

# 6 A Preliminary Catalogue of Qur'anic *Saj'* Techniques

## Beat Patterning, Parallelism, and Rhyme\*

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### Introduction

This essay proposes a preliminary methodology for the division of Qur'anic passages into discrete clusters of *saj'ahs*. The basic rules that govern Qur'anic *saj'* have already been carefully elucidated by Devin Stewart in a series of articles on this subject.<sup>1</sup> Stewart has also provided some exploratory illustrations of where individual *saj'ahs* might combine to form consecutive strings of *saj'* units.<sup>2</sup> Yet the medieval rhetorician Ḍiyā' al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239), in his *al-Mathal al-sā'ir fī adab al-kātib wa-l-shā'ir* ("The Current Model for the Literary Discipline of the Scribe and Poet"),<sup>3</sup> declares that it is only the occasional need for "brevity" (*ījāz*) and "concision" (*ikhtiṣār*) that precluded the Qur'an from having been written entirely in *saj'*.<sup>4</sup> It is evident from his declaration that "the majority of the Qur'an is *saj'*" (*inna akthar al-qur'ān masjū'*) that such oft-cited examples of Qur'anic *saj'* as Q 100:1–3 (*wa-l-ādiyāti ḍabḥā \* fa-l-mūriyāti qadhā \* fa-l-mughhīrāti ṣubḥā*) were for Ibn al-Athīr the exception, when it comes to Qur'anic *saj'*, and not the rule.<sup>5</sup> This suggests that, at some point, many more of the Qur'an's rhetorical features must have been seen as having being informed by the rules and the rhythms of *saj'* than the current understanding of Qur'anic *saj'* in the Western Academy might lead one to imagine.

Ibn al-Athīr provides a number of textual examples in illustration of the types of *saj'* present in the Qur'an. He does not, however, define the minutiae of *saj'* compositional techniques per se. Nor does he explain how these might serve to demarcate the limits of structural units or how they might be juxtaposed or interwoven in order to form complex passages that can more loosely be described as *masjū'*. As such, his statement that it is only the occasional need for brevity and concision that precluded the Qur'an from having been written entirely in *saj'* does not immediately ring true.

That short passages of *saj'* do combine into wider *masjū'* units is evident from one of the examples of non-Qur'anic *saj'* provided by Ibn al-Athīr:<sup>6</sup>

*wa-qad 'alimta anna l-dawlata l-'abbāsiyyata lam tazal 'alā sāliḍi l-ayyām  
wa-muta'āqibi l-a'wām ta'tallu ṭawran wa-taṣiḥḥu aṭwāran wa-taltāthu*

*marratan wa-tastaqillu mirāran min ḥaythu aṣluhā rāsikhun lā yataza ‘za ‘u  
wa-bunyānuhā thābitun lā yataḍa ‘ḍa ‘u*

As you well know, the Abbasid state, over the passage of days and the course of years, has sometimes fallen sick, but many times been restored to health, is occasionally tardy, but frequently independent. [This is all] on account of the fact that its foundation is stable, never shaking, and its edifice firm, never teetering.

This passage clearly consists of three separate *saj*’ units. It opens with an initial sentence of matched accentual beats (*sālifi l-ayyām* and *wa-muta ‘āqibi l-a ‘wām* both comprising precisely two Arabic words, as can be seen in Table 6.1) emerging from a lengthy introductory phrase that is counted as superfluous to the matched beats of the *saj*’ unit itself.<sup>7</sup> This initial sentence displays an extended rhyme in  $-CāCvCi\ l-aCCām$  (where C represents “any consonant” and v “any short vowel”).<sup>8</sup> Unit II, which follows, then consists in its entirety of two parallel phrases, of four accentual beats each, rhyming in  $-Cārā$ .<sup>9</sup> The final sentence is, like the first, dependent upon an introductory phrase (here: *min ḥaythu*), out of which emerges a second two-part *saj*’ unit of four accentual beats, this time rhyming in  $CāCiCun\ lā\ yataCa ‘Ca ‘$ . The whole passage can thus be laid out as shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1 Ibn al-Athīr’s example of non-Qur’anic *saj*’ broken into three subunits

I	(8) 2 2	( <i>wa-qad / ‘alimtu / anna / l-dawlata / l-‘abbāsiyyata / lam / tazal / ‘alā /</i> ) <i>sālifi / l-ayyām //</i> <i>wa-muta ‘āqibi / l-a ‘wām //</i>
II	4 4	<i>ta ‘tallu / ṭawran / wa-taṣiḥḥu / aṭwārā //</i> <i>wa-taltāthu / marratan / wa-tastaqillu / mirārā //</i>
III	(2) 4 4	( <i>min / ḥaythu /</i> ) <i>aṣluhā / rāsikhun / lā / yataza ‘za ‘ //</i> <i>wa-bunyānuhā / thābitun / lā / yataḍa ‘ḍa ‘ //</i>

Similar patterns have been observed in the Qur’an, wherein contrasting rhythms, rhyme patterns, or the presence of introductory phrases can demarcate clear divisions between consecutive sections of text. In his 1990 article on Qur’anic *saj*’, Devin Stewart provides the example of Sūrat al-‘Ādiyāt (Q 100), which he describes as comprising four *saj*’ units (see Table 6.2). The first *saj*’ unit (vv. 1–3) consists of verses with two accentual beats each, both rhyming in  $CvCḥā$ . The second *saj*’ unit (vv. 4–5) has three accentual beats per verse, and rhymes in  $CvC ‘ā$ . The third *saj*’ unit (vv. 6–8) comprises three four-beat verses, all rhyming in  $CvCī/ūd$ . The fourth and final *saj*’ unit (vv. 9–11) contains *saj*’ *ahs* with first three and then five accentual beats, rhymes in  $CvCī/ūr$ , and is marked as distinct from the preceding by the presence of an introductory phrase: *a-fa-lā ya ‘lamu idhā ...* (“Does he not know that, when ...”).<sup>10</sup>

Table 6.2 Devin Stewart's division of Sūrat al-Ādiyāt (Q 100) into four subunits

I	2 2 2	<sup>1</sup> <i>wa-l-ādiyāti / dabḥā //</i> <sup>2</sup> <i>fa-l-mūriyāti / qadhā //</i> <sup>3</sup> <i>fa-l-mughīrāti / ṣubḥā //</i>
II	3 3	<sup>4</sup> <i>fa-atharna / bihi / naq'ā //</i> <sup>5</sup> <i>fa-wasaṭna / bihi / jam'ā //</i>
III	4 4 4	<sup>6</sup> <i>inna / l-insāna / li-rabbīhi / la-kanūd //</i> <sup>7</sup> <i>wa-innahu / 'alā / dhālika / la-shahīd //</i> <sup>8</sup> <i>wa-innahu / li-ḥubbi / l-khayri / la-shadīd //</i>
IV	(3) 3 3 5	<sup>9</sup> <i>(a-fa-lā / ya'lamu / idhā /)</i> <i>bu'thira / mā / fi l-qubūr //</i> <sup>10</sup> <i>wa-ḥuṣṣila / mā / fi l-ṣudūr //</i> <sup>11</sup> <i>inna / rabbahum / bihim / yawma'idhin / la-khabīr //</i>

Contrary to initial impressions, however, while the sense of v. 11 (“On that day, their Lord will be fully aware of them”) clearly follows on from the two verses that precede it (“Does he not know that, when the contents of graves burst forth and the secrets of hearts are uncovered”), it does not emerge cleanly from the introductory phrase at the beginning of this *saj'* unit. If the two preceding cola were removed, the resultant phrase, “Does he not know that, when ... On that day, their Lord will be fully aware of them,” is ungrammatical in a way that “Does he not know that, when the contents of graves burst forth” and “Does he not know that, when ... the secrets of hearts are uncovered” are not. Its five accentual beats consequently mark it as an independent *saj'ah*. This is concretely linked to the preceding *saj'ahs* in sense (just as that which is sworn in vv. 6–8, *saj'* unit III, is linked to that which is sworn by in vv. 1–5, *saj'* units I and II), but it is nonetheless morphologically and rhythmically separate from it. Indeed, morphologically, it hearkens back to *saj'* unit III, following the pattern *inna ... la-CvCū/īC*.

As will become apparent below, the Qur'an displays a number of such structures, in which final statements protrude—rhythmically, stylistically, or in terms of their end-rhyme—from their immediate surroundings, such that they could be considered to be separate, one-line *saj'* units. The Qur'an also, however, exhibits a variety of more complex arrangements, in which *saj'* units appear to be embedded within other *saj'* units, and in which parts of verses operate outside of the dominant rhymes and rhythms and create a more intricate sense of phonetic cohesion and rhythmical texture. While obviously informed by the conventions of *saj'*, these complex quasi-*saj'* structures remain to be categorized and defined.

In what follows, I shall extend the logic suggested by Ibn al-Athīr's passage of non-Qur'anic *saj'* into the general areas of the Qur'an he highlights as *masjū'*. First, in Part One, brief attention will be paid to the passages Ibn al-Athīr adduces as Qur'anic examples of specific types of *saj'*.<sup>11</sup> Although there are complications here, the logic for Ibn al-Athīr's selection of these passages is often self-evident. The situation becomes significantly more intriguing, however,

when close attention is paid to some of the Qur’anic verses supplied almost fleetingly by Ibn al-Athīr in order to demonstrate the prevalence of *saj*‘ throughout the Qur’an. The rationale behind the citation of some of these particular Qur’anic passages as *masjū*‘, and Ibn al-Athīr’s demarcation of these specific units as discrete examples of *saj*‘, is often less transparent. Part Two, therefore, will focus on the Qur’anic verses to which Ibn al-Athīr alludes in illustration of the pervasiveness of the phenomenon of *saj*‘ throughout the Qur’an,<sup>12</sup> and on their wider thematic or structural units. These detailed case studies will seek to divide sections of the text into discrete *saj*‘ units on the basis of rhyme, rhythm, thematic considerations, and lexical and grammatical parallelism, with particular attention being paid to the traditionally *saj*‘-informed parallelism that is created by rhyme and rhythm. As a result of these endeavors, an expanded catalogue of fifteen *saj*‘-informed Qur’anic structuring techniques will be suggested (Part Three). This list is intended to serve as a basis for further research into how *saj*‘-patterns, as Ibn al-Athīr seems to have understood them, are modified and manipulated in order to structure, embellish, and unify the Qur’an.

## **Part One. Examples Provided by Ibn al-Athīr Demonstrating the Presence of Four Main Types of *Saj*‘ in the Qur’an**

### ***1 Both Parts of the Saj’ Unit being Equal***

Ibn al-Athīr provides two Qur’anic examples in illustration of “equal” *saj*‘: Q 100:1–5 and Q 93:9–10.

#### *i Q 93:9–10 as an Example of Equal Saj’*

The parallelism of the Q 93:9–10 unit is evident: there is an extended rhyme in *fa-lā taChar*; the accentual beats match at 4–4; the grammatical construct *wa-ammā ... fa-lā* is reproduced in both verses. The entirety of Sūrat al-Ḍuḥā (Q 93), however, appears to be informed by *saj*‘ patterns in some shape or form, and its potential for division into a simple string of consecutive *saj*‘ units is relatively transparent. As is apparent in Table 6.3, vv. 1–2 would also seem to form a discrete unit, an oath introduction consisting of two items (*al-ḍuḥā* and *al-layl*). Verses 3–5 then form a further unit of 5–5–4 accentual beats, with some sequential repetition in v. 3 (*mā ... wa-mā*) and some internal parallelism (the repeated *wa-la* openers of vv. 4 and 5). The following unit, vv. 6–8, exhibits grammatical parallelism in its matched *fa- ...* closers, is dependent upon an introductory *a-lam* which serves to negate all three of the following statements, and counts in at 3–3–3 accentual beats.

<sup>6</sup> (*a-lam* /)

*yajidka / yatīman / fa-āwā //*

<sup>7</sup> *wa-wajadaka / ḍāllan / fa-hadā //*

<sup>8</sup> *wa-wajadaka / ‘ā’ilan / fa-aghnā //*

<sup>6</sup> (Did He not)

Find you an orphan and shelter you,

<sup>7</sup> Find you lost and guide you,

<sup>8</sup> Find you in need and enrich you?

Next comes Ibn al-Athīr's designated unit of vv. 9–10: two grammatically parallel statements (*wa-ammā ... fa-lā ...*) of a precisely matched 4–4 accentual beats. The final verse of the surah, despite its matching the preceding *saj'* unit in its opening and its accentual beats, might possibly be considered as constituting an independent, single-verse *saj'ah* on account of its departure from the very close parallelism of vv. 9–10.

The further example of Q 100 below, however, inclines me to read the indicators of textual cohesion here as overriding the indicators of structural apartness.

Table 6.3 Sūrat al-Ḍuḥā (Q 93) broken into five subunits

I	1 3	<sup>1</sup> <i>wa-l-ḍuḥā</i> // <sup>2</sup> <i>wa-l-layli / idhā / sajā</i> //
II	5 5 4	<sup>3</sup> <i>mā / wadda'aka / rabbuka / wa-mā / qalā</i> // <sup>4</sup> <i>wa-la-l-ākhiratu / khayrun / laka / mina / l-ūlā</i> // <sup>5</sup> <i>wa-la-sawfa / yu'īka / rabbuka / fa-tarḍā</i> //
III	(1) 3 3 3	<sup>6</sup> ( <i>a-lam /</i> ) <i>yajidka / yatīman / fa-āwā</i> // <sup>7</sup> <i>wa-wajadaka / ḍāllan / fa-hadā</i> // <sup>8</sup> <i>wa-wajadaka / 'ā'ilan / fa-aghna</i> //
IV	4 4	<sup>9</sup> <i>fa-ammā / l-yatīma / fa-lā / taqhar</i> // <sup>10</sup> <i>wa-ammā / l-sā'ila / fa-lā / tanhar</i> //
	4	<sup>11</sup> <i>wa-ammā / bi-ni'mati / rabbika / fa-ḥaddith</i> //

ii Q 100:1–5 as an Example of Equal Saj'

Ibn al-Athīr's second example of balanced *saj'* initially seems just as straightforward. As was discussed above, the opening five verses of Sūrat al-Ādiyāt (Q 100) consist of two *saj'* units of first two then three accentual beats.<sup>13</sup> These display two contrasting matched grammatical parallelisms, with a pervading rhyme in CvCCā that is extended to –āti CvCḥā in the first *saj'* unit, and to bihi CvCCā in the second *saj'* unit (see Table 6.4). It can immediately, moreover, be observed that Sūrat al-Ādiyāt continues with further *saj'* units. Verses 6–8 comprise a matched unit of four accentual beats rhyming in *la-CvCū'id* and possessing parallelism in its consistent *inna ... la* construct. Verses 9–11 similarly form a discrete unit, depending this time on an introductory phrase, *a-fa-lā ya lamu idhā ...* (“Does he not know that, when ...”): the *saj'* unit per se consists of two three-beat verses rhyming in *CuCCiCa mā fi l-CuCūr*, and the first of these is

prefaced by a three-beat clause which acts on both parts of the subsequently unfolding *saj*' unit. The final verse of the surah is connected to the preceding *saj*' unit in sense, but contains an extra accentual beat, making it the only verse in the surah to contain five accentual beats. The grammatical structure of Q 100:11, however, connects not with the preceding material, as we saw in Sūrat al-Duḥā, but with vv. 6–8. It seems more likely, therefore, that vv. 9–10 of Sūrat al-ʿĀdiyāt were heard as a rhythmical insertion into a *saj*' unit running Q 100:6–8.11, that the recurrence of the grammatical pattern *inna ... la-CaCVC* would aurally override the small disparity in accentual beats (from four to five), interrupted as this disparity is by a short *saj*' unit of 3–3–3 accentual beats.

Table 6.4 Breaking Sūrat al-ʿĀdiyāt (Q 100) into four subunits

I	2	<sup>1</sup> <i>wa-l-ʿādiyāti / ḍabḥā //</i>
	2	<sup>2</sup> <i>fa-l-mūriyāti / qadhā //</i>
	2	<sup>3</sup> <i>fa-l-mughīrāti / ṣubḥā //</i>
II	3	<sup>4</sup> <i>fa-atharna / bihi / naqʿā //</i>
	3	<sup>5</sup> <i>fa-wasaṭna / bihi / jamʿā //</i>
III	4	<sup>6</sup> <i>inna / l-insāna / li-rabbihi / la-kanūd //</i>
	4	<sup>7</sup> <i>wa-innahu / ʿalā / dhālika / la-shahīd //</i>
	4	<sup>8</sup> <i>wa-innahu / li-ḥubbi / l-khayri / la-shadīd //</i>
IV	(3)	<sup>9</sup> <i>(a-fa-lā / yaʿlamu / idhā /)</i>
	3	<i>buʿthira / mā / fi l-qubūr //</i>
	3	<sup>10</sup> <i>wa-ḥuṣṣila / mā / fi l-ṣudūr //</i>
III	5	<sup>11</sup> <i>inna / rabbahum / bihim / yawmaʿidhin / la-khabīr //</i>

The presence of this final verse within the structure of Sūrat al-ʿĀdiyāt (Q 100) complicates any understanding of Qurʿanic *saj*' as reliably consisting of rhymed and rhythmic *consecutive* units. What would appear to be in evidence here is a more complex *saj*' structuring device, in which brief *saj*' sentences can be embedded within a surrounding rhythmic or grammatical structure. Further such examples of embedment will occur below.

## 2 *The Second Part of the Saj' Unit being Longer than the First*

Ibn al-Athīr supplies three Qurʿanic examples in illustration of the category “unbalanced” *saj*', one from Sūrat al-Furqān (Q 25:11–13), one from Sūrat Maryam (Q 19:88–90), and one from Sūrat al-Wāqīʿah (Q 56:27–30).

### *i* Q 25:11–13 as an Example of “Unbalanced” *Saj*'

The slight disparity of accentual beats (8–9–9) of Q 25:11–13 Ibn al-Athīr highlights as an example of incomplete *iʿtidāl* (“balance”), pointing out nonetheless the relative closeness of the numbers here. Yet the following verse is also of interest, echoing as it does the *thubūrā* and the *daʿaw* of the preceding verse,

while replicating the accentual beat patterning of the “anomalous” eight-beat v. 11.

