must be some reason for it. Arguably the most plausible explanation of the evidence consists in ascribing the observed convergence to a process of literary development in the course of which many features of the Qur'anic recitations changed simultaneously and concurrently.

⁴³ I say "almost all," because sura 110, a brief text that both Weil and Nöldeke class as Medinan, has a mean verse length of 39 transcription letters, considerably lower than all other allegedly Medinan suras. As shown in ROBINSON, *Discovering the Qur'an*, p. 80-82, sura 110 is a text that can with some justification be slotted into more than one of the four periods distinguished by Weil and Nöldeke.

⁴⁴ For details on how the mean verse length of suras has been computed, as well as graphs covering the entire Qur'an, see SINAI, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology".

verse length than the others (*Q.* 98: 74.38, *Q.* 64: 89.28, and *Q.* 47: 96.66),⁴⁵ and sura 110 (which is not represented in Figure 2 but listed in Figure 1) occupies an extreme outlier position. Moreover, moving from the right towards the middle of the spectrum the allegedly Medinan texts at some point begin to intermingle with suras that do not include any overt references to the Medinan constellation (*Q.* 28, 14, 7, 10, 35, 6, and 13).⁴⁶ Still, the overall impression must be that suras containing some glimpse of the Medinan constellation are much more consistently characterised by a high verse length than the remainder of the Qur'an.

A similar state of affairs presents itself when we examine formulaic density, a feature of the Qur'an that has recently been studied by Andrew Bannister.⁴⁷ Formulaic density, measured in percent, indicates to what extent a given sura consists of phraseology that recurs elsewhere in the Qur'an. For present purposes, let us define a formula as a succession of three "bases" (i.e., words stripped of any prefixes and suffixes, but still inflected for verb type, number, person, gender etc.) that recurs four times or more in the Qur'an.⁴⁸ A run of data that was kindly provided to me by Andrew Bannister has made it possible to correlate the suras' formulaic density with their mean verse length, yielding the scattergram in Figure 3 (for precise values, see column 3 of Figure 1). For the sake of quick reference, suras that are considered to be Medinan by Weil and Nöldeke —most of which mention or presuppose at least some aspect of the Medinan constellation— appear without brackets, while other texts (belonging to Weil's and Nöldeke's late Meccan period) are given in brackets. The figure clearly shows that there is a palpable link between the two parameters represented in the scattergram: a high mean verse length normally entails high formulaic density.⁴⁹ Thus, not only do suras presupposing the Medinan constellation display a consistently high mean verse length but they also exhibit a consistently high formulaic density (above 23%). As a result, they appear as an outer rim in the upper

⁴⁵ Of these, only *Q.* 47 and 98 were cursorily cited in the last section —namely, for the injunction to fight the unbelievers found in *Q.* 47:4-6, and for the phrase "those who have disbelieved from among the People of the Scripture" in *Q.* 98:1.6. Regarding *Q.* 64, a Medinan date is suggested to Nöldeke, inter alia, by the admonition to "obey God and His Messenger" (v. 12); see NÖLDEKE, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, p. 136 n. 5; NÖLDEKE and SCHWALLY, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, vol. I, p. 186 n. 3. Caution dictates that the exegetical tradition that is also cited by Nöldeke be disregarded.

⁴⁶ These suras are classed as "late Meccan" by Nöldeke. *Q.* 14 was actually cited in the last section, on account of Abraham's prayer for the inhabitants of the House as rendered in 14:35-37, but this is of course far from an unequivocal reference to the Medinan constellation.

⁴⁷ BANNISTER Andrew (2014), *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Qur'an*, Lexington Books, Lanham.

⁴⁸ See BANNISTER, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, 138-141 for more details on how the formulaic density of suras is computed.

⁴⁹ As observed in SINAI, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology," the correlation coefficient of both arrays of data is 0.65 (where a value of 1 would indicate perfect positive correlation, a value of 0 would indicate no correlation, and a value of -1 would indicate perfect negative correlation).

right-hand region of Figure 2, although as one moves towards the left they gradually begin to be interspersed with non-Medinan suras.⁵⁰ Still, the stylistic homogeneity of the Medinan texts is remarkable, given that mean verse length and formulaic density fluctuate so significantly across the Qur'an as a whole.

Interestingly, if we turn from stylistic to literary parameters, many of Weil's and Nöldeke's Medinan suras stand out even from those non-Medinan suras whose high mean verse length and formulaic density places them in Figure 3's interspersed region, i.e., the region populated both by allegedly Medinan and non-Medinan texts. Perhaps the most significant literary contrast between Medinan and non-Medinan texts concerns their structural organisation. As Angelika Neuwirth has shown, virtually all the bracketed (i.e., supposedly non-Medinan) suras from Figure 3 can be analysed as conforming to a tripartite template, often centred on a narrative middle part, that is continuous with the structure of many suras with a lower mean verse length (conventionally classed as middle Meccan).⁵¹ By contrast, in the Medinan texts, whose structure is admittedly still very ill-understood, this tripartite compositional scheme seems largely absent.⁵² It would, however, be insufficient to describe the Medinan suras simply in terms of a lack of literary features characterising non-Medinan texts. Rather, they seem to be deploying their own peculiar range of literary forms and devices, such as the use of vocatives as structural markers.⁵³

If we examine other literary parameters, we find both contrasts and continuities. A noticeable difference between many Medinan and non-Medinan texts consists in the former's lack of punishment legends, a veritable staple in Nöldeke's middle and late Meccan suras (= non-Medinan suras with a relatively high mean verse length).⁵⁴ The trend is bucked by sura 22, which combines high formulaic density and long verses as well as clear references to the Medinan constellation (*Q.* 22:25, 22:38-41) with reminders of how God "seized" various unbelieving peoples (22:42-48). Another recurrent ingredient of the non-Medinan texts that becomes more infrequent in the Medinan ones are signs passages, i.e., enumerations of cosmic manifestations of

⁵⁰ The stylistic continuity between non-Medinan and Medinan suras that is indicated by this interspersed region is already highlighted, albeit impressionistically, in NÖLDEKE and SCHWALLY, *Geschichte des Qur'āns*, vol. I, p. 171.

⁵¹ NEUWIRTH Angelika (2007), *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren*, 2nd ed., de Gruyter, Berlin, p. 290-313.

⁵² See the remarks in NEUWIRTH Angelika (2014), *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, p. 153-155.

⁵³ See ZAHNISER Mathias A. H. (2000), "Major Transitions and Thematic Borders in Two Long Sūras: *al-Baqara* and *al-Nisā'*," in BOULLATA Issa J. (ed.), *Literary Structures of Religions Meaning in the Qur'ān*, Routledge, Abingdon, p. 26-55, at 30-32.

⁵⁴ See in detail in MARSHALL, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*.

God's omnipotence and his ability to resurrect the dead.⁵⁵ Yet here, too, the rupture is not complete.⁵⁶ This is illustrated, again, by the second part of sura 22, vv. 61-66 of which contain a classic signs passage, and also by the signs passages in *Q.* 24:41-46. Another literary continuity spanning the Medinan/non-Medinan divide is the use of wrap-up phrases, or clausulae, at the end of verses and verse sections.⁵⁷

OTHER THEMATIC COMMONALITIES OF THE MEDINAN SURAS

We have seen that suras disclosing aspects of the Medinan constellation are stylistically homogeneous and are marked by literary contrasts to suras in which this constellation is not discernible. At the same time, we have also observed some degree of stylistic and literary continuity between both classes of texts. While the results obtained so far may seem mixed, the hypothesis that a Medinan subcorpus can be isolated on purely inner-Qur'anic grounds is decisively supported by the fact that suras presupposing the Medinan constellation are united by further thematic and doctrinal commonalities, which will now be presented. The relevant textual evidence is listed in columns 6, 7, and 8 of Figure 1.

One such further commonality, already commented upon in the introduction, consists in fact that many suras in which the Medinan constellation is visible devote considerable attention to a quasi-legal regulation of human behaviour, which is particularly prominent in *Q.* 2, 4, 5, and 65 (see column 6 of Figure 1). By contrast, suras that do not manifest the Medinan constellation or even presuppose a pre-expulsion setting tend to limit themselves to fairly general moral demands, for instance, condemnations of those who fail to support the poor (*Q.* 51:19, 69:34, 70:24-25, 74:44, 89:18, 107:3) or Decalogue-like lists of basic religious and moral commandments (*Q.* 17:22-39 and 6:151-153).⁵⁸ It is true that a few relatively specific prescriptions occur outside the Medinan sura cluster, for instance, the demand for three diurnal

⁵⁵ This contrast is well exemplified by some of the formulaic systems presented in BANNISTER, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, p. 220 sqq. For instances, Examples 1, 2, and 4, which are all signs-related, are exclusively attested in suras that, by Nöldeke's reckoning, are middle and late Meccan (or, to put it more neutrally, are exclusively attested in suras that are located in the middle region of Figure 2 yet lack Medinan characteristics).

⁵⁶ As shown by Examples 3 and 7 in BANNISTER, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, p. 220 sqq., some signs-related phraseology spans the non-Medinan/Medinan divide.

⁵⁷ NEUWIRTH, *Studien*, p. 157-170; ZAHNISER, "Major Transitions," p. 32-34.