<sup>11</sup> *bal / kadhdhabū / bi-l-sā'ati / wa-a'tadnā / li-man / kadhdhaba / bi-l-sā'ati / sa'irā //*

<sup>12</sup> *idhā / ra'athum / min / makānin / ba'idin / sami'ū / lahā / taghayyuzan / wa-zafīrā //*

<sup>13</sup> *wa-idhā / ulqū / minhā / makānan / ḍayyiqan / muqarranīna / da'aw / hunālika / thubūrā //*

<sup>14</sup> *lā / tad'ū / l-yawma / thubūran / wāḥidan / wa-d'ū / thubūran / kathīrā //*

<sup>11</sup> But they deny [the truth of] the Hour. We have prepared a blazing Fire for those that deny [the truth of] the Hour.

<sup>12</sup> When it sees them from a distance, they will hear it raging and roaring.

<sup>13</sup> When they are hurled into a narrow part of it, chained together, they will cry out for death.

<sup>14</sup> “Do not cry out this day for one death! Cry out for many deaths!”

Verse 14 of Sūrat al-Furqān is moreover followed by a long verse introducing a fresh question to be posed to the unbelievers (v. 15), which is clearly separate from the preceding structural unit.

<sup>15</sup> *qul / a-dhālika / khayrun / am / jannatu / l-khuldi / llatī / wu'ida / l-muttaqūna / kānat / lahum / jazā'an / wa-maṣīrā //*

<sup>15</sup> Which is better, this or the lasting Garden that has been promised to those who fear [God]? [There] they [will] have their reward and their journey's end.

This begs the question of why Ibn al-Athīr classified the *saj'* unit as vv. 11–13, and not either the larger thematically chained unit comprising vv. 11–14, or the smaller, rhythmically (9–9) and grammatically (*idhā ... idhā ...*) chained unit comprising vv. 12–13.

It is similarly worth noting that both v. 11 and v. 14 display internal repetition. Verse 11 varies its initial *kadhdhabū bi-l-sā'ati* with a subsequent *kadhdhaba bi-l-sā'ati*; v. 14 its initial *thubūran wāḥidan* with a subsequent *thubūran kathīran*. The structuring in these four verses is not straightforwardly linear, and what we would appear to have is a cohesive four-verse *saj'* unit bound by rhyme and rhythm which contains in its midst a two-verse *saj'* unit further bound by grammatical parallelism. The connection between vv. 13 and 14 is, however, strengthened by lexical repetition: *da'aw hunālika thubūrā* becomes *lā tad'ū l-yawma thubūran wāḥidan wa-d'ū thubūran kathīrā*. This ABBC construct, in which the central terms of the *saj'* unit display grammatical parallelism, and the final sentence is an extension of the grammatically parallel unit, is one for which

I have coined the term “stepped *saj*’.” It differs from embedded *saj*’ in the directionality of the unit as a whole: while the earlier example of Q 100:11 is similarly dependent on its preceding verses in *sense*, it is *structurally* retrospective in its return to the *inna ... la-...* pattern of Q 100:6–8. The differences between stepped *saj*’ and embedded *saj*’ are however subtle, and Qur’anic examples require careful assessment on a case-by-case basis. The same will be seen to be true with regard to discerning the boundaries between linear *saj*’ and grammatically parallel *saj*’.

Moving on within Sūrat al-Furqān, the following text unit is similarly complex in structure. The close of v. 16 is linked to the middle of v. 15 via the recurrence of the *w-‘d* root: *jannatu l-khuldi llatī wu‘ida l-muttaqūna* returns as *kāna ‘alā rabbika wa‘dan mas‘ulā*. The three final cola, moreover, can be read as being dependent upon an introductory phrase: *qul a-dhālika khayrun am jannatu l-khuldi llatī wu‘ida l-muttaqūna*. The three statements, “Say, ‘Which is better, this or the lasting Garden that has been promised to those who fear [God]? [There] they will have their reward and their journey’s end,’” “Say, ‘Which is better, this or the lasting Garden that has been promised to those who fear [God] ... There they will find everything they wish for and there they will stay,’” and “Say, ‘Which is better, this or the lasting Garden that has been promised to those who fear [God] ... This is a binding promise from your Lord,’” all cohere both grammatically and thematically. There would seem to be an argument, therefore, for introducing a *saj*’*ah* break in the middle of v. 15, and again in the middle of v. 16, such that the three final cola, all of which could attach independently to the preceding introductory phrase, display near-matched accental beats of 4–5–5.

<sup>15</sup> (*qul / a-dhālika / khayrun / am / jannatu / l-khuldi / llatī / wu‘ida / l-muttaqūna /*)

*kānat / lahum / jazā’an / wa-maṣīrā //*

<sup>16</sup> *lahum / fihā / mā / yashā’ūna / khālidīna /*

*kāna / ‘alā / rabbika / wa‘dan / mas‘ulā //*

<sup>15</sup> (Which is better, this or the lasting Garden that has been promised to those who fear [God]?)

[There] they will have their reward and their journey’s end.

<sup>16</sup> There they will find everything they wish for and there they will stay.

This is a binding promise from your Lord.

The breaking of single verses into multiple *saj*’ units is already acknowledged in the Western Academy. Devin Stewart, again, raised this in his 1990 article on *saj*’ in the Qur’an, citing the examples of Q 69:30–31 (*khudhūhu fa-ghullūh \* thumma l-jahīma ṣallūh*) and Q 112:3–4 (*lam yalid wa-lam yūlad \* wa-lam yakun lahu kufūwan aḥad*), both of which, Stewart argues, comprise three-*saj*’*ah* units, rotating around the internal rhyme created by *khudhūhu* and *ghullūhu*, on the one hand, and *yalid* and *yūlad*, on the other.<sup>14</sup> Two things should immediately be noted about

this proposition. One is the slight imprecision of the rhyme between *yālid*, *yūlad*, and *aḥad*, an imprecision that is not of course unprecedented in the Qur'an.<sup>15</sup> The other is the implication this has for the observation of pausal forms in *saj'*. If Q 69:30–31 is read in line with the accepted principles of Qur'an recitation (*tajwīd*), this *saj'* unit does not rhyme. In order for rhyme to be maintained, Q 69:30–31 must either be read as *khudhūhu fa-ghullūhu thumma l-jaḥīma ṣallūhu*, ignoring pausal form, or as *khudhūh fa-ghullūh thumma l-jaḥīma ṣallūh*, such that pausal form is upheld mid-verse. Returning to the example of Sūrat al-Furqān, if Q 25:15–16 were to be divided such that the final three cola constituted separate *saj'ahs* and end-rhyme were to be maintained, this would require the *fathah* at the end of the mid-verse *khālidīna* to be lengthened, and read *khālidīnā*. A precedent for this is set by the rhyme word at the end of v. 17, *sabīla*, which logic dictates must have been read *sabīlā*.<sup>16</sup>

The rhythmical division of vv. 15–16 into three *saj'ahs* of near-matched accentual beats, emerging from an introductory phrase, “Say, ‘Which is better, this or the lasting Garden that has been promised to those who fear [God] ...,’” would therefore appear to be uncomplicated by any disturbances in the end-rhyme. While the closeness of the rhyme between *maṣīrā* and *mas'ulā* is not maintained (there is a strong case for the argument that Qur'anic *r* rhymes with Qur'anic *l*, just as *ī* rhymes with *ū*), the degree of correspondence between the hypothetical *saj'ah*-final terms *maṣīrā*, *khālidīnā*,

Table 6.5 Breaking Q 25:11–19 into three subunits

I	8	<sup>11</sup> <i>bal / kadhdhabū / bi-l-sā'ati / wa-a'tadnā / li-man / kadhdhaba / bi-l-sā'ati / sa'īrā //</i>
	9	<sup>12</sup> <i>idhā / ra'athum / min / makānin / ba'īdin / sami'ū / lahā / taghayyuzan / wa-zafīrā //</i>
	9	<sup>13</sup> <i>wa-idhā / ulqū / minhā / makānan / ḍayyiqan / muqarranīna / da'aw / hunālika / thubūrā //</i>
	8	<sup>14</sup> <i>lā tad'ū / l-yawma / thubūran / wāḥidan / wa-d'ū / thubūran / kathīrā //</i>
II	(9)	<sup>15</sup> ( <i>qul / a-dhālika / khayrun / am / jannatu / l-khuldi / llatī / wu'ida / l-muttaqūna</i> )
	4	<i>kānat / lahum / jazā'an / wa-maṣīrā //</i>
	5	<sup>16</sup> <i>lahum / fīhā / mā / yashā'ūna / khālidīnā /</i>
	5	<i>kāna / 'alā / rabbika / wa'dan / mas'ulā //</i>
III	16	<sup>17</sup> <i>wa-yawma / yaḥshuruhum / wa-mā / ya'budūna / min / dūni / llāhi / fa-yaqūlu / a-antum / aḍlaltum / 'ibādī / hā'ulā'i / am / hum / ḍallū / l-sabīlā //</i>
	16	<sup>18</sup> <i>qālū / subḥānaka / mā / kāna / yanbaghī / lanā / an / nattakhidha / min / dūnika / min / awliyā'a / wa-lākin / matta'tahum / wa-ābā'ahum / ḥattā / nasū / l-dhikra / wa-kānū / qawman / būrā //</i>
	15	<sup>19</sup> <i>fa-qad / kadhdhabūkum / bi-mā / taqūlūna / fa-mā / tastaḥī'ūna / ṣarfan / wa-lā / naṣran / wa-man / yazlim / minkum / nudhiqhu / 'adhāban / kabīrā //</i>

and *mas'ulā* is still sufficient to classify as Qur'anic rhyme. The proposed *saj'* unit Q 25:15–16 is, moreover, bound with a closely set terminological *inclusio*, a device for which I have coined the term “circular band”: the repetition of the *w- 'd* root in the middle of v. 15 and at the end of v. 16 adds an element of structural cohesion to this *saj'* unit that is circular rather than parallel. Unlike the repeated *idhā ... idhā ...* in vv. 12 and 13, there is no suggestion that the repeated *wu'ida ... wa'd* might reside in structural parallel. While the example of Q 100 cited above makes it clear that *saj'* units are not thematic units—that a *muqsam bihi* (“that which is sworn by”) can, for example, reside in a different *saj'* unit to a *muqsam 'alayhi* (“that which is sworn”) and, I would posit, an *idhā* (“when”) construction can be structurally and rhythmically distinct from its apodosis—further examples of circular bands will occur below, and it will be seen that such structuring techniques can be used specifically in order to further embellish Qur'anic *saj'* units. Verses 17–19 of Sūrat al-Furqān, meanwhile, are nearly matched in their accentual beats, counting in at 16–16–15 respectively: an apparent example of what Ibn al-Athīr would term long *saj'*.

*ii Q 19:88–90 as an Example of “Unbalanced” Saj'*

Ibn al-Athīr's next cited example of “unbalanced” Qur'anic *saj'* is taken from Sūrat Maryam (Q 19:88–90). It is indeed possible to read vv. 88–89 as a single *saj'ah* which, together with v. 90, form a two-*saj'ah* unit of 8–9 accentual beats.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *wa-qālū / ttakhadha / l-rahmānu / waladan //* <sup>89</sup> *la-qad / ji'tum / shay'an / iddā //*

<sup>90</sup> *takādu / l-samāwātu / yatafattarna / minhu / wa-tanshaqqu / l-arḍu / wa-takhirru / l-jibālu / haddā //*

<sup>88</sup> They say, “The Lord of Mercy has a child.” <sup>89</sup> How terrible is this thing you assert!

<sup>90</sup> It almost causes the heavens to be torn apart, the earth to split asunder, the mountains to crumble to pieces ...

This fulfills Ibn al-Athīr's criteria for the “unbalanced” *saj'* in illustration of which he cites this passage: vv. 88–89, when laid out as a couplet in this way, present a near-matched rhythmical unit, in which the second *saj'ah* of the unit (v. 90) is one beat longer than the first (vv. 88–89). That adjacent verses can be combined into a single unit in order to match a surrounding rhythm is explicitly acknowledged by Ibn al-Athīr.<sup>18</sup>

The two verses that follow this pericope are, however, indisputably connected to Ibn al-Athīr's cited *saj'* unit.<sup>19</sup> It is not unfeasible that these verses, too, could be combined into a single *saj'ah*, producing the following three-*saj'ah* rhythmical unit of 8–9–10 accentual beats:

<sup>88</sup> *wa-qālū / ttakhadha / l-rahmānu / waladan //* <sup>89</sup> *la-qad / ji'tum / shay'an / iddā //*

<sup>90</sup> *takādu / l-samāwātu / yatafaṭṭarna / minhu / wa-tanshaqqu / l-arḍu / wa-takhirru / l-jibālu / haddā //*

<sup>91</sup> *an / da'aw / li-l-rahmāni / waladan //* <sup>92</sup> *wa-mā / yanbighī / li-l-rahmāni / an / yattakhidha / waladā //*

<sup>88</sup> They say, "The Lord of Mercy has a child." <sup>89</sup> How terrible is this thing you assert!

<sup>90</sup> It almost causes the heavens to be torn apart, the earth to split asunder, the mountains to crumble to pieces,

<sup>91</sup> That they attribute a child to the Lord of Mercy. <sup>92</sup> It does not befit the Lord of Mercy to have a child.

Moreover, the following textual unit within Sūrat Maryam would then appear to be a five-verse *saj'* unit (vv. 93–97) whose second and third verses can be combined in order to create a four-*saj'ah* unit of near-matched accentual beats (9–9–9–10; see Table 6.6). Although there would be no great rhythmic disparity between the *saj'* units Q 19:88–92 and Q 19:93–97, it is nonetheless tempting to describe vv. 88–92 as a *saj'* unit enclosed by a circular band (*al-rahmān* + *waladā* at vv. 88, 91, and 92), and vv. 93–97 as a *saj'* unit with a slightly extended rhyme in CvCCā and a degree of further correspondence provided by the echo between *al-rahmāni 'abdā* in v. 93 and *al-rahmānu wuddā* in v. 96. The fourteen accentual beats of the surah-final v. 98, meanwhile, like the final verse of Q 93 discussed above, seem to constitute an independent *saj'* unit within the surah, rhythmically disconnected from the material that immediately precedes it. The argument for the division of the final verses of Sūrat Maryam into

Table 6.6 Proposing an initial segmentation of Q 19:88–98 into three subunits

I	8	<sup>88</sup> <i>wa-qālū / ttakhadha / l-rahmānu / waladan //</i> <sup>89</sup> <i>la-qad / ji'tum / shay'an / iddā //</i>
	9	<sup>90</sup> <i>takādu / l-samāwātu / yatafaṭṭarna / minhu / wa-tanshaqqu / l-arḍu / wa-takhirru / l-jibālu / haddā //</i>
	10	<sup>91</sup> <i>an / da'aw / li-l-rahmāni / waladan //</i> <sup>92</sup> <i>wa-mā / yanbighī / li-l-rahmāni / an / yattakhidha / waladā //</i>
II	9	<sup>93</sup> <i>in / kullu / man / fi l-samāwāti / wa-l-arḍi / illā / ātī / l-rahmāni / 'abdā //</i>
	9	<sup>94</sup> <i>la-qad / aḥṣāhum / wa-'addahum / 'addan //</i> <sup>95</sup> <i>wa-kulluhum / ātīhi / yawma / l-qiyāmati / fardā //</i>
	9	<sup>96</sup> <i>inna / lladhīna / āmanū / wa-'amilū / l-ṣāliḥāti / sa-yaj'alu / lahumu / l-rahmānu / wuddā //</i>
	10	<sup>97</sup> <i>fa-innamā / yassarnāhu / bi-lisānika / li-tubashshira / bihi / l-muttaqīna / wa-tundhira / bihi / qawman / luddā //</i>
III	14	<sup>98</sup> <i>wa-kam / ahlaknā / qablahum / min / qarnin / hal / tuḥissu / minhum / min / aḥadin / aw / tasma'u / lahum / rikzā //</i>

three thematically or rhythmically defined *saj'* units (vv. 88–92, vv. 93–97, and v. 98) is relatively solid.

Plausible though such a division of Q 19:88–98 into relatively long, rhythmically defined *saj'ahs* might be, however, this is by no means the only way of partitioning this particular pericope. Verse 98, for instance, is remarkable in the fact that it falls into three near-matched cola of 5–5–4 accentual beats, the first two of which might plausibly be posited to exhibit a degree of grammatical parallelism: clause one terminates *min qarn*, clause two *min aḥad*:

<sup>98</sup> *wa-kam / ahlaknā / qablahum / min / qarn /  
hal / tuḥissu / minhum / min / aḥad /  
aw / tasma'u / lahum / rikzā //*

<sup>98</sup> How many generations We have destroyed before them!  
Do you perceive a single one of them now,  
Or hear more than a whisper?

At first glance, *qarn* and *aḥad* do not rhyme. The apparently random interplay between –CCā and –CvCā *fāṣilahs* in Sūrat al-Kahf (Q 18), however, suggests that there might nonetheless be a degree of internal correspondence between these two morphological patterns.<sup>20</sup> Indeed, in Chapter 8 of this volume, Devin Stewart proposes the addition of a supplementary short vowel in words of the CvCC morphological pattern, transforming the scribal *al-raj'*, *al-ṣad'*, *faṣl*, *hazl*, into the phonetic *al-raji'*, *al-ṣadi'*, *faṣil*, *hazil*.<sup>21</sup> These two factors combine to render plausible a reading of *qarn* as *qar(i)n*. A supplementary, rhyme-motivated *kasrah* would thus be added in order to maintain the phonetic correspondence between the five accentual beat clause *wa-kam ahlaknā qablahum min qar(i)n* and the subsequent five accentual beat clause *hal tuḥissu minhum min aḥad*.

The problem nonetheless remains that, while *min qar(i)n* and *min aḥad* might be argued to rhyme with one another, they categorically do not rhyme with the verse-final word of Q 19:98: *rikzā*. Here it is helpful to turn to the contextual foils provided by Ibn al-Athīr's predecessor Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013).<sup>22</sup> Despite the fact that al-Bāqillānī strenuously denies the appropriateness of the term *saj'* when applied to the Qur'an's rhetorical features, he alludes to a number of verse-medial rhymes within his discussion of passages erroneously cited as evidence of the presence of *saj'* in the Qur'an. Indeed, for al-Bāqillānī, a self-contained degree of rhyme seems to have been the single defining feature in passages of the Qur'an claimed by others as instances of *saj'*.<sup>23</sup> Thus al-Bāqillānī gainsays the accuracy of reports that posit the first part of Q 16:27 as an example of Qur'anic *saj'*:

<sup>27</sup> *thumma / yawma / l-qiyāmati / yukhzhīm /  
wa-yaqūlu / ayna / shurakā'iya / lladhīna / kuntum / tushāqqūna / fḥim / ...*

<sup>27</sup> On the Day of Resurrection, He will shame them  
And say, “Where are these partners of Mine on whose account you opposed [Me]?” ...

While rhyme is maintained across these two hypothetical *saj'ahs* and this particular passage is thematically self-contained, there is no rhythmic balance (the unit consists of 4–7 accentual beats) and this alleged *saj'* unit resides outside of the surrounding rhyme (the masculine sound plural ending *-ūn/-īn*) of Sūrat al-Naḥl (Q 16) itself.

Al-Bāqillānī also cites the example of the central part of Q 9:24:

<sup>24</sup> (... *aḥabba / ilaykum / mina /*  
*llāhi / wa-rasūlih /*  
*wa-jihādin / fī / sabīlih / ...*

<sup>24</sup> (... dearer to you than)  
God and His messenger  
And the struggle in His cause ...

Although this particular fact is not specified by al-Bāqillānī, this passage must be dependent upon the introductory phrase that terminates *aḥabba ilaykum mina* (“dearer to you than”), from which both *allāhi wa-rasūlihi* (“God and His messenger”) and *jihādin fī sabīlihi* (“the struggle in His cause”) emerge (and which has accordingly been shown in parentheses, above). The two *saj'ahs* then contain a rhythmically acceptable 2–3 accentual beats. Nonetheless, the dominant rhyme pattern of the surah consists in the masculine sound plural. The alleged *saj'* couplet is accordingly embedded within Q 9:24 rather than residing in parallel with it. The verse in its entirety reads as follows:

<sup>24</sup> *qul / in / kāna / ābā`ukum / wa-abnā`ukum / wa-ikhwānukum / wa-*  
*azwājukum / wa-`ashīratukum / wa-amwālun / iqtaraftumūhā / wa-tijāratun /*  
*takhshawna / kasādahā / wa-masākinu / tarḍawnahā / **aḥabba / ilaykum /***  
***mina / llāhi / wa-rasūlihi / wa-jihādin / fī / sabīlihi / fa-tarabbaṣū / ḥattā /***  
*ya`tiya / llāhu / bi-amrihi / wa-llāhu / lā / yahdī / l-qawma / l-fāsiqīn //*

A third passage mentioned by al-Bāqillānī spans two verses of Sūrat Āl Imrān (Q 3:48–49):

<sup>48</sup> ... *wa-l-tawrāta / wa-l-injīl //*  
<sup>49</sup> *wa-rasūlan / ilā / banī / isrā`īl / ...*

<sup>48</sup> ... and the Torah and the Gospel,  
<sup>49</sup> [Sending him] as a messenger to the Banū Isrā`īl ...

Here we have a proposed two-verse *saj*' unit of 2–4 accentual beats that requires the inclusion of the additional three accentual beats of the phrase that precedes it: *wa-yu'allimuhu l-kitāba wa-l-ḥikmata* ("He will teach him scripture and wisdom") in order to make sense, rendering this a *saj*' unit of 5–4 accentual beats. While the cited passage itself displays internal rhyme, this section of Sūrat Āl 'Imrān maintains a prevailing rhyme in *-ūn/-īn/-ūm/-īm*, from which the *fāṣilah* of v. 48 is an anomaly.

Al-Bāqillānī's final example of a passage erroneously posited by others as Qur'anic *saj*' is taken from Sūrat Maryam (Q 19:4):

<sup>4</sup> ... *innī* /  
*wahana* / *l-'aẓmu* / *minnī* / ...

<sup>4</sup> ... Indeed  
My bones have weakened ...

The internal rhyme between *innī* and *minnī* creates a bottom heavy (1–3 accentual beats) two-part *saj*' unit that has no thematic integrity.<sup>24</sup> Zechariah's reported speech continues with the statement: *wa-shta'ala l-ra'su shayban wa-lam akun bi-du'ā'ika rabbi shaqiyyā* ("and my hair is ashen grey, but never, Lord, have I ever prayed to you in vain"). The rhythm of the wider thematic unit has a certain prosodic structure due to the balance between its two central cola (a matched 3–3 accentual beats), but there is no phonetic unity to the *saj*'-final words that are thereby created: *innī*, *minnī*, *shaybā*, and *shaqiyyā*.

It is clear from the examples provided within al-Bāqillānī's *I'jāz* that the assumption that verse divisions and their attendant end-rhyme must always take precedence in the identification of Qur'anic passages as *masjū*' does not stand up to scrutiny. It is not inconceivable, therefore, that the 5–5 matched accentual beats of *wa-kam ahlaknā qablahum min qar(i)n* and *hal tuḥissu minhum min aḥad* in Q 19:98 might form an independent two-*saj*'-ah unit that resides in parallel to the dominant rhyme of the surrounding surah. Indeed, the much later rhetorician Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418) explicitly refers to two Qur'anic passages as containing *saj*' within *saj*' (*saj'an fī saj'*). He explains that *'alā amwālihim* and *'alā qulūbihim* form a separate *saj*' unit within *rabbānā ṭmis 'alā amwālihim wa-shdud 'alā qulūbihim fa-lā yu'minū ḥattā yarawu l-'adhāba l-alīm* (Q 10:88, "... Our Lord, obliterate their wealth and harden their hearts so that they do not believe until they see the agonizing torment"). Similarly, al-Qalqashandī posits *bi-ākhidhīhi* and *tughmidū fīhi* as two embedded *saj*'-ahs (*saj'atān dākhilatān*) within *wa-lastum bi-ākhidhīhi illā an tughmidū fīhi wa-'lamū anna llāha ghaniyyun ḥamīd* (Q 2:267, "... You would not accept them unless your eyes were closed. Remember that God is self-sufficient, worthy of all praise"). Al-Qalqashandī is explicit about the cited unit, in both instances, forming a *saj*' unit into which a pair of *saj*'-ahs is embedded.<sup>25</sup>

Returning to the wider passage Q 19:88–98, the internal rhythms of the beginning of this pericope similarly invite further investigation. The repeated feminine

imperfect verbs of v. 90 (*takādu ... wa-tanshaqqu ... wa-takhirru ...*) create a lilting rhythm to this verse that is not reflected in the verses that surround it. In Table 6.6, this disparity was smoothed over by the summation of vv. 88–89, and of vv. 91–92, into two single *saj'ahs*, thereby creating a near-matched 8–9–10 unit rhyming in *-dā*. Rhythmically, however, it seems equally feasible to leave the *saj'* boundaries of vv. 88–89 and 91–92 at their original verse borders, and to divide v. 90 into two, thereby creating the following 4–4–4–5–4–6 *rhythmical* unit:

<sup>88</sup> *wa-qālū / ttakhadha / l-raḥmānu / waladā //*

<sup>89</sup> *la-qad / ji'tum / shay'an / iddā //*

<sup>90</sup> *takādu / l-samāwātu / yatafaṭṭarna / minhu /*

*wa-tanshaqqu / l-arḍu / wa-takhirru / l-jibālu / haddā //*

<sup>91</sup> *an / da'aw / li-l-raḥmāni / waladā /*

<sup>92</sup> *wa-mā / yanbigḥī / li-l-raḥmāni / an / yattakhidha / waladā //*

<sup>88</sup> They say, “The Lord of Mercy has a child.”

<sup>89</sup> How terrible is this thing you assert!

<sup>90</sup> It almost causes the heavens to be torn apart,  
The earth to split asunder, the mountains to crumble to pieces,

<sup>91</sup> That they attribute a child to the Lord of Mercy.

<sup>92</sup> It does not befit the Lord of Mercy to have a child.

Two evident problems arise with this structural solution to vv. 88–92. Rhythmically, the three repeated feminine imperfect verbs of a bi-fold v. 90 protrude from their aural environment to no less a degree than they did from the unified v. 90 of Table 6.6. Although a degree of rhythmical unity is maintained across the entire passage, there remains an audible break at the beginning of v. 90 which should, perhaps, not be ignored. Phonetically, meanwhile, the *saj'ah*-final word of v. 90a (*minhu*) clearly does not rhyme with the *saj'ah*-final words that surround it. For a solution to both of these problems we shall turn to another medieval rhetorician: Abū 'Abd Allāh Jalāl al-Dīn al-Qazwīnī (d. 739/1338).<sup>26</sup>

In his 1990 article on *saj'* in the Qur'an, Devin Stewart mentions the existence of a *saj'* category to which he gives the label “a quatrain” (the *rubā'ī* form). As Stewart explains, a poetic quatrain consists of four hemistichs of which the first, second, and fourth hemistichs rhyme. When this pattern is translated into *saj'*, Stewart posits a situation in which the *rubā'ī* form becomes a paradigm in which two *saj'ahs* of equal length are followed by a third *saj'ah* about twice as long as the previous two *saj'ahs*. Ibn al-Athīr provides a passage of his own composition in illustration of such “bottom-heavy” *saj'*, but al-Qazwīnī cites Q 69:30–31: *khudhūhu fa-ghullūh \* thumma l-jahīma ṣallūh*.<sup>27</sup>

As Stewart suggests, in his analysis of al-Qazwīnī's statement, the first verse contains two *saj'ahs*, while the second verse contains three times the number of accental beats of the preceding two *saj'ahs*, with the suggestion—if this passage were to be read as an example of the “quatrain” (*rubā'ī*) form—of an internal break after *al-jahīm*. The four *saj'ahs* from Sūrat al-Ḥāqqah would then read 1–1–2–1 as follows:

<sup>30</sup> *khudhūh /*  
*fa-ghullūh //*  
<sup>31</sup> *thumma / l-jahīm /*  
*ṣallūh //*

<sup>30</sup> Take him.

Collar him.

<sup>31</sup> To the burning Fire

Lead him.

As one might expect from the quatrain form, this unit displays a relatively clear rhyme in CvC(C)ūh at the end of *saj'ahs* I, II, and IV, while *saj'ah* III terminates in the non-corresponding end-word *al-jahīm*. Although all four *saj'ahs* rhyme loosely in CvC(C)ū/C, the very close rhyme of *saj'ahs* I, II, and IV is not maintained in *saj'ah* III.

This is not the only way in which *saj'ah* III protrudes, however. Rhythmically, its two accentual beats are in sharp contrast to the single accentual beats of *saj'ahs* I, II, and IV. Grammatically, meanwhile, *saj'ah* III differs from *saj'ahs* I, II, and IV in not being in itself a complete clause. The threefold rhythmic, phonetic, and grammatical anomaly that would be the third *saj'ah* of a proposed four-*saj'ah* unit encompassing Q 69:30–31 consequently suggests that the “quatrain” (*rubā'ī*) form is not, perhaps, the most apposite model for Qur'anic passages of this particular type. Q 69:31 seems, rather, to exist outside of the rhythmic texture of its surroundings in a way that is reminiscent of an introductory phrase, rendering the passage in its entirety as follows:

<sup>30</sup> *khudhūh /*  
*fa-ghullūh //*  
<sup>31</sup> (*thumma / l-jahīma /*)  
*ṣallūh //*

<sup>30</sup> Take him.

Collar him.

<sup>31</sup> (To the burning Fire)

Lead him.

The idea that parts of a Qur'anic verse can be *masjū'*, while other parts exist in structural isolation from the *saj'* unit in which they are *prima facie* located, provides a useful paradigm for the classification of *saj'* structures. From the pages of al-Bāqillānī, it seems clear that *saj'* was posited for Qur'anic passages bound consistently by a strong degree of internal rhyme, but only occasionally by a matched correspondence in rhythm. These passages were always short, and rarely seem to have coincided with the prevailing rhyme of the surah within which they were embedded. Ibn al-Athīr, meanwhile, identifies the *masjū'* passages of the Qur'an as places where rhythmic correspondence occurs *within* the confines of the prevailing rhyme of the surah. Single

*saj'ahs* might incorporate more than one Qur'anic verse, thereby exhibiting internal rhyme correspondences, but where two rhythmic cola are bound by contrasting final terms, Ibn al-Athīr's habit would seem to have been to combine these into an arrhythmic *saj'ah*, rather than translate the quatrain form literally, such that rhythm was maintained within a I, II, IV rhyme pattern. Indeed, it seems apparent that what Ibn al-Athīr intended, in his citation of Q 19:88–90 as an example of unbalanced *saj'*, was an 8–9 accentual beat unit consisting of vv. 88–89 and v. 90. It is equally clear, however, that Q 19:88–90 could equally well be divided into smaller rhythmic units of 4–4–4–5 accentual beats. Al-Qazwīnī's cited example of Q 69:30–31 opens up the possibility that one of these smaller units might be removed from the prevailing rhyme, such that the phonetic integrity of the wider passage is maintained.

The challenge nonetheless remains of how best to tabulate the contrasting rhymes, rhythms, and correspondences of Q 19:88–98 in *saj'* form. In Table 6.7, vv. 88–89 have been laid out as a two-*saj'ah* unit of matched accentual beats (4–4). Verses 90–91 have been depicted as a three-*saj'ah* unit, somewhat unbalanced, from which the first *saj'ah* has been removed from the surrounding phonetic texture as a quasi-introductory phrase. Verse 92 then stands alone, its six accentual beats placing it rhythmically apart from the preceding. It accordingly serves as an audible closer to this thematic unit; compare the similar structures of Q 100:11 and Q 25:14 as laid out above. Dotted lines have been used between *saj'* units I, II, and III to reflect the presence of a complex circular band: *al-rahmānu waladā* (v. 88) returns in both v. 91 (*li-l-rahmāni waladā*) and v. 92 (*wa-mā yanbaghī li-l-rahmāni an yattakhidha waladā*).

A new thematic unit opens in Table 6.7 with subunit IV, whose closely matched accentual beats (9–9–9–10) are significantly longer than those of the

Table 6.7 Proposing a subsequent segmentation of Q 19:88–98 into six subunits

I	4 4	<sup>88</sup> <i>wa-qālū / ttakhadha / l-rahmānu / waladā //</i> <sup>89</sup> <i>la-qad / ji'tum / shay'an / iddā //</i>
II	(4) 5 4	<sup>90</sup> ( <i>takādu / l-samawātu / yatafaṭṭarna / minhu /</i> ) <i>wa-tanshaqu / l-arḍu / wa-takhirru / l-jibālu / haddā //</i> <sup>91</sup> <i>an / da'aw / li-l-rahmāni / waladā //</i>
III	6	<sup>92</sup> <i>wa-mā / yanbaghī / li-l-rahmāni / an / yattakhidha / waladā //</i>
IV	9 9 9 10	<sup>93</sup> <i>in / kullu / man / fi l-samāwāti / wa-l-arḍi / illā / ātī / l-rahmāni / 'abdā //</i> <sup>94</sup> <i>la-qad / aḥṣāhum / wa-'addahum / 'addan //</i> <sup>95</sup> <i>wa-kulluhum / ātīhi / yawma / l-qiyāmati / fardā //</i> <sup>96</sup> <i>inna / lladhīna / āmanū / wa-'amilū / l-ṣāliḥāti / sa-yaj'alu / lahumu / l-rahmānu / wuddā //</i> <sup>97</sup> <i>fa-innamā / yassarnāhu / bi-lisānika / li-tubashshira / bihi / l-muttaqīna / wa-tundhira / bihi / qawman / luddā //</i>
V	5 5	<sup>98</sup> <i>wa-kam / ahlaknā / qablahum / min / qar(i)n /</i> <i>hal / tuḥissu / minhum / min / aḥad /</i>
VI	4	<i>aw / tasma'u / lahum / rikzā //</i>

units that surround it. The grammatical parallelism and accommodated rhyme of *min qar(i)n* and *min aḥad* then creates a phonetically discrete pair of five accentual beat *saj‘ahs* out of the first two cola of v. 98.<sup>28</sup> The final colon of this verse, *aw tasma‘u lahum rikzā* (“Or hear more than a whisper?”) observes the dominant rhyme of the wider pericope. It has accordingly been separated from the preceding unit (rhyming in –CCā) by a dotted line. This reflects the use of dotted lines to demarcate the grammatical and rhythmical inclusions Q 100:9–10 and Q 25:12–13, above.

iii *Q 56:27–30 as an Example of “Unbalanced” Saj‘*

The apparent complexity of Qur’anic *saj‘* becomes even more apparent in the final example of “unbalanced” *saj‘* to be cited by Ibn al-Athīr. The opening statement of the detailed description of “those on the right” from Sūrat al-Wāqī‘ah (Q 56:27–30) is included in Ibn al-Athīr’s section on bottom-heavy *saj‘* in illustration of the fact that, despite the permissibility of combining two verses in order to match a surrounding rhythmical structure,<sup>29</sup> the Qur’an also includes strings of evenly matched verses which are not intended to be summed together. Q 56:27–30 is described by Ibn al-Athīr as a single *saj‘* unit on a rhythm of two accentual beats. Ibn al-Athīr thus counts all of v. 27, and the initial *fī* of v. 28, as an introductory phrase, whose accentual beats are not included in the tally. The beginning of the unit is thus marked by the presence of this introductory phrase, *wa-aṣḥābu l-yamīni mā aṣḥābu l-yamīn \* fī ...* (“Those on the Right! What People they are! [They will dwell] amid ...”). The end of the unit suggested by Ibn al-Athīr, however, is much less clear cut. Even though the depth of the matching end-rhyme dips in v. 31 (from CvCCin maCCūd to –Cin maCCūd/b), there nonetheless seems no reason not to include this verse, *wa-mā‘in maskūb* (“flowing water”) in the same *saj‘* unit. This phrase, after all, matches in accentual beats, displays the same grammatical form, and has a final word (*maskūb*) which corresponds morphologically to the preceding rhyme words *makhḍūd*, *mandūd*, and *mamdūd*; *d* and *b* are, moreover, commonly held to rhyme in Qur’anic contexts.<sup>30</sup> Verse 32, meanwhile, *wa-fākihatin kathīrah* (“abundant fruits”), is also logically and grammatically enjambed to the preceding, and matches it in accentual beats and basic grammatical structure.