⁵⁸ On the two Qur'anic Decalogues see HIRSCHFELD Hartwig (1902), *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, Royal Asiatic Society, London, p. 81-82; LEWINSTEIN Keith (2001), "Commandments," in MCAULIFFE (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, vol. I, p. 365-367; GÜNTHER Sebastian (2007), "O People of the Scripture! Come to a Word Common to You and Us (*Q.* 3:64): The Ten Commandments and the Qur'an," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9, p. 28-58, at p. 33-36.

prayers (*Q.* 11:114, 17:78-79, 20:130, 50:39-40, 76:25-26, 52:48-49), dietary taboos (*Q.* 6:119-121.145 and 16:114-115), and a juxtaposition of almsgiving with usury in *Q.* 30:39. Yet the fact that the latter verse falls short of an unequivocal ban of usury, which appears only in two Medinan texts (*Q.* 2:275-281 and 3:130), is symptomatic: suras from outside the Medinan cluster do not seem particularly concerned to provide detailed instruction about how to behave; rather, they seem concerned to enjoin and motivate their hearers to abide by a set of previously familiar moral norms, such as solidarity with the poor and the marginalised. The problem seems to be less that the audience does not know how to behave but that they are not properly motivated to behave as they know they ought to. Medinan texts, on the other hand, are keen to provide detailed behavioural instructions pertaining to a wide range of human activities that stretches far beyond the sphere of religious ritual—for instance, about the length of time during which children are to be suckled (*Q.* 2:233), how to divorce women (*Q.* 2:228-232, 2:236, 2:241, 33:49, and 65:1-7), or how an inheritance is to be divided up (*Q.* 4:7-12.176). Drawing on a distinction proposed by Fred Donner, one might say that the Meccan suras articulate a primarily “paraenetic” or exhortatory type of piety, whereas the Medinan suras exemplify a “legalistic” kind of piety.⁵⁹

Another distinctive feature of the Medinan Qur'an is its stance towards the “People of the Scripture,” i.e., Jews and Christians. Suras not belonging to the Medinan corpus generally lack sustained anti-Jewish or anti-Christian polemics, and occasionally even invoke them as witnesses against the pagan Associators. Thus, *Q.* 26:197 poses the rhetorical question, “Is it not a sign for them [i.e., Muhammad's unbelieving opponents] that the learned ones of the Israelites have knowledge of it?” A similar appeal to the knowledge of the Israelites figures in *Q.* 17:101. Three more verses invoke the recipients of earlier revelations in a confessionally unspecific manner: *Q.* 10:94 demands that any questions “about what We have sent down to you [singular]” be referred to “those who have been reciting the Scripture before you,” and *Q.* 16:43 and 21:7 prompt the audience to “ask the people of the reminder if you [plural] do not have knowledge”. In all these cases, the Qur'anic proclamations seem confident that the proprietors of previous revelations would fully assent to the revelations conveyed to Muhammad. By contrast, as illustrated by Figure 1, suras belonging to our tentatively delimited Medinan subcorpus display a very different relationship to the Scripturalists. For instance, they chastise them for various doctrinal aberrations (e.g., *Q.* 5:15-18, 5:64, 5:72-77) and for not abiding by (*aqāma*) the

⁵⁹ See DONNER Fred (1998), *Narratives of Islamic Origins: The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing*, Darwin Press, Princeton, p. 64-66 and 90-91, who distinguishes between “paraenetic piety” and “legalistic piety” and two corresponding types of Qur'anic material. Note, however, that Donner does not link this distinction with the descriptors “Meccan” and “Medinan”.

Torah or the Gospel (5:66) and for Jews, for willfully twisting or distorting (*harrafa*) revelations (*Q.* 2:75 and 5:13; *cf.* also 4:46 and 5:41). In passing, we may note that this critical confrontation with Judaism and Christianity alike deploys some established motifs of Christian anti-Jewish polemics, although these are sometimes inflected against the Christians themselves.⁶⁰

A final distinguishing mark of the Medinan suras consists in the fact that they convey a very different understanding of the function and authority of Muhammad than the remainder of the corpus, a contrast that has already been underscored by earlier scholars.⁶¹ Non-Medinan texts present Muhammad above all as a divinely commissioned “warner” (*nadhīr*, *mundhir*; e.g., *Q.* 32:3, 35:24) whose function, like that of previous messengers, is only “clear delivery” (*al-balāgh al-mubīn*) of God’s admonishments (e.g., *Q.* 11:57, 13:40, 16:35.82, 29:18, 42:48). Although such language is not absent from ostensibly Medinan texts (*Q.* 5:99, 24:54, 33:45, 48:8, 64:12?), the latter reveal a considerable elevation of the Messenger’s status and a marked diversification of his role. For instance, he is now charged with the function of distributing the Believers’ alms and spoils of war (*Q.* 8:1.41, 9:58-60, 59:6-8). That membership in the community of Believers involved a relationship of personal allegiance to the Messenger rather than just acceptance of his religious teachings is shown by *Q.* 48:10.18, and 60:12. The Messenger’s claim to leadership is drastically underlined by *Q.* 5:33-34, according to which those who “wage war against God and His Messenger” and do not repent are to be elaborately executed. The most conspicuous expression of the Messenger’s boosted authority in the Medinan suras are of course the formulaic calls to “obey God and His Messenger” and the explicit equation of obedience to the Messenger with obedience to God in *Q.* 4:80. As a

⁶⁰ This is the case, for instance, with regard to the Qur’anic claim that Jewish law was decreed by God as a punitive measure (*Q.* 4:160-161 and 6:146) and the Qur’an’s emphasis on Israelite worship of the Golden Calf (e.g., *Q.* 2:51.92, 4:153); as Holger Zellentín shows, basing himself on work by Michael Pregill, the *Didascalia Apostolorum* also considers the “Second Law” —i.e., Jewish law beyond the Ten Commandments— to have been imposed after the veneration of the Golden Calf; see ZELLENTÍN Holger (2013), *The Qur’ān’s Legal Culture: The Didascalia Apostolorum as a Point of Departure*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, p. 140-154. As noted by Zellentín, the same observation is concisely made already in HOROVITZ, *Koranische Untersuchungen*, p. 38. Incidentally, the idea goes back as far as Paul’s *Letter to the Galatians* 3:19. The Qur’anic charge that the Jews or the Scripturalists in general “killed the prophets” (*Q.* 2:61.91, 3:21.112.181, 4:155), too, has parallels in Christian literature, as exemplified by *Acts* 7:52. Another polemical move by the Medinan Qur’an that is ultimately (but probably not directly) inspired by the Pauline letters (more particularly, by *Galatians* 3 and *Romans* 4) is the Qur’anic attempt to outstrip Judaism, and also Christianity, by appealing to the figure of Abraham as a “gentile” (*ḥanīf*) —i.e., non-Jewish and non-Christian— monotheist; see DE BLOIS François (2002), “*Naṣrānī* (Ναζωραῖος) and *ḥanīf* (ἔθνικός): Studies on the Religious Vocabulary of Christianity and of Islam,” *BSOAS* 65, p. 1-30, at 21-25.

⁶¹ WELCH, “Muhammad’s Understanding of Himself,” p. 35-47; MARSHALL, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, p. 164-175. The following overview summarises parts of SINAI Nicolai, “Muhammad as an Episcopal Figure,” forthcoming in *Arabica*.

number of verses make clear, obedience to the Messenger included recognising his authority to “adjudicate” (*hakama*) disputes among the Believers (*Q.* 4:59-61.65, 5:48-49, and 24:48.51) and to provide them with casuistic guidance on how to act in specific situations.⁶² Finally, we have also seen that one verse presents the Messenger not just as a source of behavioural instructions but as an “exemplar” (*uswa*) to be emulated (*Q.* 33:21).

As was briefly highlighted above, the Medinan Qur'an's engagement with the Scripturalists shows specific parallels to Christian polemics against Judaism. It is therefore worthwhile pointing out that both the duty of obedience to the Messenger and the adjudicatory role ascribed to him in Medinan texts can likewise be connected to Christian precedents —specifically, to early and late antique Christian statements about the figure of the bishop. For instance, the letters of Ignatius (martyred in the early second century CE) insist that to obey the bishop is to obey God.⁶³ The Messenger's adjudicatory role, too, has an antecedent in late antique bishops, who presided over special episcopal courts.⁶⁴ A particularly striking textual correspondence is provided by the *Didascalia Apostolorum*'s call for bishops to “judge sinners according to the Scripture” (*d-ak ktābē tehwōn dāynin le-aylēn d-ḥāṭṭin*),⁶⁵ which closely parallels a Medinan passage's insistence on the need to “judge by” (*hakama bi-*) the Torah, Gospel, or by “what God has sent down” to the Messenger (*Q.* 5:41-50). Another suggestive parallel is between the Qur'anic condemnation of those who “seek the judgement of (*yuridūna an yataḥākamū ilā*) *al-ṭāghūt*” in *Q.* 4:60 and the *Didascalia*'s command that a Christian should not “go to the judgement (*dīnā*) of the pagans,” a request whose scriptural origin would seem to be *1 Corinthians* 6:1-6.⁶⁶ Also noteworthy is the fact that like the Qur'anic Messenger bishops were described as moral exemplars for their flock.⁶⁷ All of these parallels suggest that

⁶² See above, n. 22.

⁶³ RAPP Claudia (2013), *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity: The Nature of Christian Leadership in an Age of Transition*, University of California Press, Berkeley, p. 27 and n. 13. On the following Christian parallels see in more detail SINAI, “Prophetology of the Medinan Qur'an.”

⁶⁴ For a historical overview of episcopal courts in late antiquity see LAMOREAUX John C. (1995), “Episcopal Courts in Late Antiquity,” *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 3, p. 143-167. For miscellaneous comments on the bishop's task of passing “judgement” (*dīnā*) among his flock, see VÖÖBUS, *Didascalia*, p. 58 *sqq.* of Syriac text (ch. 5), 63 *sqq.* (ch. 6), 87 (from ch. 7), 115 *sq.* (end of ch. 9; inter alia, instructs laymen to “leave judgement in the hand of” the bishop), 121-124 (from ch. 10), and, in particular, 127 *sqq.* (ch. 11).

⁶⁵ VÖÖBUS, *Didascalia*, p. 71, l. 17 (Syriac text).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 128, l. 20 (Syriac text). Cf. also LAMOREAUX, “Episcopal Courts,” 153 (based, inter alia, on the writings of Augustine): “From their pulpits and in their writings late antique clergy proclaimed the merit that falls to those Christians who do not bring their suits before secular magistrates, but instead have recourse to the arbitration offered by the church.”

⁶⁷ RAPP, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, p. 27-28, 31, 170. Note also the close linguistic correspondence between the Qur'anic description of the Messenger as an *uswatun ḥasanatun* (*Q.* 33:21) and the Syriac

the Medinan sura's boosted portrayal of the Messenger's role and authority assimilates miscellaneous episcopal traits—which is perhaps unsurprising, given that the Christian bishop would have constituted a well-known model of religiously based urban communal leadership.⁶⁸ Non-Medinan suras, by contrast, make no effort to cast the Messenger as a quasi-episcopal communal leader, although they are in other respects intimately familiar with Christian traditions.⁶⁹

The Medinan boost in Muhammad's status goes beyond specific political and normative tasks and prerogatives. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that the Messenger is cast as a "prophet" (*nabiyy*), a title that non-Medinan texts tend to reserve for figures of Biblical history.⁷⁰ Use of the title "prophet" is most frequent in sura 33,⁷¹ which contains a number of other bold statements as well: the Messenger is portrayed as a quasi-paternal figure to the Believers (33:6),⁷² it is implied that he is superior in rank to other prophets like Moses and Jesus (33:7), and he is called by the enigmatic title "seal of the prophets" (33:40).⁷³ Medinan texts closely link the Messenger with God by calling not only for obedience to "God and His Messenger" but also by demanding "belief in God and His Messenger" (*Q.* 49:15, 57:7.19.28, 64:8), as opposed to "belief in God and the Last Day".⁷⁴ Such bracketing induces what David Marshall has described as a "godward movement of the Messenger".⁷⁵ *Q.* 9:128 goes so far as to ascribe to the Messenger two attributes (kindness and mercy) that are otherwise reserved for God and thus implies the Messenger's "participation in

Didascalia's injunction to the bishop to be a "good example (*dmuthā shappirthā*) to the people"; see VÖÖBUS, *Didascalia*, p. 57, l. 20-22 (Syriac text).

⁶⁸ ZELLENTIN, *The Qur'an's Legal Culture*, p. 215-228 argues that the Qur'anic critique of a group of Christian leaders called the *ruhban* does not, or not exclusively, denote monks, as traditionally assumed, but also includes "church officials such as the Didascalia's bishops" (p. 219). If this argument is accepted, then the Qur'anic text itself would explicitly betray familiarity with the institution of the episcopate.

⁶⁹ See above, n. 1 and n. 2.

⁷⁰ WELCH, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," p. 43; BOBZIN Hartmut (2010), "The 'Seal of the Prophets': Towards an Understanding of Muhammad's Prophethood," in NEUWIRTH Angelika *et al.* (eds.), *The Qur'an in Context: Literary and Historical Investigations into the Qur'anic Milieu*, Brill, Leiden, p. 565-583, especially 567-569 and 571-574. But note *Q.* 6:112 and 25:31, both of which begin by asserting that "We have appointed an enemy for every prophet" and can be construed as implying that the Messenger is a prophet, too. Sura 25 is clearly non-Medinan, while matters are more complicated in the case of sura 6: Nöldeke would date it to the late Meccan period, but it does contain a number of passages addressing Medinan themes. These latter might of course be later additions, a possibility briefly considered below.

⁷¹ WELCH, "Muhammad's Understanding of Himself," p. 43.

⁷² According to the *Didascalia*, the bishop is "your father after God"; see VÖÖBUS, *Didascalia*, p. 103, l. 21 (Syriac text) and elsewhere, as well as RAPP, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, p. 31.

⁷³ RUBIN Uri (2014), "The Seal of the Prophets and the Finality of Prophecy: On the Interpretation of the Qur'anic Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33)," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 164, p. 65-96.

⁷⁴ See *Q.* 2:126.177.228.232.264, 3:114, 4:39.59.162, 5:69, 9:18.19.44.45.99, 24:2, 58:22, and 65:2.

⁷⁵ MARSHALL, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, p. 164-175.

divine characteristics".⁷⁶ Incidentally, the Christian bishop is similarly constructed as a locus of divine presence.⁷⁷ The Messenger is also charged with the sacerdotal functions of interceding (*istaghfara*) for the Believers (*Q.* 4:64, 47:19, 63:5-6) and of purifying (*zakkā*) and praying for them (*Q.* 2:129, 151, 3:164, 9:103, 62:2), activities that bring to mind the role of late antique Christian holy men.⁷⁸

In line with the lofty status claimed for the Messenger, Medinan passages repeatedly address the etiquette of being received by him or interacting with members of his household (*Q.* 24:62-63, 33:53-55, 49:1-5, 58:12-13). An atmosphere of almost courtly distance is thus created around him.⁷⁹ The behaviour expected of or towards the Messengers' wives is singled out for special attention (*Q.* 33:28-33, 33:53-55, 66:1-5). It is also insisted upon that the Messenger must not be insulted (9:61-63, 33:57), just as God did not allow Moses to be insulted (*Q.* 33:69). In sum, the Medinan suras portray the Messenger as an awesome, towering figure who unites paternal, kingly, and priestly aspects and whose role certainly goes far beyond the function of relaying divine revelations that is predominant in the remainder of the Qur'an.

To survey the argument that has so far been made, suras presupposing the particular political and military constellation that I have called "Medinan" are united by a number of additional and highly recognisable thematic concerns: they take a marked interest in quasi-legal instructions; they attest to an intense rivalry with Jews and Christians that is at best very muted in other suras; and they significantly amplify the status and role of the Messenger by portraying him as a bishop-like communal leader. These themes, although distinct, are at least partly complementary. For instance, we have seen that the Medinan constellation includes Scripturalists who were at some point expelled from the Believers' settlement, which obviously provides a plausible background against which to place polemical disputes with and comments on the Jews and Christians. Similarly, the Messenger's role as an adjudicator of disputes and normative queries may well have spawned at least some of the legal material that is found, for instance, in suras 2, 4, 5, and 65. As a matter of fact, as illustrated by a quick glance at columns 5-8 of Figure 1, the four themes just enumerated display a

⁷⁶ MARSHALL, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers*, p. 170-173. The observation is already made in PARET Rudi (1977), *Der Koran: Kommentar und Konkordanz*, 2nd ed., Kohlhammer, Stuttgart, on *Q.* 9:128. The Arabic attributes are *ra'ūf* and *rahīm*. They are applied to God, for instance, in *Q.* 2:143, 9:117, 16:47, 22:65, 24:20, 57:9, and 59:10.

⁷⁷ Ignatius demands that "we should look upon the bishop even as we would upon the Lord Himself" (*Letter to the Ephesians*, ch. 6). Similarly, the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* requires that the bishop be honoured like God "because the bishop sits for you in the place of God Almighty"; see VÖÖBUS, *Didascalia*, p. 103, l. 24-26 and p. 112, l. 2-4 (Syriac text).

⁷⁸ Cf. RAPP, *Holy Bishops in Late Antiquity*, p. 67-73.

⁷⁹ Note that the *Didascalia* demands that bishops be honoured like kings: VÖÖBUS, *Didascalia*, p. 110, l. 12-13 and p. 112, l. 2-4 (Syriac text).

marked tendency to appear in close literary vicinity: eight suras are characterised by all four of them (*Q.* 2, 3, 4, 5, 9, 22, 33, and 59), while five further suras tick at least three of the four boxes (*Q.* 8, 24, 49, 57, 62).

We are thus faced with a repertoire of themes that are both inherently linked and concentrated in a relatively limited number of suras, all of which exhibit a high mean verse length and formulaic density. This, I would submit, warrants isolating the suras in question as a distinct subcorpus of the Qur'an, which is conveniently picked out by the traditional label "Medinan". At least in certain cases, it makes sense to include into this subcorpus suras exhibiting only two of our four thematic foci, at least barring evidence to the contrary, such as clear references to a pre-expulsion setting. Thus, I would not dispute Weil's and Nöldeke's allocation to the Medinan Qur'an of suras 63 and 65-66. Whether one should adopt the same position with regard to sura 64 seems less certain to me, though, and suras 98 and 110 are even more doubtful. Naturally, a thorough weighing of individual cases is best left to more specialised studies. Yet it must be underlined that the general category of a Medinan subcorpus of the Qur'an is not invalidated by the fact that we occasionally meet with texts that are hard to assign, either because they are fairly generic (as is the case for sura 98) or because they display hybrid characteristics (such as suras 6 or 22).