<sup>27</sup> *wa-aṣḥābu / l-yamīni / mā / aṣḥābu / l-yamīn //*

<sup>28</sup> *fī / sidrin / makhḍūd //*

<sup>29</sup> *wa-ṭalḥin / mandūd //*

<sup>30</sup> *wa-ẓallin / mamdūd //*

<sup>31</sup> *wa-mā‘in / maskūb //*

<sup>32</sup> *wa-fākihatin / kathīrah //*

<sup>33</sup> *lā / maqṭū‘atin / wa-lā / mamnū‘ah //*

<sup>34</sup> *wa-furushin / marfū‘ah //*

<sup>27</sup> Those on the Right! What People they are!

<sup>28</sup> [They will dwell] amid thornless lotus,

- <sup>29</sup> And clustered acacia,  
<sup>30</sup> And spreading shade,  
<sup>31</sup> And flowing water,  
<sup>32</sup> And abundant fruits,  
<sup>33</sup> Never failing, never forbidden,  
<sup>34</sup> And exquisite<sup>31</sup> companions.<sup>32</sup>

As will be shown in Table 6.8, this passage from Sūrat al-Wāqī'ah (Q 56) can be divided into six apparent *saj'* units. The initial introductory phrase spawns a simple string of four two-beat phrases rhyming in *–Cin maCCūd/b*. This same introductory phrase then gives rise to two further, non-adjacent *saj'ahs* (vv. 32 and 34), again of two accentual beats each but rhyming in *–CūCah/–CīCah* and with a small degree of grammatical parallelism in their paired initial *wa*-s. The rhyme change between vv. 31 and 32 makes it clear that a new *saj'* unit begins at this juncture of the surah; the grammatical parallelism between vv. 32 and 34 suggests that these two verses are part of the same, two-*saj'ah* unit. Verse 33, meanwhile, is suspended in between vv. 32 and 34. While this verse, like vv. 32 and 34, rhymes in *–CūCah/–CīCah*, it can itself be divided into two *saj'ahs* of two accentual beats each, distinguished by their matched grammatical pattern (*lā ... wa-lā ...*) but consistent with the surrounding verses both in end-rhyme and in accentual beat patterning, comparable in many ways to the phonetically suspended unit that comprises the first two clauses of Q 19:98, but here grammatically rather than phonetically defined.

Verses 35–36 are structured differently again, with an initial *innā* spawning two closely matched verses rhyming in *–CaCnāhunna vCCāCā*. In addition to the change in rhyme, moreover, this section of the surah no longer stems from the initial introductory phrase in vv. 27 and 28, suggesting that there is without doubt a new *saj'* unit at this juncture, even though vv. 35–37 describe the “exquisite companions” which are arguably referred to in v. 34.<sup>33</sup> That such thematic considerations do not preclude the presence of more than one *saj'* unit within a block of text has been made clear by such previously argued examples as the Q 100 split *muqsam bihi* and *muqsam 'alayhi* and the Q 25 split *idhā* construction.

<sup>35</sup> *innā / ansha 'nāhunna / inshā 'ā //*

<sup>36</sup> *wa-ja 'alnāhunna / abkārā //*

<sup>35</sup> We created them anew,

<sup>36</sup> We rendered them virginal ...

The slight disparity in accentual beats (v. 35 contains three accentual beats, and v. 36 two accentual beats) suggests that the initial *innā* should be read as an introductory phrase. Verses 35–36 are then perfectly parallel: the two-beat *ansha 'nāhunna inshā 'ā* is matched by the two-beat *ja 'alnāhunna abkārā*.

Verse 37 (“Loving, of matching age”; *uruban atrābā*) is quite different, a non-verbal extension of v. 36. As such, therefore, *wa-ja 'alnāhunna* (“We rendered

them”), in itself under the influence of the introductory *innā* (“We”) of v. 36, holds grammatical sway of its own over three terms (all in the indefinite accusative): *abkārān*, *‘urubān*, and *atrābān*. It is worth observing the shallow rhyme, –*Can* or –*Cā*, of these three end-words. Rhyme could be argued to dictate that, within this passage from *Sūrat al-Wāqī‘ah*, the three consecutively rhyming end-words of vv. 36–37 be laid out as linear *saj‘*:

<sup>36</sup> *wa-ja‘alnāhunna / abkārā //* <sup>37</sup> *‘urubā / atrābā //*  
<sup>36</sup> We rendered them virginal, <sup>37</sup> loving, of matching age ...

Rhythmically, however, there is a strong counter-argument for the following 2–2–2–2 unit, ignoring the grammatical dependency of all of v. 37 on the *ja‘alnāhunna* of v. 36 and, indeed, ignoring the disturbance in end-rhyme that is created if the rhythmically equal, and grammatically enjambed, v. 38 (*li-aṣḥābi l-yamīn*, “For Those on the Right”) is collocated with its peers as part of the same *saj‘* unit:

<sup>35</sup> (*innā /*)  
*ansha‘nāhunna / inshā‘ā //*  
<sup>36</sup> *wa-ja‘alnāhunna / abkārā //*  
<sup>37</sup> *‘urubān / atrābā //*  
<sup>38</sup> *li-aṣḥābi / l-yamīn //*

Verse 38 is enjambed to the preceding, which can be logically represented as follows:

A <sup>35</sup> We (*innā*)  
 B Created them anew (*ansha‘nāhunna inshā‘ā*),  
 B <sup>36</sup> Rendered them virginal (*wa-ja‘alnāhunna abkārā*),  
 C <sup>37</sup> Loving, of matching age (*‘urubān atrābā*),  
 D <sup>38</sup> For Those on the Right (*li-aṣḥābi l-yamīn*).

Either of the B clauses could be removed without disturbing the sense of the Qur’anic passage; the C clause, similarly, is not required in order for clause D to make sense. At the same time, v. 38 matches the preceding verses in its accentual beat rhythm (2–2–2–2) while protruding from them in its end-rhyme (vCCāCā becomes *yamīn*). Indeed, Q 56:38 forms a circular band, both in terms of its rhyme and via lexical repetition, with Q 56:27 (*wa-aṣḥābu l-yamīni mā aṣḥābu l-yamīn*, “Those on the Right! What People they are!”). A similar device was arguably present in Q 19:88 and 92, both of which pivot around the terms *ittakhadha*, *al-raḥmān*, and *waladā*.

The three accentual beats of the final *saj‘* unit of this subsection, meanwhile (Q 56:39–40; see Table 6.8), may constitute a clear departure from the prevalent accentual beat pattern, and exhibit matched grammatical parallelism in their repeated *thullatun mina l-* ... constructs, but rhyme considerations nonetheless

serve to connect vv. 39–40 to the preceding verse 38.<sup>34</sup> With Q 56:35–38, the paradigms for *saj'* structures suggested thus far are exhausted.

It is difficult to rationalize the placement of Q 56:38 in the *saj'* structure of its environs. Considerations of rhythm link vv. 27–38 and 39–40. Rhyme, however, produces different subdivisions, with links between vv. 27 and 38–40, 28–31, 32–34, 35–37, and 38–40. Lexical or grammatical parallelism, meanwhile, suggest connections between vv. 27 and 38, 28–31, 32 and 34, 33a and 33b, 35–36, 36–37, and 39–40. This is far from the simple string of consecutive *saj'* units illustrated in Table 6.3 with reference to Q 93. The adjacent rhyme words at the end of vv. 36 and 37 are, however, strongly redolent of closure, and traversing this structural boundary with a further stich which moreover protrudes in end-rhyme seems unjustifiable. In my view, the passage in its entirety can best be laid out as shown in Table 6.8.

In Table 6.8, Q 56:38 has been categorized as a separate *saj'* unit, whose connection to the preceding material has been reflected in the placement of a dotted line dividing *saj'* units IV and V.<sup>35</sup> A firm structural border at the close of v. 38 is created by the strong grammatical parallelism of vv. 39 and 40, and the shift to three accentual beats at this juncture.<sup>36</sup> This overrides the presence of end-rhyme linking vv. 39–40 to v. 38 to create a separate *saj'* unit consisting of vv. 39–40. This structure has been reflected by the placement of a solid line between vv. 38 and 39. Ibn al-Athīr's suggested introductory phrase, meanwhile

Table 6.8 Breaking Q 56:27–40 into six subunits

I	6	<sup>27</sup> <i>wa-aṣḥābu / l-yamīni / mā / aṣḥābu / l-yamīn //</i>
II	(1) 2 2 2 2	<sup>28</sup> ( <i>fī /</i> <i>sidrin / makhḍūd //</i> <sup>29</sup> <i>wa-talḥin / mandūd //</i> <sup>30</sup> <i>wa-zallin / mamdūd //</i> <sup>31</sup> <i>wa-mā'in / maskūb //</i>
II	2	<sup>32</sup> <i>wa-fākihatin / kathīrah //</i>
III	2 2	<sup>33</sup> <i>lā / maqtū'ah /</i> <i>wa-lā / mamnū'ah //</i>
II	2	<sup>34</sup> <i>wa-furushin / marfū'ah //</i>
IV	(1) 2 2 2	<sup>35</sup> ( <i>innā /</i> <i>anṣha'nāhunna / inshā'ā //</i> <sup>36</sup> <i>wa-ja'alnāhunna / abkārā //</i> <sup>37</sup> <i>uruban / atrābā //</i>
V	2	<sup>38</sup> <i>li-aṣḥābi / l-yamīn //</i>
VI	3 3	<sup>39</sup> <i>thullatun / mina / l-awwalīn //</i> <sup>40</sup> <i>wa-thullatun / mina / l-ākhirīn //</i>

(*wa-aṣḥābu l-yamīni mā aṣḥābu l-yamīn \* fī*), has been split into a single opening *sajʿah* (see, for comparison, Q 25:11) followed by a short introductory phrase (*fī*).

### 3 Explicitly Short Sajʿ

Ibn al-Athīr cites four examples under the category “short *sajʿ*”. These examples are taken from Sūrat al-Mursalāt (Q 77:1–2), Sūrat al-Muddaththir (Q 74:1–7), Sūrat al-Najm (Q 53:1–3), and Sūrat al-Qamar (Q 54:1–3).

#### *i* Q 77:1–2 as an Example of “Short” Sajʿ

The opening two verses of Sūrat al-Mursalāt (Q 77), *wa-l-mursilāti ʿurfā \* fa-l-ʿāṣifāti ʿaṣfā*, are part of a seven-verse Qurʿanic “sentence” swearing to the truth of the promise God has made that the end of the world will come to pass. As in the previous example, there is no immediately perceptible reason for why Ibn al-Athīr should have suggested a unit consisting of these two verses in particular, and it initially seems possible that his citation might have been expected to serve merely as a prompt. Upon closer inspection, however, there is an argument for dividing the first six verses of Sūrat al-Mursalāt into couplets. A strong preference for rhyming couplets in *sajʿ* is expressed by the medieval rhetorical tradition.<sup>37</sup> The presence of the repeated incipial oath-marker *wa-* at v. 3, moreover, suggests a minor break at this juncture. Other oath series in the Qurʿan consist either of a string of repeated *wa-s*,<sup>38</sup> of an initial *wa-* followed by *fa-s*,<sup>39</sup> or, in one instance, by a series of initial *wa-s* followed by a string of *fa-s*.<sup>40</sup> In all of these instances, *wa-* is series- or oath-initial, while *fa-* serves only to connect one oath to another oath (introduced by either *wa-* or *fa-*) that precedes it.

A division of Q 77:1–7 at the second *wa-* produces the following pair of couplets:

<sup>1</sup> *wa-l-mursilāti ʿurfā*

<sup>2</sup> *fa-l-ʿāṣifāti ʿaṣfā*

<sup>1</sup> By the swiftly dispatched,

<sup>2</sup> By the violently storming ...

<sup>3</sup> *wa-l-nāshirāti nashrā*

<sup>4</sup> *fa-l-fāriqāti farqā*

<sup>3</sup> By the disparately scattering,

<sup>4</sup> By the forcefully separating ...

Moving on within the surah, v. 5 similarly opens with the medial oath-marker *fa-*. However, vv. 5–6 differ from the verses that precede them by dint of being enjambed. They moreover exhibit a high degree of internal rhyme (*dhikran*,

'*udhran*, and *nudhran* all being of the morphological pattern CvCr and displaying the matching indefinite accusative ending *-an* or, if read pausally, *-ā*). This might be taken to suggest that, like the example of Q 56:36–37 explicated above, these two verses comprise a discrete *saj'* unit that could plausibly be structured in a linear fashion.

<sup>5</sup> *fa-l-mulqiyāti dhikrā* <sup>6</sup> '*udhrā aw nudhrā*

<sup>5</sup> By the deliverers of reminders, <sup>6</sup> as proof or as warning ...

The force of the prevailing accentual beat pattern, however, suggests rather that Q 77:1–6 divides into three couplets: vv. 1–2, 3–4, and 5–6. This has been reflected in the layout of Table 6.9, within which v. 7, moreover, is presented as a single verse *saj'ah*. Despite the fact that vv. 7 and 8 both contain three accentual beats, the clear change in rhyme and the shift in grammatical pattern between v. 7 and v. 8 make it clear that a new *saj'* unit begins at this juncture.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>7</sup> *innamā tū 'adūna la-wāqi'*

<sup>8</sup> *fa-idhā l-nujūmu ṭumisat*

<sup>9</sup> *wa-idhā l-samā 'u furijat*

<sup>7</sup> What you are promised will come to pass.

<sup>8</sup> When the stars are dimmed,

<sup>9</sup> When the sky is torn apart ...

Single-verse closing *saj'ahs* seem very much to be a feature of Qur'anic *saj'* and were already observed with reference to Q 100:11 and Q 56:38.

Table 6.9 Breaking Q 77:1–7 into four subunits

I	2	<sup>1</sup> <i>wa-l-mursilāti / 'urfā //</i>
	2	<sup>2</sup> <i>fa-l- 'āṣifāti / 'aṣfā //</i>
II	2	<sup>3</sup> <i>wa-l-nāshirāti / nashrā //</i>
	2	<sup>4</sup> <i>fa-l-fāriqāti / farqā //</i>
III	2	<sup>5</sup> <i>fa-l-mulqiyāti / dhikrā //</i>
	3	<sup>6</sup> ' <i>udhran / aw / nudhrā //</i>
IV	3	<sup>7</sup> <i>innamā / tū 'adūna / la-wāqi' //</i>

ii Q 74:1–7 as an Example of “Short” Saj'

The next example of short Qur'anic *saj'* cited by Ibn al-Athīr is the opening five verses of Sūrat al-Muddaththir (Q 74; see Table 6.10) which, along with vv. 6–7, form the introductory paragraph to this surah. The matched *wa- ... fa- ...* grammatical structure of vv. 2–5 would initially appear to designate this a discrete

*saj*<sup>ʿ</sup> unit with a two-accentual-beat rhythm, attached to an introductory phrase (v. 1), *yā-ayyuhā l-muddaththir*. As was witnessed with regard to Q 56:33 and Q 25:12–13, the central material within this opening *saj*<sup>ʿ</sup> unit displays an increased degree of parallelism. The consistency of the accentual beat rhythm across vv. 1–5, however, coupled with the repeated grammatical structure, and the near-repeated end-rhyme, discourage any interpretation of Q 74:3–4 as an embedded *saj*<sup>ʿ</sup> unit within a wider *saj*<sup>ʿ</sup> structure.

<sup>1</sup> (*yā-ayyuhā / l-muddaththir //*)

<sup>2</sup> *qum / fa-andhir //*

<sup>3</sup> *wa-rabbaka / fa-kabbir //*

<sup>4</sup> *wa-thiyābaka / fa-ṭahhir //*

<sup>5</sup> *wa-l-rujza / fa-hjur //*

<sup>1</sup> (You, wrapped in your cloak,)

<sup>2</sup> Arise and give warning,

<sup>3</sup> Proclaim the greatness of your Lord,

<sup>4</sup> Cleanse your garments,

<sup>5</sup> Keep away from filth.

The subsequent increase to three accentual beats in v. 6, coupled with a slight shift in end-rhyme, would seem to mark the beginning of a fresh *saj*<sup>ʿ</sup> unit at this point.

<sup>6</sup> *wa-lā / tamnun / tastakthir //*

<sup>7</sup> *wa-li-rabbika / fa-ṣbir //*

<sup>6</sup> Do not give, hoping only to receive.

<sup>7</sup> Be steadfast in your Lord's cause.

The structure of Q 74:1–7 is, however, intriguing. The return to a slightly protruding end-rhyme in v. 6 (vv. 1 and 6 terminate in CvCCvC*thir*, as opposed to the *fa*-CvCC*ir* or *fa*-CC*ir* of vv. 2–5 and v. 7) is reminiscent of the much more obvious return to the *yamīn* rhyme in Q 56, and it is striking that in both cases the first occurrences of this protruding rhyme word would appear to occur in introductory phrases. The absence of direct lexical repetition, nonetheless, discourages any interpretation of Q 74:1.6 as forming a circular band. The resumption of the *wa*- ... *fa* -... grammatical pattern in v. 7, meanwhile, bears similarities to the return to an *inna* ... *la* ... pattern after a two-verse *saj*<sup>ʿ</sup> unit insertion in Q 100:11, yet it seems very unlikely that v. 6 might be classified as an independent embedded *saj*<sup>ʿ</sup> unit in any way comparable to Q 100:9–10. It should, moreover, be noted that vv. 6–7 are no less emergent from the introductory phrase *yā-ayyuhā l-muddaththir* than are vv. 2–5.

What we would appear to have here, then, is two *saj*<sup>ʿ</sup> units both of which open with a *saj*<sup>ʿ</sup>*ah* rhyming in CvCCvC*thir*, and neither of which should be

classified as introductory phrases. Both of these CvCCvC*thir saj'ahs* are then followed by either a short or a long run of two-accentual-beat *saj'ahs* of the pervading grammatical pattern *wa- ... fa- ...*. This is the interpretation of the structure of Q 74:1–7 that has been reflected in Table 6.10.

Table 6.10 Breaking Q 74:1–7 into two subunits

I	2	<sup>1</sup> <i>yā-ayyuhā / l-muddaththir //</i>
	2	<sup>2</sup> <i>qum / fa-andhir //</i>
	2	<sup>3</sup> <i>wa-rabbaka / fa-kabbir //</i>
	2	<sup>4</sup> <i>wa-thiyābaka / fa-ṭahhir //</i>
	2	<sup>5</sup> <i>wa-l-rujza / fa-hjur //</i>
II	3	<sup>6</sup> <i>wa-lā / tamnun / tastakthir //</i>
	2	<sup>7</sup> <i>wa-li-rabbika / fa-ṣbir //</i>

### iii Q 53:1–3 as an Example of “Short” Saj'

The first three verses of Sūrat al-Najm (Q 53), similarly cited by Ibn al-Athīr as an example of short *saj'*, are distinctive on account of the repeated *mā ... mā ... mā ...* grammatical construct of vv. 2 and 3. This was presumably felt to supersede the slight variety in the accentual beats of Q 53:1–3 in order to create a 3–5–4 *saj'* unit of these three verses, rhyming in *Cawā*.

<sup>1</sup> *wa-l-najmi / idhā / hawā //*

<sup>2</sup> *mā / ḍalla / ṣāhibukum / wa-mā / ghawā //*

<sup>3</sup> *wa-mā / yanṭiqu / 'ani / l-hawā //*

<sup>1</sup> By the star when it sets,

<sup>2</sup> Your companion has not strayed and is not deluded,

<sup>3</sup> He does not speak from [his own] desire.

Ibn al-Athīr's proposed *saj'* unit Q 53:1–3 is followed by a number of rhythmically defined pericopes. Verses 5–8 count in at a rhythm of three accentual beats; vv. 9–11 at five accentual beats; vv. 12–13 at four accentual beats; vv. 14–15 at three accentual beats; vv. 16–17 at five accentual beats; and v. 18 at six accentual beats. It should immediately be noted that, while v. 1 of Ibn al-Athīr's suggested unit is not rhythmically matched to the verses that follow it, this is not the case for v. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *in / huwa / illā / waḥyun / yūḥā //*

<sup>4</sup> It is nothing less than a revelation revealed.

Moreover, while rhythm would suggest a clear structural break between the five accentual beats of vv. 9–11 and the four accentual beats of vv. 12–13, there is also a case for arguing that the grammatical parallelism of the repeated *mā* closers of vv. 10–12 take precedence over the surah's accentual beat rhythm.

<sup>10</sup> *fa-awḥā / ilā / ‘abdiḥī / mā / awḥā //*

<sup>11</sup> *mā / kadhāba / l-fu’ādu / mā / ra’ā //*

<sup>12</sup> *a-fa-tumārūnahu / ‘alā / mā / yarā //*

<sup>10</sup> He revealed to His servant what he revealed.

<sup>11</sup> His own heart did not distort what he saw.

<sup>12</sup> Are you going to argue with him over what he sees?

A section break between vv. 12 and 13 is suggested by Angelika Neuwirth on thematic grounds: vv. 5–12 describe Muḥammad’s first vision; vv. 13–18 his second.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, logic would imply that vv. 8 and 9 reside together, with the *fa-* clauses of vv. 8, 9, and 10 all emerging from the *thumma* clause at the very beginning of v. 8.

<sup>8</sup> *thumma / danā / fa-tadallā //*

<sup>9</sup> *fa-kāna / qāba / qawsayni / aw / adnā //*

<sup>10</sup> *fa-awḥā / ilā / ‘abdiḥī / mā / awḥā //*

<sup>8</sup> Then he came near and descended.

<sup>9</sup> He was two bow-lengths away or even nearer.

<sup>10</sup> He revealed to His servant what he revealed.

The existence of possible areas of tension between what one might consider to be a thematic unit and what would nonetheless appear to be a *saj’*-informed unit was highlighted with reference to Sūrat al-‘Ādiyāt (Q 100) and Sūrat al-Furqān (Q 25) above. The situation in Sūrat al-Najm (Q 53) is, however, different. In Sūrat al-‘Ādiyāt, the *muqsam bihi* (“that which is sworn by”) of an oath was found to reside in a different *saj’* unit to the *muqsam ‘alayhi* (“that which is sworn”). In Sūrat al-Furqān, an *idhā* (“when”) construction was argued to be structurally and rhythmically distinct from its apodosis. In the opening verses of Sūrat al-Najm, rhythmical shifts, grammatical parallelism, and apparent thematic units provide frequently conflicting indicators of structural divide, and yet this entire surah is cited by al-Qalqashandī as exemplifying the presence of *saj’* in the Qur’an,<sup>43</sup> so it seems inconceivable that these apparent tensions should be dismissed as incidental.

In Table 6.11, an attempt has been made to create an orthographic system that might rationalize the various indicators at play in Q 53:1–18. Verse 1 has been placed in parentheses as an introductory phrase, thereby granting it immunity from the rhythmical texture of the verses that follow. While it could plausibly function as a stand-alone initial *saj’ah*, recalling the structures of Q 25:11 and Q 56:27, vv. 2, 3, and 4 can all be read as emerging from v. 1 with no loss of sense.

<sup>1</sup> (*wa-l-najmi / idhā / hawā //*)

<sup>2</sup> *mā / ḍalla / ṣāhibukum / wa-mā / ghawā //*

<sup>3</sup> *wa-mā / yanṭiqu / ‘ani / l-hawā //*

<sup>4</sup> *in / huwa / illā / waḥyun / yūḥā //*

<sup>1</sup> (By the star when it sets!)

<sup>2</sup> Your companion has not strayed and is not deluded.

<sup>3</sup> He does not speak from [his own] desire.

<sup>4</sup> It is nothing less than a revelation revealed.

The introductory phrase paradigm would, therefore, appear to be the most appropriate way of interpreting this verse.

The rhythmical integrity of vv. 5–8 has then been respected by the creation of *saj'* unit II, which reads as follows.

<sup>5</sup> *'allamahu / shadīdu / l-quwā //*

<sup>6</sup> *dhū / mirratin / fa-stawā //*

<sup>7</sup> *wa-huwa / bi-l-ufuqi / l-a'lā //*

<sup>8</sup> *thumma / danā / fa-tadallā //*

<sup>5</sup> It was taught to him by one with mighty powers

<sup>6</sup> And great strength. He stood

<sup>7</sup> On the highest horizon.

<sup>8</sup> Then he came near and descended.

Verses 9–11, meanwhile, with their distinctive five-beat accentual rhythm, are thematically dependent on the verses that precede them but can nonetheless be removed from the text of Sūrat al-Najm without creating a grammatical non-sense of its verses.

<sup>9</sup> *fa-kāna / qāba / qawsayni / aw / adnā //*

<sup>10</sup> *fa-awḥā / ilā / 'abdihi / mā / awḥā //*

<sup>11</sup> *mā / kadhaba / l-fu'ādu / mā / ra'ā //*

<sup>9</sup> He was two bow-lengths away or even nearer.

<sup>10</sup> He revealed to His servant what he revealed.

<sup>11</sup> His heart did not distort what he saw.

They have therefore been afforded their own *saj'* unit (unit III), separated from unit II by the presence of a dotted line to indicate thematic integrity, and indented to reflect their embedment.

A similar argument can be made regarding vv. 14–15: their three-beat rhythm and extended grammatical parallelism—a repeated *'inda* construct followed in both instances by an *idāfah* phrase wherein, moreover, the first of both sets of terms rhyme (both *sidrati* and *jannatu* being of the morphological form CvCCah)—sets them apart.

<sup>14</sup> *'inda / sidrati / l-muntahā //*

<sup>15</sup> *'indahā / jannatu / l-ma'wā //*

<sup>14</sup> By the Lote Tree of the Boundary,

<sup>15</sup> Near the Garden of Restfulness ...

The rhythmical and grammatically parallel unit that is vv. 14–15 is, moreover, removeable from its context without the sense of the passage being disturbed, and an alternative 4–4–5–5 structure consisting of vv. 12–13 and vv. 16–17 then becomes a plausible postulate.

<sup>12</sup> *a-fa-tumārūnahu / 'alā / mā / yarā //*

<sup>13</sup> *wa-la-qad / ra`āhu / nazlatan / ukhrā //*

<sup>16</sup> *idh / yaghshā / l-sidrata / mā / yaghshā //*

<sup>17</sup> *mā / zāgha / l-başaru / wa-mā / ṭaghā //*

<sup>12</sup> Are you going to dispute with him over what he sees?

<sup>13</sup> A second time he saw him,

<sup>16</sup> When the tree was somehow covered.

<sup>17</sup> His sight never wavered, nor was it too bold.

The potential removability of discrete clauses, verses, and even entire paragraphs is very much a feature of Qur'anic style and it would be impractical to make an attempt to designate every occasion where this might be the case. Nonetheless, if introductory phrases are to be recognized in *saj'* orthography by the indentation of each of the subsequent dependent clauses, it makes sense for a certain type of *saj'* paragraph to be similarly marked by an indentation. In the pages of this essay, this logic has been applied to *saj'* units, marked as such by contrasting rhythms, rhymes, or grammatical structures, that share with the cola that emerge from introductory phrases the grammatical quality of removability. Verses 12–13 have, therefore, been designated as unit IV in Table 6.11, while vv. 14–15 (unit V) have been placed within dotted lines (to indicate thematic cohesion) and indented (to reflect embedment). Verses 16–17 then represent unit VI. It should be noted that the string of *mā ... mā ... mā ...* clauses in vv. 16–17 are reminiscent of the *mā ... mā ... mā ...* clauses in vv. 2–3.

The shift to a new rhythmical and grammatical pattern in v. 18 has been taken to suggest that this verse is a stand-alone *saj'ah*, thematically connected to the preceding *saj'* units but rhythmically and structurally separate.

<sup>18</sup> *la-qad / ra`ā / min / āyāti / rabbihi / l-kubrā //*

<sup>18</sup> He saw some of His Lord's greatest signs.

This stand-alone *saj'ah* serves to seal this overarching thematic unit: vv. 19–28 shift to the topic of the female angels granted so-called intercessionary powers by the unbelievers. A similar phenomenon, whereby single-verse *saj'* units are located at the end of structural units, was visible in Q 77:7 and in Q 56:18, although in the latter case the situation was complicated by the rhyme ring in Q 56:1 and 18 and the extension of the structural unit Q 56:1–18 in the thematically and rhyme-linked Q 56:19–20.

Table 6.11 Breaking Q 53:1–18 into seven subunits

I	(3) 5 4 5	<sup>1</sup> (wa-l-naǰmi / idhā / hawā //) <sup>2</sup> mā / ǧalla / šāhibukum / wa-mā / ǧhawā // <sup>3</sup> wa-mā / yanṭiqu / 'ani / l-hawā // <sup>4</sup> in / huwa / illā / wahyun / yūhā //
II	3 3 3 3	<sup>5</sup> 'allamahu / shadīdu / l-quwā // <sup>6</sup> dhū / mirratin / fa-stawā // <sup>7</sup> wa-huwa / bi-l-ufuqi / l-a' lā // <sup>8</sup> thumma / danā / fa-tadallā //
III	5 5 5	<sup>9</sup> fa-kāna / qāba / qawsayni / aw / adnā // <sup>10</sup> fa-awḥā / ilā / 'abdihi / mā / awḥā // <sup>11</sup> mā / kadhaba / l-fu'ādu / mā / ra'ā //
IV	4 4	<sup>12</sup> a-fa-tumārūnahu / 'alā / mā / yarā // <sup>13</sup> wa-la-qad / ra'āhu / nazlatan / ukhrā //
V	3 3	<sup>14</sup> 'inda / sidrati / l-muntahā // <sup>15</sup> 'indahā / jannatu / l-ma'wā //
VI	5 5	<sup>16</sup> idh / yaghshā / l-sidrata / mā / yaghshā // <sup>17</sup> mā / zāgha / l-baṣaru / wa-mā / ṭaghā //
VII	6	<sup>18</sup> la-qad / ra'ā / min / āyāti / rabbihi / l-kubrā //

iv Q 54:1–3 as an Example of “Short” Saj'

Ibn al-Athīr's final example of short *saj'* is taken from Sūrat al-Qamar (Q 54), a surah he himself describes as being composed entirely in *saj'*. He proposes the 4–7–6 accentual beat vv. 1–3 as a stand-alone unit.

<sup>1</sup> *iqtarabati / l-sā'atu / wa-nshaqqa / l-qamar //*

<sup>2</sup> *wa-in / yaraw / āyatan / yu'riḏū / wa-yaqūlū / siḥrun / mustamir //*

<sup>3</sup> *wa-kadhdhabū / wa-ttaba'ū / ahwā'ahum / wa-kullu / amrin / mustaqir //*

<sup>1</sup> The Hour draws near. The moon is split in two.

<sup>2</sup> Whenever they see a sign, they turn away. They say, “Same old sorcery.”

<sup>3</sup> They disbelieve. They follow their own desires. Everything is recorded.

Rhythmically, however, there would appear to be a strong argument for including vv. 4 and 5 in the same structural unit as vv. 2 and 3. These four verses count in at the not entirely dissimilar 7–6–7–5 accentual beats. All four of these verses, moreover, consist of multiple clauses, the last of which counts in at a uniform three accentual beats.

<sup>2</sup> (*wa-in / yaraw / āyatan / yu'riḏū / wa-yaqūlū / siḥrun / mustamir //*

<sup>3</sup> (*wa-kadhdhabū / wa-ttaba'ū / ahwā'ahum / wa-kullu / amrin / mustaqir //*

<sup>4</sup> (*wa-la-qad / jā`ahum / mina / l-anbā`i /*) *mā / fīhi / muzdajar //*

<sup>5</sup> (*ḥikmatun / bālighatun /*) *fa-mā / tughni / l-nudhur //*

<sup>2</sup> (Whenever they see a sign, they turn away.) They say, “Same old sorcery.”

<sup>3</sup> (They disbelieve. They follow their own desires.) Everything is recorded.

<sup>4</sup> (Information has reached them,) [information] which [should have] acted as a deterrent,

<sup>5</sup> (Far-reaching wisdom,) but warnings do not help.

Verses 6–8 then present as a straightforward *saj`* unit of matched (8–8–8) accentual beats, enclosed by a circular band created by the repetition of the term *yawm* at the beginning of v. 6 and the end of v. 8.

<sup>6</sup> *fa-tawalla / `anhum / yawma / yad`u / l-dā`i / ilā / shay`in / nukur //*

<sup>7</sup> *khushsha`an / abṣāruhum / yakhrujūna / mina / l-ajdāthi / ka-annahum / jarādun / muntashir //*

<sup>8</sup> *muḥṭi`īna / ilā / l-dā`i / yaqūlu / l-kāfirūna / hādhā / yawmun / `asir //*

<sup>6</sup> [Prophet] turn away from them. On the Day the Summoner will summon them to the horrific event,

<sup>7</sup> Their eyes downcast, they will emerge from their graves like swarming locusts,

<sup>8</sup> Rushing toward the summoner. The unbelievers will say, “This is a stern day.”

A short Noah pericope runs from vv. 9–17, followed by a number of other punishment narratives, indicating a clear section break at the end of v. 8.

Table 6.12 reflects an understanding of Q 54:1–8 as consisting of three structural units. A single-verse declaration (v. 1) on a rhythm of four accentual beats is followed by a four-verse description of the rejection of truth by the disbelievers on a split rhythm of (4)–3–(3)–3–(4)–3–(2)–3 accentual beats. This leads into a three-verse example of longer *saj`* on a perfectly matched rhythm of 8–8–8 accentual beats, characterized by a heavy degree of enjambment and a thematic shift to the topic of the behavior the disbelievers will exhibit on the Last Day.

A number of the more complex stylistic features that would appear to be typical of Qur’anic *saj`* are therefore displayed in Q 54:1–8: the clear presence of consecutive, rhythmically distinct units, but also the suggestion that parts of a verse might be *masjū`* and reside in a particular rhythm, while parts of the same verse are designed to be read as quasi-introductory phrases, straight prose sections that are under no obligation to rhyme or otherwise match their surroundings in any particular way. The idea that the opening verse of a surah, like the closing verse of a structural unit, might exist as a stand-alone *saj`ah* should also by now be becoming familiar.

Table 6.12 Breaking Q 54:1–8 into three subunits

I	4	<sup>1</sup> <i>iqtarabati / l-sā'atu / wa-nshaqqa / l-qamar //</i>
II	(4) 3 (3) 3 (4) 3 (2) 3	<sup>2</sup> ( <i>wa-in / yaraw / āyatan / yu'riḍū /</i> ) <i>wa-yaqūlū / sihrun / mustamir //</i> <sup>3</sup> ( <i>wa-kadhdhabū / wa-ttaba'ū / ahwā'ahum /</i> ) <i>wa-kullu / amrin / mustaqir //</i> <sup>4</sup> ( <i>wa-la-qad / jā'ahum / mina / l-anbā'i /</i> ) <i>mā / fihi / muzdajar //</i> <sup>5</sup> ( <i>ḥikmatun / bālighatun /</i> ) <i>fa-mā / tughni / l-nudhur //</i>
III	8 8 8	<sup>6</sup> <i>fa-tawalla / 'anhum / yawma / yad'u / l-dā'i / ilā / shay'in / nukur //</i> <sup>7</sup> <i>khushsha'an / absāruhum / yakhrujūna / mina / l-ajdāthi / ka-annahum /</i> <i>jarādun / muntashir //</i> <sup>8</sup> <i>muḥṭi'ina / ilā / l-dā'i / yaqūlu / l-kāfirūna / hādhā / yawmun / 'asir //</i>

#### 4 Explicitly Long Saj'

Ibn al-Athīr gives three Qur'anic examples of *al-saj' al-ṭawīl*, Q 11:9–10, Q 9:128–29, and Q 8:43–44. Ibn al-Athīr discusses these passages solely in terms of their accentual beats: the first passage counting in at 11–13 beats, as he points out, and the last at almost 20 accentual beats (19–19). It can be observed, however, that Q 11:9–10 also display parallel grammatical structures, matching in both their opening (*wa-la-in adhaqnā ...*) and their closing (*innahu la-...*) constructs.