The body of texts thus delimited has distinct phraseological characteristics that deserve to be studied in more detail. A highly conspicuous example is the command to "obey God and the / His Messenger," which is expressed either directly by the imperatives *aṭī'ū Allāha wa-al-rasūla* or *aṭī'ū Allāha wa-rasūlahū*, or indirectly by means of the relative clause *man yuṭī'i Allāha wa-al-rasūla / wa-rasūlahū*. Indeed, explicit demands for obedience to Muhammad are so characteristic of the Medinan Qur'an that Nöldeke considers the occurrence of the imperative version of the injunction in *Q.* 64:12 ("Obey God and obey the Messenger!") to constitute an important argument for assigning sura 64 to the Medinan Qur'an.⁸⁰ Another signature trait of the Medinan Qur'an are references to the undertaking of effort (*j-h-d*) or fighting (*q-t-l*) "in the path of God" (*fi sabīli Allāhi*). The peculiar concerns of the Medinan Qur'an—such as enjoining its addressees to militancy or providing them with adjudicatory guidance—are thus linked with a repertoire of stock terms and phrases, much as the Book of Deuteronomy is marked by a highly recognisable phraseology.⁸¹

The comparison to Deuteronomy is apt for another reason, since Biblical scholars are wont to identify a "Deuteronomistic" redactional layer outside the book of

⁸⁰ NÖLDEKE, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, p. 136 n. 5; NÖLDEKE and SCHWALLY, *Geschichte des Qurāns*, vol. I, p. 186 n. 3.

⁸¹ For some examples, see WEINFELD Moshe (1972), *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, p. 1-9.

Deuteronomy. Similarly, texts that do not otherwise display Medinan features can sometimes contain isolated occurrences of terms and phrases that are otherwise solidly associated with the Medinan sura group. For instance, *Q.* 74:31—a verse that stands out from its literary context by its excessive length—contains the phrases “those who have been given the Scripture” (*alladhīna ūtu al-kitāba*) and “those in whose hearts is sickness” (*alladhīna fī qulūbihim maraḍun*), both characteristically Medinan formulae. The reason for this must be that *Q.* 74:31 is a secondary interpolation, a conclusion also suggested by other observations.⁸² Hence, we must recognise the possibility that some suras could turn out, upon closer analysis, to be redactionally composite texts combining Medinan and non-Medinan sections. A probable case in point is sura 22, in which Medinan characteristics are limited to particular verses and verse groups (vv. 17, 25-41, 58-60, 67, and 77-78).

CONCLUSION: THE MEDINAN QUR'AN'S RELATIONSHIP TO THE REST OF THE CORPUS

I shall conclude with a few concise remarks on the Medinan Qur'an's relationship to the remainder of the Islamic scripture. As I have noted on several occasions, we encounter both aspects of continuity and of discontinuity: while the Medinan Qur'an is characterised by a distinct range of themes, distinct literary devices, and distinct phraseology, it does not display a complete rupture with the non-Medinan portion of the Qur'an. For example, we have seen that one highly recognisable feature of the Medinan suras are injunctions to obey the Messenger. While these only occur in suras that are evidently or at least possibly Medinan, there are various cases in non-Medinan suras where earlier prophets or messenger figures, such as Noah and Jesus, demand to be obeyed.⁸³ Moreover, both Medinan and non-Medinan passages call upon the Messenger not to obey his opponents.⁸⁴ Thus, the Medinan command to “obey God and His Messenger” is palpably continuous with non-Medinan texts. The same is true for the Medinan use of the verb *jāhada* to denote militancy, which is also used—albeit in a non-military, discursive sense—in non-Medinan texts

⁸² On *Q.* 74:31 and the equally obvious case of 73:20 see in more detail SINAI Nicolai, “Two Types of Inner-Qur'anic Interpretation,” forthcoming in a volume edited by Georges Tamer (de Gruyter, Berlin), and SINAI, “Processes of Literary Growth and Editorial Expansion”.

⁸³ This demand recurs numerous times in the narrative cycle occupying the middle part of sura 26 (vv. 108, 110, 126, 131, 144, 150, 163, 179). See also *Q.* 20:90, 43:63, and 71:3.

⁸⁴ Cf. *Q.* 18:28, 25:52, 31:15, 68:8.10, 76:24, 96:19 and *Q.* 33:1.48.

(*Q.* 25:52, 29:6.8.69, 31:15).⁸⁵ Moreover, the characteristically Medinan casting of the Messenger as a prophet is at least suggested by *Q.* 6:112 and 25:30-31. There is also stylistic continuity between the Medinan and the non-Medinan Qur'an, as illustrated by Figure 3: although the Medinan suras are relatively homogeneous in terms of their mean verse length and formulaic density, they gradually begin to interlock with seemingly non-Medinan suras as one moves to the left of the spectrum.

How to make sense of this mixed picture? My preferred model is an evolutionary scenario according to which the Medinan texts are preceded by, and develop out of, the non-Medinan ones. Such an evolutionary model would cogently explain the phraseological and stylistic continuity between ostensibly Medinan and non-Medinan suras that has just been pointed out. Moreover, an evolutionary model is supported by the argument that I have put forward elsewhere in favour of the conclusion that the Qur'anic proclamations underwent a gradual increase of mean verse length over time.⁸⁶ Finally, an evolutionary model is backed⁸⁷ by the fact that many non-Medinan suras yield a plausible fit with what some Medinan passages tell us about the situation of the Messenger and his adherents prior to their expulsion from the sanctuary (see especially the retrospective in *Q.* 8:30 *sqq.*, cited above). Against the background of such a developmental understanding of the relationship between the non-Medinan and Medinan texts, Medinan-flavoured sections in suras that are otherwise non-Medinan are most easily understood as secondary insertions.⁸⁷

The alternative scenario would be a Qur'anic two-source hypothesis, based on the idea that the Meccan and the Medinan corpus originated separately and were only subsequently combined into the received version of the Qur'an. Although I would consider such a model to be much less capable of accommodating the evidence just listed, I shall here confine myself to pointing out a further problem that such a two-source model would face. It consists in the fact that at least certain Medinan passages seem to refer back to non-Medinan ones and thus to be familiar with them. For instance, *Q.* 9:114 comments on Abraham's intercession for his idolatrous father, which is reported in various non-Medinan texts (*Q.* 14:41, 19:47, and *Q.* 26:86),

⁸⁵ Another case of continuity is *Q.* 33:63, which closely parallels a cluster of verses from non-Medinan suras; see, *inter alia*, *Q.* 7:187, 10:48, 21:38, 27:71, 51:12, 75:6, 79:42.

⁸⁶ SINAI, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology".

⁸⁷ Neuwirth has argued that *Q.* 7:145-147, 7:152-153, and 7:155-157 are such additions; see NEUWIRTH Angelika (2004), "Meccan Texts – Medinan Additions? Politics and the Re-reading of Liturgical Communications," in ARNZEN Rüdiger and THIELMANN Jörn (eds.), *Words, Texts, and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the Sources, Contents, and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science, Dedicated to Gerhard Endress on his Sixty-Fifth Anniversary*, Peeters, Leuven, p. 71-93.

and attempts to neutralise the irenic implications of this act.⁸⁸ Another case in point is the Medinan identification of the angel transmitting the Qur'anic revelations to the Messenger with Gabriel, which is also plausibly seen as alluding to and updating earlier non-Medinan statements (*cf.* *Q.* 2:97-98 with 16:102 and 26:193-196). The preliminary impression arising from such examples is that the Medinan corpus is at least partly familiar with the non-Medinan one.⁸⁹ This, too, corroborates my assumption that the Medinan suras belong to the same developmental trajectory as the earlier non-Medinan proclamations.

⁸⁸ See in detail SINAI, "Two Types of Inner-Qur'anic Interpretation".

⁸⁹ Other non-conventional models besides a straightforward two-source hypothesis are certainly conceivable: it is not impossible that an originally independent non-Medinan corpus was secondarily embedded in the latter and that in the course of this process Medinan texts were expanded by references to passages from the non-Medinan corpus (which in turn was expanded by passages in a Medinan style). Given that I see no need to replace what I consider a perfectly satisfactory evolutionary model, I do not consider it my business to work out what such a theory might look like in detail.

APPENDIX 1
 FRED DONNER ON THE SUPRA-CONFESSIONAL CHARACTER
 OF THE BELIEVERS' MOVEMENT

As adumbrated in the introduction, Fred Donner has argued that the religious movement that was established by Muhammad and subsequently went on to conquer the Near East did not originally possess a distinct confessional identity but rather included “all those who shared Muhammad’s intense belief in one God and in the impending arrival of the Last Day, and who joined together to carry out what they saw as the urgent task of establishing righteousness on earth (...) in preparation for the End”.⁹⁰ Donner therefore understands the collective that the Qur’an designates as “the Believers” to have formed a supra-confessional alliance in which Jews and Christians could be full members “if the doctrines of their religious confessions were consonant with strict monotheism and not too inimical to the Believers’ other basic ideas”.⁹¹ Some, but by no means all, of these Believers would have followed Qur’anic law, whereas others might instead have followed, for instance, Jewish law.⁹² Accordingly, Donner would be likely to query my own habit, amply displayed throughout this article, of simply equating the Qur’anic term “the Believers” with phrases like “the Qur’anic community” or “Muhammad’s adherents”; instead, he would presumably insist that the latter were only contained in, but by no means coextensive with, the former.