<sup>9</sup> *wa-la-in / adhaqnā / l-insāna / minnā / raḥmatan / thumma / naza'nāhā / minhu / innahu / la-ya'ūsun / kafūr //*

<sup>10</sup> *wa-la-in / adhaqnāhu / na'mā'a / ba'da / ḍarrā'a / massathu / la-yaqūlanna / dhahaba / l-sayyi'ātu / 'annī / innahu / la-fariḥun / fakhūr //*

<sup>9</sup> If We let man taste Our mercy and then withhold it from him, how desperate and ungrateful he becomes.

<sup>10</sup> If We let him taste Our favor after hardship has touched him, he declares, “Misfortune has left me!” How exultant and boastful he becomes.

Similarly, the example of long *saj'* provided by Ibn al-Athīr from Sūrat al-Anfāl (Q 8:43–44) exhibits near-identical openers (*idh yurīkahum* and *wa-idh yurīkumūhum*), overlapping uses of *fī ... qalīlan* constructs, overlapping medial references to God (*wa-lākinna llāha sallama* and *li-yuqḍiya llāhu amran kāna maf'ūlan*), and overlapping divine clausulae at their close (*innahu 'alīm bi-dhāti l-ṣudūr* and *wa-ilā llāhi turja'u l-umūr*).

<sup>43</sup> *idh / yurīkahumu / llāhu / fī / manāmika / qalīlan / wa-law / arākahum / kathīran / la-fashiltum / wa-la-tanāza'tum / fī l-amri / walākinna / llāha / sallama / innahu / 'alīmun / bi-dhāti / l-ṣudūr //*

<sup>44</sup> *wa-idh / yurīkumūhum / idhi / ltaqaytum / fī / a'yunikum / qalīlan / wa-yuqallilukum / fī / a'yunihim / li-yuqḍiya / llāhu / amran / kāna / maf'ūlan / wa-ilā / llāhi / turja'u / l-umūr //*

<sup>43</sup> Remember when God showed them to you (sing.) as few in your sleep? If He had shown them to you (sing.) as many, surely you (pl.) would have lost heart and argued about the matter. But God saved (you). He knows what is in [people's] breasts.

<sup>44</sup> Remember when He showed them to you (pl.) as few in your eyes, when you met? And made you seem few in theirs? [God did this] in order to bring about the matter that had been ordained. Everything goes back to God.

The final example of long *saj'* supplied by Ibn al-Athīr, Q 9:128–29, possesses structural prominence by dint of its location at the very close of Sūrat al-Tawbah. The near matched 14–15 accentual beats of these two verses suggest a small degree of parallelism when compared to the more erratic beat patterning of the preceding verses of the surah.

<sup>128</sup> *laqad / jā'akum / rasūlun / min / anfusikum / 'azīzun / 'alayhi / mā / 'anittum / ḥarīṣun / 'alaykum / bi-l-mu'minīna / ra'ūfun / raḥīm //*

<sup>129</sup> *fa-in / tawallaw / fa-qul / ḥasbiya / llāhu / lā / ilāha / illā / huwa / 'alayhi / tawakkaltu / wa-huwa / rabbu / l-'arshi / l-'azīm //*

<sup>128</sup> A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him. He is concerned for you. He is full of kindness and mercy toward the believers.

<sup>129</sup> If they turn away, say: “God is enough for me. There is no god but Him. I put my trust in Him. He is the Lord of the Mighty Throne.”

By providing these three examples of Q 11:9–10, Q 9:128–29, and Q 8:43–44, Ibn al-Athīr makes it clear that the lexical and grammatical parallelism of short *saj'* can be transferred into longer rhythmical units; the *saj'*-like structure of Q 11:9–10 and Q 8:43–44 is clear. However, the integrity of Q 9:128–29 as a *saj'* unit, like the example of Q 25:17–19 discussed above, is indicated primarily by its near-matched accentual beats and consistent end-rhyme, rather than by any further grammatical or lexical correspondences. The position of this pair of verses at the very close of Sūrat al-Tawbah adds to them an air of structural distinction, and the rhythmical regularity of the opening of Sūrat al-Furqān adds to the matched accentual beats of Q 25:17–19 a degree of significance, but the lack of an easily transferrable methodology in Ibn al-Athīr's designation of certain long Qur'anic verses as *masjū'*, one that might be applied to the rest of the Qur'an such that his statement *inna akthara l-qur'āni masjū'* would ring as self-evidently true, renders his underlying logic for what might or might not be *saj'* rather elusive.<sup>44</sup> Further investigation into what might have prompted Ibn al-Athīr to declare that the majority of the

Qur'an is written in *saj'* is clearly necessary. Part Two of this essay will therefore examine, on an individual basis and within their structural and thematic context, each of the verses Ibn al-Athīr cites in justification of this statement. This will moreover provide an opportunity for further exploration of the supplementary Qur'anic *saj'* structures identified thus far.

## **Part Two. Examples Provided by Ibn al-Athīr Illustrating the Presence of *Saj'* throughout the Entirety of the Qur'an**

Ibn al-Athīr mentions four passages as illustrative of the fact that *saj'* encompasses the whole Qur'an: Q 33:64–65, Q 20:1–8, Q 50:5–7, and Q 100:1–5. This last passage has already been discussed above as one of Ibn al-Athīr's cited examples of balanced *saj'*. The remaining three passages will be analyzed in detail below.

### **1 Q 33:64–65**

The very first cited example of Qur'anic *saj'* provided by Ibn al-Athīr in his *al-Mathal al-sā'ir* is Q 33:64–65.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>64</sup> *inna / llāha / la'ana / l-kāfirīna / wa-a'adda / lahum /sa'irā //*

<sup>65</sup> *khālidīna / fihā / abadan / lā / yajidūna / walīyan / wa-lā / naṣīrā //*

<sup>64</sup> God has rejected the unbelievers and prepared a blazing fire for them.

<sup>65</sup> There they will stay for ever, finding no friend and no supporter.

Ibn al-Athīr does not specify why these particular verses should be considered to be *masjū'*, but it can immediately be observed that they display: a consistent rhyme in *CaCīrā*; near-matching accentual beats of 7–8; a degree of enjambment, suggesting thematic coherence; and some parallelism in the final three words of v. 65 (*walīyan wa-lā naṣīran*; see the examples of Q 56:37 and Q 77:5–6, discussed above). There is no grammatical or lexical parallelism between its adjacent verses, but the *saj'* unit Q 33:64–65 is demarcated at its outset by a slight shift in end-rhyme (from *CvCībā* to *CvCīrā*), and at both its outset and its close by a variation in accentual beat patterning. The preceding v. 63 contains 15 accentual beats, and the following v. 66 consists of 10 accentual beats.

There is an argument for proposing Q 33:67–68 as another *saj'* unit within this thematic passage, in addition to the following one, singled out by Ibn al-Athīr: *sabīlā* and *kabīrā* rhyme,<sup>46</sup> these two verses display precisely matching accentual beats; and the repeated *rabbanā* construct at the outset of both verses adds a strong element of parallelism to the two statements.

<sup>67</sup> *wa-qālū / rabbanā / innā / aṭa'nā / sādatanā / wa-kubarā'anā / fa-aḍallūnā / l-sabīlā //*

<sup>68</sup> *rabbanā / ātihim / di‘fayni / mina / l-‘adhābi / wa-l‘anhum / la‘nan / kabīrā //*

<sup>67</sup> They will say, “Lord, we obeyed our masters and our chiefs, and they led us astray.

<sup>68</sup> Lord, give them a double punishment and curse them completely.”

Q 33:66, meanwhile, features parallelism in its final cola, and can be read as two matched accentual beat units which emerge from an introductory phrase:

<sup>66</sup> (*yawma / tuqallabu / wujūhuhum / fi l-nāri / yaqūlūna / yā-laytanā /*  
*aṭa‘nā / llāha /*  
*wa-aṭa‘nā / l-rasūlā //*)

<sup>66</sup> (On the Day when their faces are being turned about in the Fire, they will say, “If only)

We had obeyed God

And we had obeyed the Messenger.

By extending the orthographic short *-a* vowel at the end of *llāha* to a long *-ā* vowel, a shallow rhyme in *-Cā* is created. A precedent for this was mentioned with reference to the rhyme word of Q 25:17, above, which logic dictates must be read *sabīlā*.<sup>47</sup>

A similar argument can be made for Q 33:63, whose *yudrīka* can be extended to *yudrīkā* to create internal rhyme within this verse, and the following structure:

<sup>63</sup> (*yas‘aluka / l-nāsu / ‘ani / l-sā‘ati / qul / innamā / ‘ilmuhā / ‘inda / llāhi /*  
*wa-mā / yudrīka /*  
*la‘alla / l-sā‘ata / takūnu / qarībā //*)

<sup>63</sup> (People ask you about the Hour. Say: “God alone has knowledge of it.)

What will make you (sing.) understand?

The Hour may well be near.”

There is rhythmic harmony between the two clauses *wa-mā yudrīka* and *la‘alla l-sā‘ata takūnu qarībā*, which count in at 2–4 accentual beats, an example of bottom-heavy *saj‘*. Both “What will make you (sing.) understand?” and “The Hour may well be near” can be read as capable of emerging, independently, from the same introductory phrase: “People ask you about the Hour. Say: ‘God alone has knowledge of it.’” In terms of rhyme, meanwhile, *yudrīkā* and *qarībā* can be argued to rhyme in *-CīCā*. It is therefore possible to break the entirety of Q 33:63–68 into a straightforward sequence of thematically linked *saj‘* units, comparable to the example of non-Qur’anic *saj‘* provided by Ibn al-Athīr, and similar to the examples of Q 93, Q 77:1–7, Q 74:1–7, and Q 53:1–18 investigated above.

A model for how such a subdivision of Q 33:63–68 might look is set out in Table 6.13. Two of the units thus identified are distinguished by their matched (or near-matched) accentual beats, with one showing further parallelism in its repeated *rabbanā* opener, and the other displaying an extended linear rhyme (*lā yajidūna walīyan wa-lā naṣīran*). The other two units both emerge from introductory phrases and subdivide internally in order to create two-stich *saj'* units within single Qur'anic verses. While the rhyme correspondence produced by these internal divisions is not precise, if we concede to the extension of a final *-a* vowel into an *-ā*, the match between *yudrīkā* and *qarībā*, *allāhā* and *al-rasūlā*, certainly seems close enough to pass muster. The accentual beats of the ensuing *saj'* units follow the standard patterning of either bottom-heavy or matched *saj'*.

Table 6.13 Breaking Q 33:63–68 into four subunits

I	(9) 2 4	<sup>63</sup> ( <i>yas'aluka / l-nāsu / 'ani / l-sā'ati / qul / innamā / 'ilmuhā / 'inda / llāhi /</i> <i>wa-mā / yudrīkā /</i> <i>la'alla / l-sā'ata / takūnu / qarībā //</i>
II	7 8	<sup>64</sup> <i>inna / llāha / la'ana / l-kāfirīna / wa-a'adda / lahum / sa'irā //</i> <sup>65</sup> <i>khālidīna / fihā / abadan / lā / yajidūna / walīyan / wa-lā / naṣīrā //</i>
III	(6) 2 2	<sup>66</sup> ( <i>yawma / tuqallabu / wujūhuhum / fi l-nāri / yaqūlūna / yā-laytanā /</i> <i>aṭa'nā / llāhā /</i> <i>wa-aṭa'nā / l-rasūlā //</i>
IV	8 8	<sup>67</sup> <i>wa-qālū / rabbanā / innā / aṭa'nā / sādatanā / wa-kubarā'anā /</i> <i>fa-aḍallūnā / l-sabīlā //</i> <sup>68</sup> <i>rabbanā / ātihim / ḍi'fayni / mina / l-'adhābi / wa-l'anhum / la'nan /</i> <i>kabīrā //</i>

## 2 Q 20:1–8

Ibn al-Athīr's citation of the opening eight verses of Sūrat Ṭāhā as his next example of Qur'anic *saj'* is initially perplexing. Although this passage displays a consistent rhyme in *-Cā*, and is demarcated as a plausible textual unit by the presence of the story of Moses that opens, with a sharp drop in accentual beats, in v. 9 (*wa-hal / atāka / ḥadīthu / mūsā //*), there is no obvious pattern to its own accentual beats. Nor do these initial eight verses of Sūrat Ṭāhā exhibit any consistent grammatical parallelism. As a consequence, the usual indications of the presence of a passage of Qur'anic *saj'* are not immediately apparent. If Q 20:1–8 is broken into subunits, however, four clear *saj'* units emerge. After the initial proclamation of *ṭāhā* (subunit I), subunit II (vv. 2–5) consists of four verses of relatively similar accentual length (5–4–6–4). Subunit III (v. 6) then follows with an initial *lahu* upon which four parallel clauses depend, with matched *mā* openers and near-matched identical beats (2–2–2–3). Finally, vv. 7–8 again display very similar accentual lengths: seven then eight beats, making vv. 7–8 a *saj'* unit defined both by rhyme and by rhythm (subunit IV).

This is not the first instance within this essay where repeated *mā* constructs have been argued to embellish *saj*‘. In Sūrat al-Najm (Q 53), for example, vv. 2–3, 10–11, and 16–17 all exhibit repeated *mā* constructs, here a combination of the negative use of *mā* (in vv. 2, 3, 11, and 17) and the pronominal use of *mā* (in vv. 10, 11, and 16).

<sup>2</sup> *mā ḍalla ṣāhibukum wa-mā ghawā*  
<sup>3</sup> *wa-mā yanṭiqu ‘ani l-hawā*

<sup>2</sup> Your companion has not strayed. He is not deluded.  
<sup>3</sup> He does not speak from [his own] desire.

<sup>10</sup> *fa-awḥā ilā ‘abdihi mā awḥā*  
<sup>11</sup> *mā kadhaba l-fu’ādu mā ra’ā*

<sup>10</sup> He revealed to His servant what He revealed.  
<sup>11</sup> His own heart did not distort what he saw.

<sup>16</sup> *idh yaghshā l-sidrata mā yaghshā*  
<sup>17</sup> *mā zāgha l-baṣaru wa-mā ṭaghā*

<sup>16</sup> When the tree was somehow covered,  
<sup>17</sup> His sight never wavered, nor was it too bold.

Within the above discussion of Sūrat al-Najm, however, no argument was made for its *mās* to be placed in structural parallel. While it would have been possible, for example, to organize Q 53:2–3 such that its three *mās* were situated one below the other, the ensuing *saj*‘*ahs* would have possessed no rhythmical integrity and displayed no end-rhyme.

<sup>2</sup> *mā / ḍalla / ṣāhibukum /*  
*wa-mā / ghawā //*  
<sup>3</sup> *wa-mā / yanṭiqu / ‘ani / l-hawā //*

<sup>2</sup> Your companion has not strayed.  
 He is not deluded.  
<sup>3</sup> He does not speak from [his own] desire.

It was strongly felt that a textual unit of 3–2–4 accentual beats terminating in *ṣāhibukum/ghawā/l-hawā* could not be described as *saj*‘ (although a linear statement *mā ḍalla ṣāhibukum wa-mā ghawā wa-mā yanṭiqu ‘ani l-hawā* can nonetheless be described as *masjū*‘).

The situation in Sūrat Ṭāhā is different. In Q 20:6, all of the *mās* are used pronominally (i.e., with the meaning “what”). If they are arranged in parallel, three of the ensuing *saj*‘*ahs* contain exactly two accentual beats each, with the fourth

containing three accentual beats. It is of course possible to arrange this verse in linear fashion, such that it is the repeated *ā* vowels (*mā*, *samāwāt*, *mā*, *mā*, *baynahumā*, *mā*, *tharā*) that create resonance, and with it a sense of rhyme. The sheer force of the matched accentual beats, however, seems too blatant to be ignored. Consequently, I have acknowledged rhythm in the layout of Q 20:1–8 suggested in Table 6.14.

Table 6.14 Breaking Q 20:1–8 into four subunits

I	1	<sup>1</sup> <i>ṭāhā</i> //
II	5 4 6 4	<sup>2</sup> <i>mā</i> / <i>anzalnā</i> / <i>'alayka</i> / <i>l-qur'āna</i> / <i>li-tashqā</i> // <sup>3</sup> <i>illā</i> / <i>tadhkiratan</i> / <i>li-man</i> / <i>yakhshā</i> // <sup>4</sup> <i>tanzīlan</i> / <i>mimman</i> / <i>khalāqa</i> / <i>l-arḍa</i> / <i>wa-l-samāwāti</i> / <i>l-'ulā</i> // <sup>5</sup> <i>al-raḥmānu</i> / <i>'alā</i> / <i>l-'arshi</i> / <i>stawā</i> //
III	(1) 2 2 2 3	<sup>6</sup> ( <i>lahu</i> /) <i>mā</i> / <i>fi-l-samāwāti</i> / <i>wa-mā</i> / <i>fi-l-arḍi</i> / <i>wa-mā</i> / <i>baynahumā</i> / <i>wa-mā</i> / <i>taḥta</i> / <i>l-tharā</i> //
IV	7 8	<sup>7</sup> <i>wa-in</i> / <i>tajhar</i> / <i>bi-l-qawli</i> / <i>fa-innahu</i> / <i>ya'lamu</i> / <i>l-sirra</i> / <i>wa-akhfā</i> // <sup>8</sup> <i>allāhu</i> / <i>lā</i> / <i>ilāha</i> / <i>illā</i> / <i>huwa</i> / <i>lahu</i> / <i>l-asmā'u</i> / <i>l-ḥusnā</i> //

### 3 Q 50:5–7

Ibn al-Athīr alludes to the 9–12–11 accentual beat Q 50:5–7 as a discrete unit.