Donner’s intriguing hypothesis is supported by three classes of evidence: (i) Qur’anic verses implying that there might be, or that there are, “believing” Jews and Christians; (ii) the so-called Constitution of Medina, a treaty from Muhammad’s lifetime that is widely accepted as authentic and according to which Jewish tribes seem to have been members of the Medinan *umma*; and (iii) non-Islamic testimonies to the effect that the Arab conquerors included, or cooperated with, Jews and Christians.⁹³ My claim that already the Medinan Qur’an documents an incipient demarcation of the Messenger’s adherents as a distinct religious community puts me in direct conflict with Donner’s view. I therefore feel compelled to offer a brief discussion of his arguments. However, given that the focus of the present article is squarely on the Qur’an, I shall suspend judgement on the difficult question of the Arab conquerors’ religious identity after the death of Muhammad and thus on all

⁹⁰ DONNER, “From Believers to Muslims,” p. 10-11.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁹² *Ibid.*, “From Believers to Muslims,” p. 16.

⁹³ These three categories of evidence are discussed in *ibid.*, sections II, IV, and V-VI.

evidence falling into category (iii). After all, even if it could be conclusively shown that the post-prophetic Arabic conquerors did indeed form an ecumenical and supra-confessional alliance, this would not immediately establish that the same held true for the Qur'anic *Urgemeinde* during Muhammad's lifetime.⁹⁴

The weightiest support for Donner's hypothesis arguably consists in the Constitution of Medina. According to this treaty, "the Believers (*mu'minūn*) and Submitters (*muslimūn*) of Quraysh and Yathrib and those who follow them and attach themselves to them and strive with them [in war]" form "one community set apart from [the rest of] mankind" (*innahum ummatun wāḥidatun min dūni al-nās*).⁹⁵ The followers of the Believers include a number of Jewish groups who are explicitly given leave to retain a *dīn* ("law," "cult," "religion"?) that is different from that of the Believers and Submitters.⁹⁶ Thus, it would appear that the Constitution of Medina reflects an arrangement in which the Medinan *umma* is not conceived as a religiously homogeneous body but as a supra-confessional confederation of autonomous tribal groups uniting the Believers with other monotheists. However, as noted by Donner himself,⁹⁷ even this document does not explicitly present the Jews as having the status of Believers. Instead, at least some passages clearly operate a binary distinction between the Believers and the Jews as two constituent groups of the Medinan *umma*.⁹⁸ The general impression is that the Jews' status was that of subordinate allies.⁹⁹ Hence, even if the treaty documents a stage at which members of the Medinan *umma* were not yet all expected to be Believers, the text does not call into doubt that the Believers

⁹⁴ That post-Qur'anic developments do have implications for our understanding of the Qur'anic data is raised in a private correspondence by Donner. As pointed out there, if we follow the traditional view that the Qur'an begins with a friendly attitude to the Scripturalists that undergoes progressive hardening in the Qur'an's Medinan stratum, "we have to envision a course of communal development over 125-150 years in which the community begins with a welcoming attitude to at least some *ahl al-kitāb*, then by the end of the Prophet's life views them very negatively, then 30 years or so later views them positively again and works with them, and then around 700 starts to turn against them definitively again". Such a zig-zaggy development may certainly strike one as awkward and consequently implausible. Two manners of responding to the objection suggest themselves: one might either insist that there is no reason to exclude that historical developments could be zig-zaggy; or one might attempt, as I shall not, to engage Donner's construal of the early post-Qur'anic evidence.

⁹⁵ LECKER, *Constitution*, p. 32 (§ 1; translation modified).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 35 (§ 28). See also *ibid.*, p. 135-181, which comments in detail on the section of the document that deals with Jewish groups. For Donner's treatment, see DONNER, "From Believers to Muslims," p. 28-34, and *id.*, *Muhammad and the Believers*, p. 72-74.

⁹⁷ DONNER, "From Believers to Muslims," p. 33.

⁹⁸ E.g., §27: "The Jews share expenditure with the Believers as long as they are at war" (LECKER, *Constitution*, p 35; translation slightly modified).

⁹⁹ See §1, which distinguishes between "the Believers and Submitters of Quraysh and Yathrib," on the one hand, and "those who follow them and attach themselves to them and strive with them [in war]" (LECKER, *Constitution*, p 32; translation modified). It seems reasonable to associate the Jewish groups treated later in the document with this latter category.

formed a distinct religious group within an overarching political structure. It seems that the Constitution of Medina codifies an early state of Medina's political organisation before the *umma* became a religiously homogeneous collective. Traces of this transformation are readily discernible in the Qur'an—for instance, in the demand that the Believers should not “take Jews and Christians as friends” (*Q.* 5:51) or in the passages recalling the expulsion of at least some Scripturalists from the settlement inhabited by the Qur'anic community (*Q.* 33:26-27 and 59:2).

Finally, we must turn to the Qur'anic evidence that makes up category (i). Some of the verses implying the existence, or possible existence, of Jews or Christians who qualify as genuine believers have already been concisely treated above. I would insist that these passages do not as such decisively undermine the claim that parts of the Qur'an document an embryonic view of the followers of the Qur'anic Messenger as forming a distinct religious community. However one interprets the passages in question, the textual support for a scenario of at least incipient communal distinctness appears to be very solid: as we saw above, the Qur'an polemicalises against key Jewish and Christian beliefs and practices and against both communities' religious leadership, and various Qur'anic passages portray the Believers as a separate *umma* alongside other religious communities.

It is relevant in this context that *Q.* 5:41 criticises audience members who appear to be Jews (as implied by v. 43) for their selective attitude to the Qur'anic proclamations, namely, for being willing to accept only those Qur'anic pronouncements that replicate existing Jewish customs and beliefs. On Donner's hypothesis, one would actually have expected this to have been the default position of Jewish members of the Believers' movement. Yet *Q.* 5:41 clearly expresses a deep dissatisfaction with such a stance: what the Qur'an demands from the Jews is an unconditional acceptance of the Qur'anic revelations, whether or not these are matched by anything presently contained in the Jewish or Christian scriptures.¹⁰⁰ Prima facie, then, Muhammad's Jewish and Christian contemporaries were expected not only to embrace a strict and anti-trinitarian brand of monotheism but also to submit to the prophetic authority of Muhammad and his revelatory proclamations. Only thus, it appears, would they have qualified as full members of the community of Believers. If that is so, the latter can hardly be described as supra-confessional.

As always, more could be said. Perhaps most crucially, Donner sets out a different reading of some of the verses that I would take to presuppose that the Qur'anic

¹⁰⁰ That some of Muhammad's contemporaries were indeed prepared to conform to this demand is suggested by *Q.* 3:199: “Among the People of the Scripture there are some who believe in (...) what has been sent down to you [plural] and what has been sent down to them (...).”

Believers formed an independent religious community. The verses in question are *Q.* 2:62 and 5:69, the opening segments of which list “the Believers” alongside the Jews, Christians, and Sabians —ostensibly an enumeration of separate religious communities. Donner acknowledges this implication yet draws attention to the remainder of both verses. For instance, *Q.* 2:62 runs as follows: “Those who believe and the Jews and the Christians and the Sabians —whoever believes in God and the Last Day and does righteous deeds, they will have their reward with their Lord; no fear will be upon them nor will they grieve.” According to Donner, the second part of the verse “makes it clear that those Jews, Sabians, and Christians *who Believe in God and the Last Day and who act righteously* are, like those simply called ‘Believers’, promised salvation. That is, ‘Belief’, which secures salvation is actually a category that transcends the communal distinctions between Jew, Sabian, Christian, etc.”¹⁰¹

Does this undermine an appeal to the two verses in question as indicating the communal distinctness of the Believers? I would concede Donner’s point that salvation is here clearly presented as available to members of earlier religious communities. However, I would also insist that we cannot assume that belief in the unity of God and in the Last Judgement as well as righteous behaviour, even if viewed as entitling one to salvation, were necessarily seen as coextensive with membership in the earthly community of Believers —the Believers with a capital B, as it were. This is because, as I have argued above, full affiliation with the latter would have required a renunciation of the core dogma of mainstream Christianity —namely, the divinity of Christ— and an unconditional acceptance of the Qur’anic proclamations as forming a supremely authoritative body of divine revelations.

Lest the foregoing distinction between being a believer in the unity of God and the Last Judgement, on the one hand, and being a Believer with a capital B, on the other, strike the reader as scholastic subterfuge, let me point to *Q.* 3:113, 5:66, and 7:159. These three verses describe Jews and Christians who are “upright,” “moderate,” or “guide by the truth” as forming their own *umma* —effectively, as a sub-community— *within* Judaism and Christianity. It seems uncontroversial to identify these “upright” and “moderate” Jews and Christians with the believing Jews and Christians whom we encounter in other Qur’anic passages. Now, if Donner’s hypothesis were correct, one might have expected such believing Jews and Christians to be simply and straightforwardly regarded as members of the community of Believers rather than to be given the ambiguous intermediate status that the three verses at hand appear to ascribe to them. This confirms my impression that the fact that some members of other religious communities might merit salvation does not call into

¹⁰¹ DONNER, “From Believers to Muslims,” p. 19 (italics in the original).

question the existence of a distinct Qur'anic community (whose primary designation had, unhelpfully, come to be "the Believers"). Thus, what *Q.* 2:62 and 5:69 are saying is merely that the boundaries demarcating religious communities in this world do not coincide with the salvational boundaries in the world to come. One is reminded of the Augustinian distinction between the visible and the invisible church, although the upshot here is a very different one: according to the Qur'an, the invisible church seems to be *more* expansive than the visible one rather than less so.