<sup>5</sup> *bal* / *kadhdhabū* / *bi-l-ḥaqqi* / *lammā* / *jā'ahum* / *fa-hum* / *fī* / *amrin* / *marīj* //

<sup>6</sup> *a-fa-lam* / *yanzurū* / *ilā* / *l-samā'i* / *fawqahum* / *kayfa* / *banaynāhā* / *wa-zayyannāhā* / *wa-mā* / *lahā* / *min* / *furūj* //

<sup>7</sup> *wa-l-arḍa* / *madadnāhā* / *wa-alqaynā* / *fīhā* / *rawāsiya* / *wa-anbatnā* / *fīhā* / *min* / *kulli* / *zawjin* / *bahīj* //

<sup>5</sup> But they deny the truth when it comes to them. They are in a state of confusion.

<sup>6</sup> Do they not see the sky above them? How We have built and adorned it, with no rifts in it?

<sup>7</sup> How We spread out the earth and put solid mountains on it? How We caused every kind of joyous plant to grow in it?

While the repeated *ā* vowels of *banaynāhā*, *zayyannāhā*, *mā lahā*, *madadnāhā*, *alqaynā fīhā*, and *anbatnā fīhā* create a degree of internal rhyme within vv. 6–7, the nine-beat v. 5 would appear to combine with the eleven-beat v. 2 in order to form an *inclusio* embellishing the surah's opening paragraph.<sup>48</sup>

<sup>2</sup> *bal / ‘ajibū / an / jā’ahum / mundhirun / minhum / fa-qāla / l-kāfirūna / hādhā / shay’un / ‘ajīb //*

<sup>2</sup> But they are amazed that a warner has come from among them. The unbelievers say, “How strange!” ...

<sup>5</sup> *bal / kadhdhabū / bi-l-ḥaqqi / lammā / jā’ahum / fa-hum / fī / amrin / marīj //*

<sup>5</sup> But they deny the truth when it comes to them. They are in a state of confusion.

Verses 4–5, meanwhile, form a perfectly matched unit in terms of their accentual beats.

<sup>4</sup> *qad / ‘alimnā / mā / tanquṣu / l-arḍu / minhum / wa-‘indanā / kitābun / ḥafīz //*  
<sup>5</sup> *bal / kadhdhabū / bi-l-ḥaqqi / lammā / jā’ahum / fa-hum / fī / amrin / marīj //*

<sup>4</sup> We know very well what the earth takes away from them. We keep a comprehensive record.

<sup>5</sup> But they deny the truth when it comes to them. They are in a state of confusion.

Ibn al-Athīr’s suggestion that v. 5 might form the first verse of a tripartite *saj’* unit that runs vv. 5–7 makes little apparent sense.

Sūrat Qāf would in fact appear to divide along the following lines. A first section, vv. 1–14, is marked as a discrete unit by the Leitwort *kadhdhaba*, which occurs repeatedly within these fourteen verses (at vv. 5, 12, and 14) and not elsewhere in the surah. This term seals the first paragraph of the introduction (vv. 1–5) and binds the extremities of its last paragraph (vv. 12–14). Meanwhile, explicit references to the Day (*yawm*, at vv. 20, 22, 30, 34, 38, 41, 42, and 44) and to Creation (*kh-l-q*, at vv. 15, 16, and 38) occupy the surah’s central section (vv. 15–35) and its tail (vv. 36–45). The term *wa’īd*, however, which accrues structural prominence via its presence as the final word of the surah, connects the final verse of the introduction (vv. 1–14) with the central section (thus the further occurrences at vv. 20 and 28) and the tail of the surah.<sup>49</sup> The second paragraph of the introduction and the first paragraph of the central section are then marked by an initial *a-fa-* (vv. 6 and 15), while an all-encompassing ring is created by the repetition of the term *qur’ān* in the surah’s first and final verses (vv. 1 and 45).<sup>50</sup> Within this structure, the following breakdown of vv. 1–14 seems plausible. An introductory unit (vv. 1–5) is bordered by repeated initial *bal* in vv. 2 and 5, and sealed by the first declaration of denial (*bal kadhdhabū bi-l-ḥaqq*) in v. 5. A second unit then runs vv. 6–11. This opens *a-fa-* (cf. v. 15) and comprises a thematically linked catalogue of God’s acts of creation. A third unit, vv. 12–14, is bordered by the second and third declarations of denial

(*kadhhabat qablahum ... kullun kadhhaba l-rusul*), and by the suggestion of a ring in the partial reversal of *qawmu nūhin wa-aṣḥābu rass* (v. 12) into *aṣḥābu l-aykati wa-qawmu tubba'* (v. 14). The final word of the introduction (*wa'īd*) reoccurs as the final word of the surah.

This subdivision of vv. 1–14 into three units is thematically and structurally viable, and yet the simultaneous presence of discrete *saj'* units running vv. 1–5, 6–11, and 12–14 is by no means clear cut. A consistent rhyme in CvCīC/CvCūC unites the surah as a whole, with only minor variations occasionally extending the rhyme within that. In terms of its rhythm, the introduction exhibits matched (or near-matched) accentual beats in vv. 4–5 (subunit I) and again in vv. 6–7 (subunit II), but also in vv. 11–12 (spanning subunits II and III). Outside of the potential for an echo in the transformation of v. 7's *min kulli zawjin bahīj* into v. 8's *li-kulli 'abdin munīb*, there is no evident grammatical parallelism, nor do any of the elements of vv. 1–14 emerge from an introductory phrase, both features that categorized parts of Q 33:63–68 and Q 20:1–8 as discrete *saj'* units. Indeed, had Ibn al-Athīr not identified Q 50:5–7 as *masjū'*, there would be no apparent reason for investigating this passage in such terms.

The presence of short verses interspersed among the long, however, is of interest. Above, it was suggested that parts of Q 69:31 and Q 19:90 might reside in some sort of rhythmic seclusion within the larger *saj'* units Q 69:30–31 and Q 19:88–92, operating in the same way as introductory phrases but giving rise to single cola, not the multiple rhyming *saj'ahs* that typically emerge from introductory phrases within *saj'*; a similar structure was posited for the opening clauses of Q 54:2–5. If the initial parts of Q 50:2–5 are removed from the rhythmic texture of unit I (vv. 1–5), a 3–3–3–3–4 *saj'* unit rhyming in CvCīC emerges. The opening verse of the surah then sits alongside the closing comments to each verse in contrapuntal harmony to the remainder of this *saj'* unit. That is to say: although the two parts of each verse operate as separate voices, rhythmically independent of one another, their sense is nonetheless dependent upon what happens when the two voices combine.

<sup>1</sup> *qāf / wa-l-qur'āni / l-majīd //*

<sup>2</sup> (*bal / 'ajibū / an / jā'ahum / mundhirun / minhum / fa-qāla / l-kāfirūna /*  
*hādhā / shay'un / 'ajīb //*

<sup>3</sup> (*a-idhā / mitnā / wa-kunnā / turāban /*  
*dhālika / raj'un / ba'īd //*

<sup>4</sup> (*qad / 'alimnā / mā / tanquṣu / l-arḍu / minhum /*  
*wa-'indanā / kitābun / ḥafīz //*

<sup>5</sup> (*bal / kadhhabū / bi-l-ḥaqqi / lammā / jā'ahum /*  
*fa-hum / fī / amrin / marīj //*

<sup>1</sup> Qāf! By the glorious Qur'an!

<sup>2</sup> (But they are amazed that a warner has come from among them. The unbelievers say,)

“How strange.

<sup>3</sup> (To come back [to life] after we have died and become dust?)

That is too far-fetched.”

<sup>4</sup> (We know very well what the earth takes away from them.)

We keep a comprehensive record.

<sup>5</sup> (But they deny the truth when it comes to them.)

They are in a state of confusion.

The strong rhythmical balance of vv. 6–7, meanwhile, terminating in *furūj* and *bahīj*, sits in tension with two further structural elements. The first of these is the string of repeated *ā* vowels mentioned above, which are encompassed within the end-rhyme and could plausibly be viewed as a *masjū*<sup>6</sup> inclusion within this pair of verses. The second, however, as we shall see below, is the presence of a degree of both grammatical and rhythmical parallelism at the close of vv. 7 and 8, which precludes the demarcation of the entirety of vv. 6–7 as a discrete *saj*<sup>6</sup> unit ending in *bahīj*. There are three voices at play here, and it is difficult to draw clean lines between them.

Entirely speculatively, then, the best solution would appear to be one in which unit II of Sūrat Qāf is defined by the repeated *ā* vowels of vv. 6–7. This hypothetical unit would terminate in an extended *rawāsiyā* in the middle of v. 7, creating a 3–2–3 unit, rhyming in *–ā*, in which both the opening phrase and the central description of the sky are removed from the rhythmic structure because, even though they do not protrude rhythmically, the contrasting end-rhyme excludes them from a *saj*<sup>6</sup> unit which centers on repeated *ā* vowels.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>6</sup> (*a-fa-lam / yanzurū / ilā / l-samā`i / fawqahum /*)

*kayfa / banaynāhā / wa-zayyannāhā /*

*(wa-mā / lahā / min / furūj //)*

<sup>7</sup> *wa-l-arḍa / madadnāhā /*

*wa-alqaynā / fihā / rawāsiyā /*

<sup>6</sup> (Do they not see the sky above them?)

How We have built and adorned it,

(Without any rifts?)

<sup>7</sup> How We spread out the earth

And put solid mountains on it?

The benefit of this speculative unit is twofold. A focus on the repeated *ā* vowels provides a degree of rationalization for why Ibn al-Athīr might have highlighted Q 50:6–7 as illustrative of the omnipresence of *saj*<sup>6</sup> in the Qur’an in the first place. Dividing v. 7 into two units, meanwhile, allows the analyst to observe the close parallelism between the two verse-final closers of vv. 7 and 8 (*min kulli zawjin bahīj* and *li-kulli ‘abdin munīb*). If v. 7 is split at this juncture, a 5–6 beat *saj*<sup>6</sup> unit can be created out of the second part of v. 7 and the entirety of v. 8.

<sup>7</sup> ... *wa-anbatnā / fihā / min / kulli / zawjin / bahīj //*

<sup>8</sup> *tabširatan / wa-dhikrā / li-kulli / ‘abdin / munīb //*

<sup>7</sup> ... How We caused every kind of joyous plant to grow in it

<sup>8</sup> As a lesson and reminder for every servant who turns [to God].

The ten accentual beats of v. 9 can then be divided into two five-beat units, the first of which exists in phonetic isolation from the prevailing rhyme scheme, despite the exact precision of its matched accentual beats. Verse 11 is heavily enjambed, in its opening, with v. 10, and the relative rhythmical consistency of its subsequent cola suggests that it might reside in the same structural unit as vv. 9–10.

<sup>9</sup> (*wa-nazzalnā / mina / l-samā`i / mā`an / mubārakan /*)

*fa-anbatnā / bihi / jannātin / wa-ḥabba / l-ḥaṣīd //*

<sup>10</sup> *wa-l-nakhla / bāsiqātin / lahā / ṭal`un / naḍīd //*

<sup>11</sup> (*rizqan / li-l-`ibādi /*)

*wa-aḥyaynā / bihi / baldatan / maytan / kadhālika / l-khurūj //*

<sup>9</sup> (How We sent blessed water down from the sky,)

Grew gardens with it, and the harvest grain,

<sup>10</sup> Tall date palms, laden with clusters of dates,

<sup>11</sup> (As a provision for everyone.)

How We give new life with it to a land that is dead. This is what the resurrection is like.

Verses 12–14, meanwhile, listing previous generations of disbelievers, form a clear thematic unit, which can be divided into a rhyming block of rhythmically matched cola out of which only one *saj`ah* (*wa-aṣḥābu l-aykati wa-qawmu tubba`in*) must needs be removed from the phonetic framework in order to respect its lack of a rhyming end-word to match the rest of the unit.

<sup>12</sup> *kadhhabat / qablahum / qawmu / nūḥ /*

*wa-aṣḥābu / l-rassi / wa-thamūd //*

<sup>13</sup> *wa-`ādun / wa-fir`awnu / wa-ikhwānu / lūt //*

<sup>14</sup> (*wa-aṣḥābu / l-aykati / wa-qawmu / tubba`in /*)

*kullun / kadhhaba / l-rusula / fa-ḥaqqā / wa`īd //*

<sup>12</sup> The people of Noah disbelieved long before these [people],

As did the people of Rass and Thamud,

<sup>13</sup> `Ād and Pharaoh and the brothers of Lot,

<sup>14</sup> (The forest-dwellers and the people of Tubba`.)

All of these people disbelieved their messengers, and My warning was realized.

A division of Q 50:1–14 into the six *saj`* units described above is defensible. After all, there are a number of indications that a certain degree of flexibility is appropriate in the maintenance of *saj`* structures: the permitted presence of

introductory phrases, for instance, that reside outside of the pervading accentual beat rhythm of their immediate environment; the acknowledged existence of the quatrain form, whereby the third line of a four-line *saj'* unit does not rhyme with its fellows; al-Bāqillānī's understanding of the term *saj'* as something that is used in order to describe internally rhyming passages which exist outside of the dominant end-rhyme of their surroundings; and al-Qalqashandī's acknowledgment of this feature as *saj'an fī saj'*. There is a certain awkwardness to the frequency with which parts of each *saj'* unit within Q 50:1–14 must needs be removed from the overall rhythmic or phonetic texture in order to create blocks in which rhythmically matched, rhyming *saj'ahs* are placed one below the other. The difficulty here may simply, however, be one of formatting and orthography, and the prospect of some sort of a stylistic stepping stone between the “straight” *saj'* of Q 93 and the more complicated patterns of Q 55, where Qur'anic sentences are frequently punctuated mid-thought process by a repeated refrain, is undeniably attractive. A six-unit Q 50:1–14 has, therefore, been reflected in Table 6.15 below.

Table 6.15 Breaking Q 50:1–14 into six subunits

I	3 (8) 3 (4) 3 (6) 3 (5) 4	<sup>1</sup> <i>qāf' / wa-l-qur'āni / l-majīd //</i> <sup>2</sup> ( <i>bal / 'ajibū / an / jā'ahum / mundhirun / minhum / fa-qāla / l-kāfirūna /</i> ) <i>hādhā / shay'un / 'ajīb //</i> <sup>3</sup> ( <i>a-idhā / mitnā / wa-kunnā / turāban /</i> ) <i>dhālika / raj'un / ba'id //</i> <sup>4</sup> ( <i>qad / 'alimnā / mā / tanquṣu / l-arḍu / minhum /</i> ) <i>wa-'indānā / kitābun / ḥafīz //</i> <sup>5</sup> ( <i>bal / kadhdhabū / bi-l-ḥaqqi / lammā / jā'ahum /</i> ) <i>fa-hum / fī / amrin / marīj //</i>
II	(5) 3 (4) 2 3	<sup>6</sup> ( <i>a-fa-lam / yanzurū / ilā / l-samā'i / fawqahum /</i> ) <i>kayfa / banaynāhā / wa-zayyannāhā /</i> ( <i>wa-mā / lahā / min / furūj //</i> ) <sup>7</sup> <i>wa-l-arḍa / madadnāhā /</i> <i>wa-alqaynā / fīhā / rawāsiyā /</i>
III	6 5	<i>wa-anbatnā / fīhā / min / kulli / zawjin / bahīj //</i> <sup>8</sup> <i>tabṣīratan / wa-dhikrā / li-kulli / 'abdin / munīb //</i>
IV	(5) 5 5 (3) 6	<sup>9</sup> ( <i>wa-nazzalnā / mina / l-samā' / mā'an / mubārakan /</i> ) <i>fa-anbatnā / bihi / jannātin / wa-ḥabba / l-ḥaṣīd //</i> <sup>10</sup> <i>wa-l-nakhla / bāsiqātin / lahā / ṭal'un / naḍīd //</i> <sup>11</sup> ( <i>rizqan / li-l-'ibādi /</i> ) <i>wa-aḥyaynā / bihi / baldatan / maytan / kadhdhabū / l-khurūj //</i>
VI	4 3 4 (4) 5	<sup>12</sup> <i>kadhdhabat / qablahum / qawmu / nūḥ /</i> <i>wa-aṣḥābu / l-rassi / wa-thamūd //</i> <sup>13</sup> <i>wa-'ādun / wa-fir'awnu / wa-ikhwānu / lūt //</i> <sup>14</sup> ( <i>wa-aṣḥābu / l-aykati / wa-qawmu / tubba'in /</i> ) <i>kullun / kadhdhaba / l-rusula / fa-ḥaqqā / wa'id //</i>

### Part Three. Conclusions

The issue of how *saj'* patterns structure lengthy passages of Qur'anic discourse is clearly complex, and far from straightforward to define. While Q 93 divided neatly into a string of consecutive *saj'* units distinguished by their matched rhyme, their matched rhythm, and, frequently, their matched grammatical parallelism, the same was not the case for such contrasting cases as Q 25:15–16, whose *saj'*-integrity required the splitting of both its constituent verses into two stichs, for Q 19:93–97, whose rhythmical balance was maintained by the combining of two Qur'anic verses into one stich, or for the many examples of rhythmically cohesive Qur'anic passages cited above, where one or more of the conventional boundaries of rhyme, rhythm, and parallelism would appear to have been stretched, without breaking the borders of what constitutes *saj'*.