To some degree, my different, and more conservative, reading of the Qur'anic evidence simply results from the fact that I weigh the scriptural data differently than Donner. Rather than beginning with the polemical verses that I have emphasised above, Donner takes as his point of departure those passages that may be taken to suggest permeable boundaries between the Believers, on the one hand, and Jews and Christians, on the other, and only subsequently addresses the Qur'an's criticism of key Christian and Jewish beliefs and practices, which he freely acknowledges to constitute a difficulty for his hypothesis.¹⁰² (There is no inherently correct order of proceeding here; one must start somewhere, after all.) Donner's principal way of accommodating such overt polemics is to invoke the possibility that the passages in question were not widely known or taken very seriously. Although I would admit the possibility that many early post-Qur'anic Muslims only possessed a fragmentary knowledge of their scriptural canon,¹⁰³ I would resist a transfer of this scenario to the Qur'an's original milieu. It strikes me as unlikely that Christians could have joined the Qur'anic community while Muhammad was promulgating staunchly anti-trinitarian polemics without these Christian members understanding themselves in some sense as converts.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² DONNER, "From Believers to Muslims," p. 17-18 and 24-28.

¹⁰³ As a matter of fact, I have explicitly argued for this proposition myself: see SINAI Nicolai (2014), "When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure?," *BSOAS* 77, p. 273-292 and 509-521, at p. 289-291.

¹⁰⁴ Donner briefly hints at an alternative manner of reconciling his theory with the Qur'an's anti-Jewish and anti-Christian polemics, namely, by claiming that the passages in question were only incorporated into the Qur'an at a secondary stage (DONNER, "From Believers to Muslims," p. 17-18). However, as Donner himself indicates, a proper development of this idea would of course require a great deal of meticulous textual analysis. Thus, it is impossible to assess this option in the abstract.

APPENDIX 2
FIGURES

Figure 1: A conspectus of the stylistic and thematic characteristics of all of Nöldeke's Medinan suras.

The table also lists non-Medinan (according to Nöldeke, middle and late Meccan) suras that have a mean verse length higher than that of sura 98. Suras about whose belonging to the Medinan Qur'an I feel fairly confident are highlighted in grey. In the case of sura 22, this confidence is limited to vv. 17, 25-41, 58-60, 67, and 77-78.

1 sura no.	2 mean verse length in transcription letters	3 formulaic density in percent ¹⁰⁵	4 dating by Nöldeke (on the basis of Weil) ¹⁰⁶	5 references to the Medinan constellation	6 behavioural prescriptions	7 addresses of, comments on, and demarcation from the Scripturalists (including positive statements)	8 special authority and prerogatives of the Messenger / the Prophet
2	137.19	29.79	Md	2:125-129 (Abraham erects the sanctuary), 2:144 and 2:149-150 (the direction of prayer is towards the sanctuary), 2:158 (pilgrimage to the sanctuary), 2:190-194 (injunction to fight the Unbelievers, on fighting at the sanctuary and during the inviolable months), 2:196-203 (pilgrimage rites to be performed at the sanctuary), 2:216 (injunction to fight), 2:217 (fighting during the inviolable month, the Unbelievers accused of barring access to the sanctuary), 2:218 (the Emigrants)	2:153-283 (extensive legal corpus: pilgrimage, dietary rules, manslaughter, bequests, fasting, fraud, militancy, charity, wine and gambling, orphans, no intermarriage with the Associators, menstruation, divorce, prayer, usury, recording of debts)	2:40-123 (disobedience of the Israelites, polemics against the Jews; v. 62: reward for Jewish and Christian believers)	2:129.151 (the Messenger is to purify the Believers)

¹⁰⁵ Values in this column were provided by Andrew Bannister. As in Figure 2, the formula length is set at 3 and the repeat threshold at 4.

¹⁰⁶ Abbreviations: M II = middle Meccan; M III = late Meccan; Md = Medinan.

3	111.66	32.94	Md	<p>3:13 (battlefield reminiscence), 3:28 (the Believers must not take the Unbelievers as friends), 3:96-97 (Abraham and the pilgrimage sanctuary), 3:121-128 (battlefield reminiscence), 3:139-160 (battlefield reminiscences, injunctions to militancy, promise of divine assistance in battle), 3:166-175 (battlefield reminiscences, the Hypocrites), 3:195 (those who "have emigrated and been expelled from their houses" and fight)</p>	<p>3:130 (prohibition of usury)</p>	<p>3:64-80 (address of, and comments about, the Scripturalists, inter alia about Abraham), 3:98-100 (polemical address of Scripturalists), 3:110-115 (the Believers as a community distinct from the Scripturalists), 3:186-189 (the Scripturalists have broken their covenant with God), 3:199 (reward for believing Scripturalists)</p>	<p>3:32 (obedience to the Messenger), 3:68 ("this prophet"), 3:132 (obedience to the Messenger), 3:164 (the Messenger is to purify the Believers)</p>
4	137.79	26.74	Md	<p>4:61 (the Hypocrites resist adjudication by the Messenger), 4:71-79 (injunctions to militancy), 4:84 (injunction to militancy), 4:88-91 (on fighting the Hypocrites?), 4:95-98 (those who strive in battle vs. those who "remain sitting," damnation for those who could have emigrated but did not), 4:138-145 (against the Hypocrites)</p>	<p>4:1-42 (legal corpus centred on family law, esp. marriage and inheritance), 4:43 (prayer), 4:92-93 (punishment for killing a Believer), 4:101-103 (prayer on military campaigns), 4:127-130 (female orphans, marital relations), 4:135 (the Believers must be honest witnesses), 4:176 (inheritance)</p>	<p>4:44-47 (polemical address of and comments on those who have been given the Scripture), 4:160-162 (Jewish law as a punishment, promise of reward for believing Jews), 4:171-172 (rejection of the divinity of Christ)</p>	<p>4:13-14 (obedience to the Messenger), 4:59-65 (obedience to the Messenger and all other messengers, disputes to be adjudicated by the Messenger, intercession by the Messenger), 4:69 (obedience to the Messenger), 4:80 (obedience to the Messenger = obedience to God)</p>

5	150.06	31.52	Md	5:2 (the Unbelievers have barred access to the sanctuary), 5:97 (the sanctuary identified with the Ka'ba)	5:1-11 (pilgrimage, dietary rules, commensality and intermarriage with the Scripturalists, prayer), 5:32 (the Biblical prohibition of murder), 5:33-34 (punishment for waging war against the Messenger), 5:38-40 (punishment for theft), 5:45 (law of talion), 5:87-108 (oaths, wine and gambling, pilgrimage, bequests)	5:5 (commensality and intermarriage with the Scripturalists, 5:12-19 (the Jews and Christians accused of breaking their covenant with God, the Scripturalists called to recognise the authority of the Messenger, criticism of Jewish and Christian beliefs), 5:41-50 (the Jews and Christians called to judge by the Torah and the Gospel, God could have created a unitary religious community), 5:51-56 (demand for dissociation from the Scripturalists), 5:57-86 (miscellaneous polemics and threats, God's reward for pious Christians), 5:116-118 (Christ himself refutes the belief in his divinity)	5:15-16 and 5:19 (the Messenger's mission to the Scripturalists), 5:33-34 (punishment for waging war against the Messenger), 5:81 (belief in "God and the Prophet"), 5:92 (obedience to the Messenger)
6	117.87	25.56	M III	6:119-121 (dietary taboos), 6:145 (dietary taboos), 6:151-153 (Decalogue)	6:20 (those who have received the Scripture recognise it like their own sons), 6:114 (the Scripturalists confirm the truthfulness of the Qur'anic revelations); 6:146-147 (Jewish dietary laws imposed as a punishment), 6:154-159 (criticism of Jewish and Christian exclusivism and divisions)	6:112 (speaks of "every prophet" and implies that the Messenger is one of them; cf. 25:31)	

7	104.27	25.2	M III			7:148-171 (the worship of the Golden Calf and various other cases of Israelite disobedience; v. 159: among the people of Moses there is a community that “guides by the truth”)	7:157-158 (the Messenger called “the <i>ummī</i> prophet” who is announced by the Torah and the Gospel, belief in “God and His Messenger”)
8	107.63	31.05	Md	8:1 (see column 6), 8:7-19 (battlefield reminiscences), 8:26 (reminiscence of oppression prior to expulsion and subsequent refuge?), 8:30-33 (reminder of the Messenger’s preaching “among” the Unbelievers), 8:34-36 (the Unbelievers bar access to the sanctuary, criticism of their cult at the sanctuary), 8:39-41 (injunction to fight the Unbelievers until conversion, booty), 8:42-45 (battlefield reminiscences, injunction to steadfastness in battle), 8:48 (battlefield reminiscence), 8:49 (the Hypocrites), 8:57-66 (injunctions to fight the Unbelievers), 8:67-71 (captives and booty), 8:72-75 (solidarity among the Emigrants, relations with Believers who have not emigrated, the Emigrants and those who have sheltered them)	8:1 and 8:41 (spoils), 8:67-71 (captives, booty)	8:1 (spoils belong to the Messenger; obedience to the Messenger), 8:13 (opposition to the Messenger), 8:20-21 (obedience to the Messenger), 8:41 (a fifth of all booty belongs to the Messenger and the needy), 8:46 (obedience to the Messenger), 8:64.65.70 (“O Prophet!”), 8:67-71 (the captives and booty; the Messenger titled a prophet)	

9	127.88	25.52	Md	<p>9:1-28 (dissociation from the Associates, injunction to fight them, Associates may not inhabit the sanctuary, annulation of family ties with them), 9:29 (Jews and Christians to be fought until they pay tribute), 9:36 (the Associates to be fought even during the inviolable months), 9:38-57 (polemics against those unwilling to fight), 9:64-68 (against the Hypocrites), 9:73-103 (against the Hypocrites, polemics against those unwilling to fight, the bedouin), 9:111 (eschatological reward for militancy), 9:113-114 (no intercession for the Unbelievers), 9:117-123 (the Emigrants and the Helpers, the people of Medina vs. the surrounding bedouin, injunction to fight the Unbelievers)</p>	<p>9:36-37 (calendar issues), 9:103 (alms from the bedouin)</p>	<p>9:29-35 (Jews and Christians to be fought and accused of venerating Ezra and Jesus as well as their religious dignitaries, criticism of the latter)</p>	<p>9:58-60 (allocation of alms), 9:61-63 (the Prophet must not be insulted), 9:71 (obedience to the Messenger), 9:73 (“O Prophet!”), 9:103 (the Messenger to take alms from the bedouin and to purify and pray for them), 9:113 and 9:117 (“the Prophet”), 9:128 (the Messenger is “kind and merciful”)</p>
10	104.36	37.52	M III			<p>10:68-70 (God has no child - directed against Christians?), 10:94 (questions about the Qur’anic revelations to be referred to the Scripturalists)</p>	
11	96.18	27.18	M III		<p>11:114 (three diurnal prayers)</p>	<p>11:17 (threat against the the <i>ahzāb</i> who do not believe in the Messenger’s revelations)</p>	
12	99.42	15.6	M III				

13	126.16	29.39	M III			13:36 (the Scripturalists rejoice in the Qur'anic revelations, but some of the <i>al/zāb</i> deny these revelations), 13:43 (appeal to those who possess "knowledge of the Scripture")	
14	103.29	29.04	M III	14:35-37 (Abraham's prayer for the sanctuary and his descendants)			
16	93.41	33.41	M III	16:41 (reward for the Emigrants), 16:110 (mercy for the Emigrants)	16:91-92 (fulfilment of oaths sworn by God), 16:114-115 (dietary taboos)	16:118-119 (comment on Jewish law), 16:43 (injunction to "ask the people of the reminder"), 16:118-119 (comment on Jewish law)	
17	90.15	16.3	M II		17:22-39 (Decalogue), 17:78-79 (three diurnal prayers)	17:4 (the Israelites twice punished by the conquest of their sanctuary), 17:101 (appeal to confirmation by the Israelites), 17:107-109 ("those to whom knowledge has been previously given" believe in the Qur'anic recitations)	
18	90.98	12.44	M II				
22	102.54	32.68	Md	22:25 (Unbelievers bar access to the sanctuary), 22:26-29 (Abraham and the sanctuary), 22:38-41 (the Believers authorised to fight after having been expelled)	22:27-37 (pilgrimage instructions)	22:17 (the Believers listed as a distinct religious community)	22:52 (implies that the Messenger is a prophet)

24	135.64	28.66	Md	24:22 (cursory reference to the Emigrants)	24:2-9 (fornication), 24:22-23 (alms, slander of chaste women), 24:27-33 (the etiquette of entering houses, modesty, marriage), 24:58-61 (more on social etiquette), 24:62-63 (see column 8)		24:47-56 (obedience to the Messenger; the Messenger is to adjudicate between the Believers), 24:62-63 (on parting from the Messenger and being summoned by him)
25	75.25	17.19	M II				25:30-31 (could be construed as implying that the Messenger is a prophet; <i>cf.</i> 6:112)
27	78.19	24.42	M II			27:76 (the Qur'an informs the Israelites of that about which they differ)	
28	101.34	23.91	M III			28:52-53 (the Scripturalists believe in the Qur'anic revelations)	
29	92.36	42.33	M III	29:11 (condemnation of the Hypocrites), 29:26 (Lot announces that he will "emigrate" to God)		29:46 (injunction to "dispute nicely" with the Scripturalists, except the evildoers), 29:47 (the Scripturalists believe in the Qur'anic revelations)	
30	87.20	40.07	M III		30:39 (giving alms preferable to usury)		
31	97.32	39.27	M III				
32	77.33	35.22	M III			32:23-25 (the leaders of the Israelites "guided by Our command")	

33	117.26	23.33	Md	33:1 (the Hypocrites), 33:6 (the Emigrants), 33:9-27 (the confederates' attack on Yathrib, references to the Hypocrites and the expulsion of Scripturalists), 33:48 (the Hypocrites), 33:60-62 (against the Hypocrites), 33:73 (the Hypocrites)	33:4-5 (abolition of adoption), 33:49-52 (marriage and divorce; see column 8), 33:53-55 (see column 8), 33:59 (women to dress modestly)	33:26-27 (expulsion of the unbelieving Scripturalists)	33:1.2 etc. ("O Prophet!," multiple occurrences of the title "prophet"), 33:6 (the Prophet as a quasi-paternal figure), 33:7 (the Messenger listed ahead of Noah, Abraham, etc.), 33:28-34 (admonishment of the Prophet's wives, duty of obedience to him), 33:36 (obedience to the Messenger), 33:37-39 (vindication of the Messenger against the suspicion of having contracted an incestuous marriage), 33:40 (the Messenger called the "seal of the prophets"), 33:50-52 (marriage rules for the Prophet), 33:53-55 (how to interact with the Prophet's wives), 33:56-57 (God's blessing over the Prophet, prohibition of insulting him), 33:66-68 (disobedience to the Messenger punished by damnation), 33:69-71 (the Messenger paralleled with Moses, obedience to the Messenger)
34	99.31	26.58	M III			34:6 (those who have "received knowledge" confirm the Qur'anic revelations)	
35	108.96	34.06	M III				
39	98.40	33.73	M III				
40	89.20	31.48	M III				

41	93.56	25.82	M III				41:45 (doubts and disagreement about the Mosaic revelation)	
42	99.57	36.74	M III				42:14-15 (“those who have received the Scripture as an inheritance after them” are “in doubt about it”)	
45	84.00	42.62	M III				45:16-17 (the Israelites disagreed after having been given knowledge)	
46	112.74	33.64	M III					
47	96.66	26.75	Md		47:4-6,20-21,31,35 (injunctions to fight the Unbelievers), 47:13 (expulsion of the Messenger)		47:19 (the Messenger is to intercede on behalf of the Believers), 47:32-33 (obedience to the Messenger)	
48	130.97	27.86	Md		48:1 (the Messenger granted a “decisive victory”), 48:5-6 (the Hypocrites), 48:10-27 (pledge of allegiance to the Messenger, accusations against the bedouin, battlefield reminiscences, sanctuary linked to the “valley of Makka,” the Messenger and his followers’ safe performance of the pilgrimage)		48:1-3 (God forgives the Messenger’s sins and assures him of His assistance), 48:8-10 and 48:13 (to believe in and obey God = to believe in and obey the Messenger), 48:17 (obedience to the Messenger)	
49	124.61	32.29	Md		49:14 (the bedouin are not true Believers but only Submitters; see also 49:16-18)	49:9-12 (on how to resolve and avoid conflicts between the Believers)	49:1-5 (on the etiquette being received by the Messenger/ Prophet), 49:14 (the bedouin enjoined to obey the Messenger), 49:15 (belief in God and His Messenger)	
57	129.69	42.33	Md		57:10 (those who have fought before and after the “decisive victory”), 57:13-15 (parable against the Hypocrites)	57:16 (the hardened hearts of the Scripturalists), 57:29 (the Scripturalists have no power over God’s bounty)	57:7, 57:19, and 57:28 (belief in God and His Messenger)	

58	137.59	37.26	Md		58:1-4 (divorce), 58:11 (on how to behave in assemblies), 58:12-13 (see column 8)		58:5 (against those who oppose God and His Messenger), 58:8-10 (against private meetings in disobedience to the Messenger), 58:12-13 (commands almsgiving before a private audience with the Messenger, obedience to the Messenger), 58:20-22 (condemnation of opposition to the Messenger)
59	119.67	29.31	Md		59:6-8 (see column 8)	59:2-4 (condemnation of unbelieving Scripturalists), 59:11 (further reference to the unbelieving Scripturalists)	59:4 (see column 5), 59:6-8 (booty to be distributed by the Messenger)
60	179.31	25.57	Md		60:1 and 60:8-9 (the Believers must not take as friends the Unbelievers who have expelled them), 60:10 and 60:12 (on receiving female Emigrants)		60:12 ("O Prophet!")
61	100.14	45.58	Md		61:4.11.13-14 (general injunction to militancy)		61:9.11-13 (belief in God and His Messenger guarantees God's forgiveness and assistance)
62	100.18	43.5	Md		62:9-11 (Friday prayer)	62:5-8 (criticism of the Jews)	62:2-3 (God has sent a messenger to the <i>ummiyîn</i> who is to purify them)
63	110.18	27.62	Md		63:1-8 (against the Hypocrites)		63:5-6 (intercession by the Messenger)
64	89.28	53.72	Md				64:8 (belief in God and His Messenger), 64:12 (obedience to God and His Messenger)

65	157.83	24.91	Md		65:1-7 (divorce)		65:1.2 ("O Prophet!")
66	138.33	27.17	Md	66:9 (the Messenger commanded to strive against the Unbelievers and the Hypocrites)			66:1-5 ("O Prophet!", indirect admonishment of the Messenger's wives to submit to his authority), 66:8 (eschatological reward for "the Prophet and those who believe with him"), 66:9 ("O Prophet!")
98	74.38	53.19	Md	98:1 and 98:6 (the "Unbelievers among the people of the Scripture")		see column 5	
110	39	15.79	Md	110:1-2? (God's victory, mass conversion to "God's religion")			

Figure 2: The 61 suras with the highest mean verse length.
 Suras that Nöldeke considers to be Medinan are marked with “Md” (sura 110, whose mean verse length is 39, is not listed).

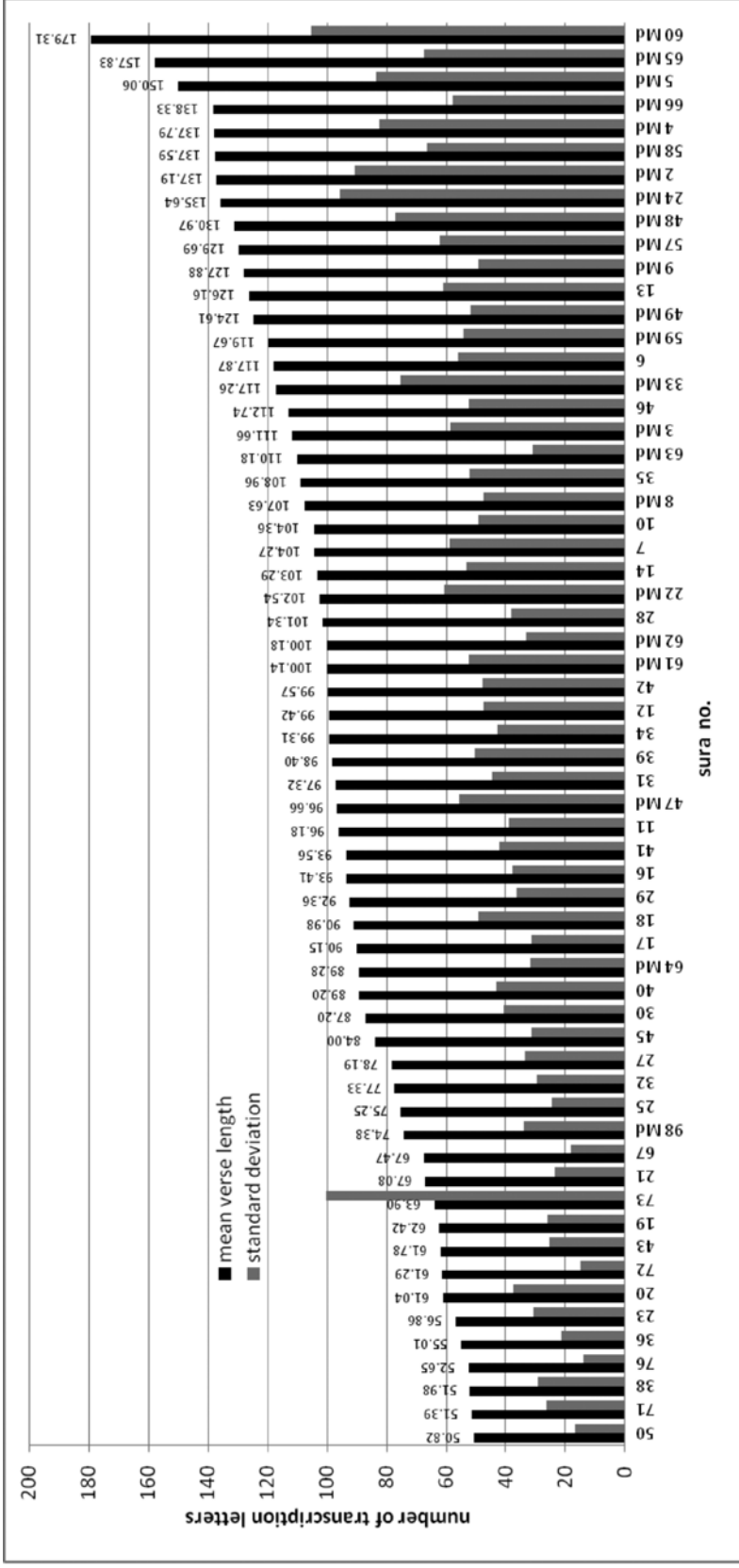
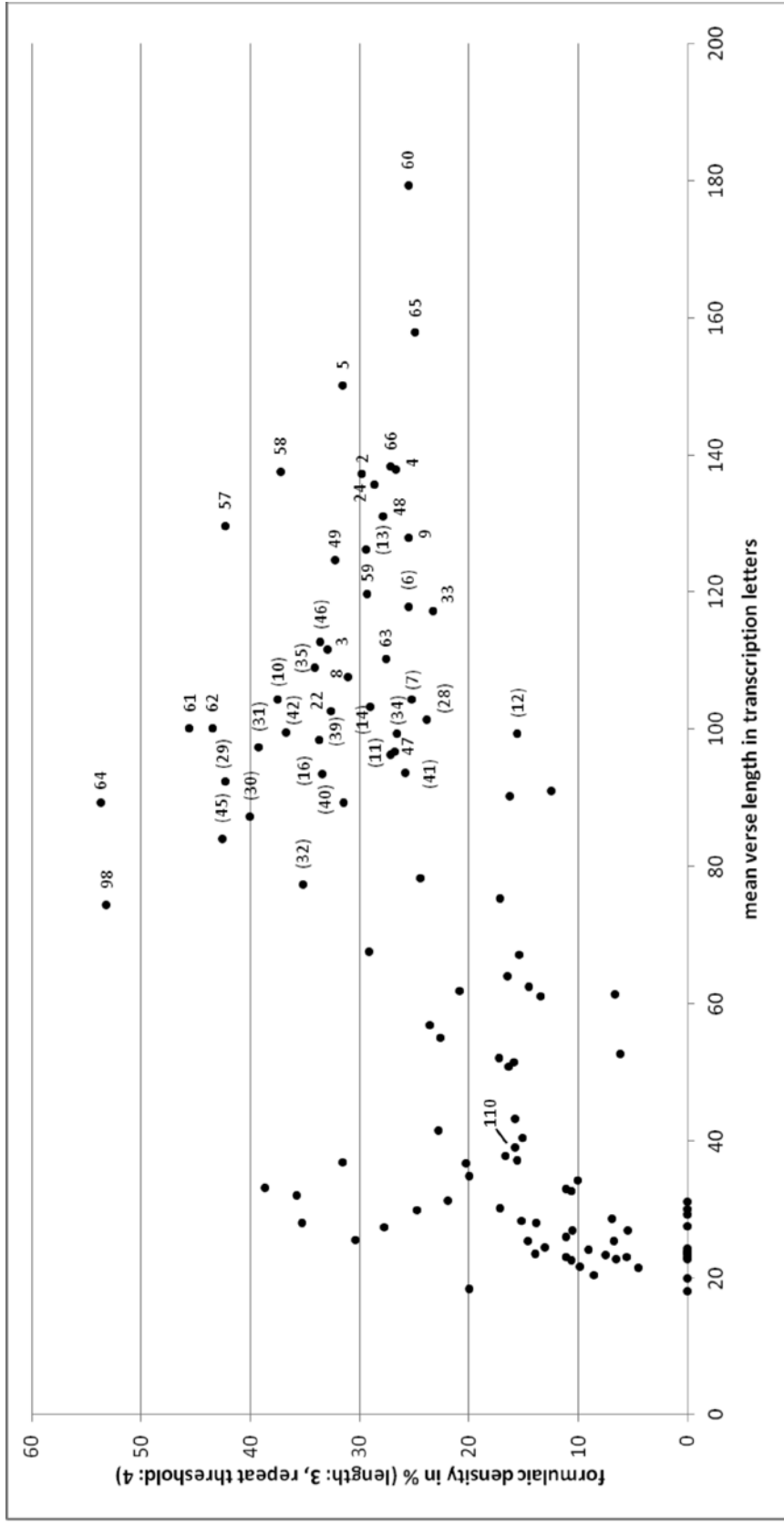


Figure 3: The correlation between mean verse length and formulaic density.

Data labels specify sura numbers. Suras that are considered to be Medinan by Weil and Nöldeke appear without brackets, while other suras (belonging to Weil and Nöldeke's late Meccan period) are given in brackets. Values for formulaic density were kindly provided by Andrew Bannister. Note the outlier value of *Q*. 110.



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