The remarks above provided a close analysis of all the discrete Qur'anic passages that Ibn al-Athīr cites in illustration of the omnipresence of *saj'* in the Qur'an. These cited passages were viewed within their wider Qur'anic context, a context that was sometimes structurally and sometimes thematically defined. A number of Qur'anic structures plainly informed by *saj'* immediately became apparent. These far outstripped the basic model of simple strings of consecutively matched rhythmical units (exemplified by Q 93 and Q 100) traditionally understood to constitute Qur'anic *saj'*. It was moreover argued that it is possible for parts of a Qur'anic verse to be *masjū'* to the exclusion of others.

It is worth supplying a preliminary catalogue of these suggested supplementary *saj'* structures, with representative examples, as a basis for future research. The following list is by no means intended to be either rigid or exhaustive. The idea that Qur'anic *saj'* might operate within a deliberate give and take of three distinct parameters—end-rhyme, accentual beat patterning, and grammatical parallelism—proved to be a fruitful one, and the question of whether to allow rhyme, rhythm, or grammatical parallelism to take precedence in the depiction of Qur'anic *saj'* was one that this essay confronted at regular junctures.

The fifteen principal categories of Qur'anic *saj'* forms identified in the course of this essay can be classified as follows.

- 1 Group One: simple strings of consecutive *saj'ahs* bound by contrasting rhythms, rhymes, and structural parallelisms**  
e.g., Q 93:1–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–11, Q 100:1–3 and 4–5, Q 56:27–31 and 39–40, Q 77:1–2 and 3–4, Q 74:2–5, Q 53:1–4, 5–8, 9–11, 12–13, 14–15, 16–17, and 18; cf. Q 11:9–10 and Q 8:43–44.
- 2 Group Two: single *saj'ah* closers to *saj'* clusters**  
e.g., Q 93:11, Q 100:11, Q 25:14, Q 19:92 and 98c, Q 56:34 and 38, Q 77:7, and Q 53:18.
- 3 Group Three: single *saj'ah* openers to *saj'* clusters**  
e.g., Q 25:11, Q 56:27 and 32, and Q 54:1; cf. Q 53:1 and Q 50:1.

- 4 **Group Four: complex *saj'* units whose overall rhythmical integrity is maintained by the presence of an introductory phrase**  
e.g., Q 100:9–10, Q 25:15–16, Q 19:90, Q 56:28–31 and 35–37, Q 74:1–5, Q 53:1–4, Q 33:63, 66, and 67, and Q 20:6.
- 5 **Group Five: single *saj'ahs* whose overall rhythmical integrity is maintained by the presence of an introductory phrase**  
e.g., Q 69:31 within the unit Q 69:30–31, Q 19:90 within the unit Q 19:90–91, Q 54:2, 3, 4, and 5 within the unit Q 54:2–5, Q 50: 2, 3, 4, and 5 within the unit Q 50:1–5, Q 50:6 within the unit Q 50:6–7, Q 50:9 and 11 within the unit Q 50:9–11, and Q 50:14 within the unit Q 50:12–14.
- 6 **Group Six: *saj'* units whose rhythmical integrity is maintained via the splitting or combining of Qur'anic verses**  
e.g., Q 25:15–16, Q 19:94–95 within the unit 93–97, and 98, Q 56:33, Q 53:1–3, Q 33:63 and 66, Q 20:6, Q 50:6–7 and 12–14.
- 7 **Group Seven: *saj'* units whose borders are further marked by the presence of a circular lexical band**  
e.g., *wu'ida/wa'dan* in Q 25:15 and 16, *waladā* in Q 19:88, 91, and 92, *aṣḥābu l-yamīn* in Q 56:27 and 38, *bal ... bal ...* in Q 50:2 and 5, *kadhhabat ... khadhdhaba ...* in Q 50:12 and 14.
- 8 **Group Eight: *saj'* units whose borders are reinforced by a string of adjacent rhyming words at their close**  
e.g., Q 56:36–37, Q 77:5–6, and Q 33:65.
- 9 **Group Nine: stepped *saj'* units (AAB or ABBC)**  
e.g., Q 25:11–14, Q 19:88–92 and 98, and Q 56:35–38.
- 10 **Group Ten: phonetic inclusions into a surrounding rhyme pattern**  
e.g., Q 3:48–49, Q 9:24, Q 16:27, and Q 19:4 and 98.
- 11 **Group Eleven: rhythmical inclusions into a surrounding accentual beat pattern**  
e.g., Q 100:9–10 within the unit Q 100:6–8 and 11, and Q 25:12–13 within the unit Q 25:11–14.
- 12 **Group Twelve: grammatical inclusions into a surrounding phonetic and rhythmical pattern**  
e.g., Q 100:9–10 within the unit Q 100:6–8 and 11, Q 25:12–13 within the unit Q 25:11–14, and Q 56:33 within the unit Q 56:32–34.
- 13 **Group Thirteen: thematic inclusions marked by contrasting rhyme, rhythm, or grammatical pattern**  
e.g., Q 53:9–11 and 14–15.
- 14 **Group Fourteen: longer *saj'* (eight beats per *saj'ah* or more)**  
e.g., Q 25:17–19, Q 19:93–97, Q 54:6–8, Q 11:9–10, Q 9:128–129, Q 8:43–44, and Q 3:67–68.
- 15 **Group Fifteen: units in which rhythmic or grammatical parallelism is maintained at the expense of rhyme**  
e.g., Q 20:6 (and see Q 50:9–10 and 13–14).

It is to be hoped that these categories will serve as a useful starting point from which to attempt a rationalization of the shifting rhythms and emphases of complex Qur'anic structural units. A deeper understanding of the Qur'an's *saj'*-informed structures, and how these are modified as the Qur'an traverses its variety of genres, represents a necessary, and long overdue, step in progressing the prosodic analysis of the Qur'anic text.

## Notes

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- 1 Stewart largely extrapolates his information from the manuals of rhetoric provided by the medieval Islamic tradition, such scholars as Abū Bakr Muḥammad b. al-Ṭayyib al-Bāqillānī (d. 403/1013), Ḍiyā' al-Dīn ibn al-Athīr (d. 637/1239), and Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Qalqashandī (d. 821/1418). See Devin J. Stewart, "Saj' in the Qur'ān: Prosody and Structure," *Journal of Arabic Literature* 21 (1990), and Devin J. Stewart, art. "Rhymed Prose," in *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, ed. Jane Dammen McAuliffe, 6 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2001–2006).
- 2 As will be illustrated in Table 6.2, these are demarcated by shifts in rhyme, rhythm, or the presence of what Stewart terms an "introductory phrase," a word or series of words introducing the beginning of a new *saj'* unit, whose ensuing clauses are dependent upon the introductory phrase for sense, but whose matched accentual beats are counted independently of the accentual beats of the introductory phrase itself.
- 3 For a description of this work, and a useful introduction to the Arabic rhetorical tradition, see Geert van Gelder, *Beyond the Line. Classical Arabic Literary Critics on the Coherence and Unity of the Poem* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1982), 146–52 and *passim*.
- 4 Naṣr Allāh b. Muḥammad Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir fī adab al-kātib wa-l-shā'ir*, ed. Aḥmad al-Ḥūfī and Badawī Ṭabānah, 2 vols. (Cairo: Dār Nahḍat Miṣr, n.d.), vol. 1, 214.
- 5 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, vol. 1, 214. Ibn al-Athīr defines *saj'* relatively broadly, as any speech in which the form of individual words and phrases was chosen in order to complement the form of the individual words and phrases that preceded them. Nonetheless, Ibn al-Athīr stresses that form, in true *saj'*, is always held subservient to meaning. He also insists that the meaning of each word in a *masjū'* pair must convey a sense distinct from that of its partner. Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, vol. 1, 215.
- 6 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, vol. 1, 218.
- 7 For the importance of introductory phrases, see Stewart, "Saj' in the Qur'ān"; Stewart, "Rhymed Prose"; and Devin J. Stewart, "Divine Epithets and the *Dibacchius: Clausulae* and Qur'anic Rhythm," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 15, no. 2 (2013).
- 8 Rhyme in Qur'anic Arabic is a complex interplay of matching morphological form (*wazn*) and true rhyme (*qāfiyah*). For further explanation, see Marianna Klar, "Text-Critical Approaches to Sura Structure: Combining Synchronicity with Diachronicity

in *Sūrat al-Baqara. Part One*,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 19, no. 1 (2017), 17–19; Stewart, “*Saj’* in the Qur’ān”; and idem, “Rhymed Prose.”

- 9 I am assuming here that *saj’* passages should be read in accordance with *tajwīd* and observing *taskīn*. For pausal forms in Standard Arabic, see Robert D. Hoberman, art. “Pausal Forms,” in *Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics*, ed. Kees Vers-teegh et al., 5 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 2005–2009). See also the discussion of Qur’anic *saj’* in Stewart, “*Saj’* in the Qur’ān,” 109–10.

It should be noted that it is also possible to break unit II into a four-part *saj’* unit of two accentual beats, rhyming in –Cā, thus:

*ta’tallu / ṭawrā //*  
*wa-taṣiḥḥu / aṭwārā //*  
*wa-taltāthu / marratā //*  
*wa-tastaqillu / mirārā //*

The hopscotch parallelism of a four-part, two-beat unit II, however, strikes me as less likely than the more sustained parallelism of the two-part, four-beat unit II proposed above. For an example of a Qur’anic passage rhyming solely in –Cā see the case of Q 96:6–14. While the majority of the *fāṣilahs* therein exhibit a deeper level of morphological correspondence, terminating in –CvCCā, Q 96:11 merely ends with the word *hudā*, and Q 96:14 with the word *yarā*. Across its entirety, therefore, the Qur’anic passage rhymes only in –Cā. The same can be observed of Q 18 (see note 20 below), and of one of the examples of non-Qur’anic *saj’* provided by Devin Stewart (Chapter 8, this volume). See the text of the oath of Musaylimah in Stewart, “Introductory Oaths” (p. 286).

- 10 Stewart, “*Saj’* in the Qur’ān,” 127.  
 11 See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā’ir*, vol. 1, 255–58.  
 12 See Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā’ir*, vol. 1, 210.  
 13 Stewart, “*Saj’* in the Qur’ān,” 122.  
 14 Stewart, “*Saj’* in the Qur’ān,” 126. The possible breaking of Q 112:3 at *yālid* is reflected in Anton Spitaler, *Die Verszählung des Koran nach islamischer Überlieferung* (München: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1935), 73, who provides countless examples of junctures where additional breaks at rhyme divisions are posited by the tradition. See, for example, the break recorded at *alīm* in Q 2:10, at *khā’ifīn* in Q 2:114, or at *yunfiqūn* in Q 2:219. Further, unique verse divisions at rhyme junctures are recorded by François Déroche in his study of early Qur’an manuscripts. See the examples of Q 4:34 (at *sabīlā*) and 79 (at *rasūlā*), Q 9:115 (at *mā yattaqūn*), and Q 14:27 (at *zālimīn*) in François Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l’islam: le codex Parisino-petropolitanus* (Leiden: Brill, 2009).  
 15 See, for example, the combination of penultimate long and short vowels in Q 86:1–12.  
 16 These readings have been reflected in Table 6.5. On this matter, see also Devin J. Stewart, “Poetic License in the Qur’an: Ibn al-Ṣā’igh al-Ḥanafī’s *Iḥkām al-rāy fī aḥkām al-āy*,” *Journal of Qur’anic Studies* 11, no. 1 (2009). On p. 34, Stewart provides the following translation of Ibn al-Ṣā’igh al-Ḥanafī’s ninth category out of forty-odd “features” that provide *munāsabah* (“accordance”) at the end of Qur’anic verses:

Lengthening of a final short vowel, as in *al-zunūnā* (“conjectures”, Q. 33:10) [for *al-zunūn(a)*] and *al-sabīlā* (“the path”, Q. 33:67) [for *al-sabīl(a)*]. Included in this category is the retention of a long vowel despite the presence of an apocopating particle, as in *lā takhāfu darakan wa-lā takhshā* (do not fear a low station and do not fear, Q. 20:77) [for *lā takhāfu darakan wa-lā takhsha*] and *sa-nuqri’uka fa-lā tansā* (We will cause you to recite, so do not forget, Q. 87:6) [for *fa-lā tansa* with a short -a vowel], reading the passages as prohibitions.

- 17 It would appear to make sense to ignore verse-final pausal forms where these occur in the middle of a *saj'ah*. This decision has been reflected in the transliterated passage above.
- 18 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, vol. 1, 256. It should be noted that Ibn al-Athīr restricts this to the example of three-part *saj'* units wherein two short verses are followed by a substantially longer verse, citing a hypothetical pair of four-beat verses, which are then followed by a ten- or eleven-beat verse (with a natural division at the four-beat mark) without a significant breach of *i'tidāl* ("balance"). Ibn al-Athīr does not provide any references to specific Qur'anic verses in illustration of this.
- 19 While this was also the case for Q 100:6–8, as demonstrated above, following on from Ibn al-Athīr's *saj'* unit of Q 100:1–5, it is very difficult to envisage Q 19:91–92 as a rhythmical unit in its own right. This will become apparent below.
- 20 Apart from an isolated CvCāCā at Q 18:103, Sūrat al-Kahf rhymes in a combination of –CCā (vv. 13, 18, 23, 25, 32, 44, 65–83, 86–91, 93–101, and 104–5) and –CvCā (vv. 1–12, 14–15, 17, 19–22, 24, 26–31, 33–43, 45–64, 84–85, 92, 102, and 106–10) *fāsilahs*. For Qur'anic passages rhyming in CvCvC, see, e.g., Q 54; for CvCC, see, e.g., Q 89:1–5.
- 21 Stewart argues as follows:

[T]he verse-final words take the form *fa'l*, the first pair ending in –C', while the second pair ends in –Cl. In both cases, the intended pronunciation probably required a vowel, –i-, –e-, or –ə-, in between the consonants—*raji'*, *ṣadi'*, *faṣil*, *hazil*—as in the common variant *katif* for *kitf* "shoulder" (or modern Lebanese Arabic *filim* "movie" vs. Egyptian Arabic *film*).

See below (Stewart, Chapter 8, p. 298).

- 22 For al-Bāqillānī, see again van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*, 100–7 and *passim*.
- 23 Although al-Bāqillānī defines *saj'* as "a continuous span of speech on a single meter" (*muwālāti l-kalam 'alā wazn wāhid*) and emphasizes that *saj'* must exhibit "balance" (*i'tidāl*), very few of the examples of Qur'anic *saj'* that he provides display the even rhythm he cites as fundamental to the presence of good *saj'*. See al-Bāqillānī, *I'jāz*, vol. 2, 57, 58.
- 24 For examples of one-word verses in the Qur'an, see Q 55:1 (*al-rahmān*) and 64 (*mudhāmmatān*), Q 93:1 (*wa-l-ḍuḥā'*), and the instances where isolated letters are counted as one-word verses, phonetically independent from the verses that follow them (the first verses of Q 2–3, Q 7, Q 19–20, Q 26, Q 28–32, Q 36, and Q 40–46). Note that, in the latter cases this is in marked contrast to other occasions (Q 10, Q 11–15, Q 27, Q 38, Q 50, and Q 68) where isolated letters are incorporated into the statements that follow them.
- 25 See Abū l-'Abbās Aḥmad al-Qalqashandī, *Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-a'shā* ("The Dawn of the Blind"), 14 vols. (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1922), vol. 2, 281.
- 26 For this figure, see van Gelder, *Beyond the Line*, 153–58 and *passim*.
- 27 See Jalāl al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Qazwīnī, *al-Īdāḥ fī 'ulūm al-balaghāh*, ed. Ibrāhīm Shams al-Dīn (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2003), 297. As Stewart has pointed out to me, it is possible that the printed edition of *al-Īdāḥ* records a mistake: Q 69:30–32 would appear to be a clear example of bottom-heavy *saj'*, in which v. 32 has seven accentual beats, compared to the 2–3 accentual beats of vv. 30 and 31. Stewart provides in his essay for the present volume (Chapter 8) an example of non-Qur'anic *saj'* (*wa-l-shafaqi / wa-l-ghasaq // wa-l-falaqi / idhā / ttasaq // inna / mā / anba'tuka / bihi / la-ḥaq(q) //*), where rhythm would clearly seem to encourage rhyming terms to coexist unperturbed within one and the same *saj'ah* (p. 301). The printed edition of *al-Īdāḥ* is, however, clear in its insistence that it is only vv. 30–31 that are being discussed here. This statement is moreover reflected in the earlier edition of al-Qazwīnī's *Īdāḥ* referenced by Stewart, "Saj' in the Qur'ān," 26 (which utilizes Muḥammad 'Abd al-Mun'im al-Khafajī's 1949 edition of the *Īdāḥ*). It should

also be noted that the fact that a *saj'ah* can consist of a single term is similarly posited by al-Bāqillānī with reference to Q 19:4, discussed above. See further the discussion in n. 24.

- 28 It should be noted, however, that both of the final cola of v. 98 are dependent on the same initial interrogatory *hal*. Indeed, if the *hal* is removed as an introductory phrase, these two final cola become precisely matched at four accentual beats each. The decision was nonetheless taken to ignore both the grammatical dependency and the secondary rhythmical parallelism of v. 98 in this instance. A similar judgment call will be made regarding Q 56:35–37 below.
- 29 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, vol. 1, 256.
- 30 See Stewart, “*Saj'* in the Qur'ān,” 109.
- 31 For *marfū'ah* with the sense of “honored” or “of high estimation,” see Edward William Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon* (London: Willams and Norgate, 1863), 1,124, and also the poetry of al-Nābighah, where a woman is described as *dumyatin min marmarin marfū'ah*. Al-Nābighah al-Dhubayānī, *Dīwān*, ed. and annot. Ḥannā Naṣr al-Hittī (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī, 1991), 71. Al-Hittī glosses this section of al-Nābighah’s poetic verse as meaning “it was as if she were a marble statue of the utmost perfection and beauty” (*ka-annahā timthālin min al-marmari fī ghāyati l-ḥusni wa-l-jamāl*). The raised couches (*sururun marfū'ah*) of Q 88:13 would appear to be part of a different eschatological scenery, with carefully positioned goblets (*akwābun mawdū'ah*), cushions placed in rows (*namāriqu maṣfūfah*), carpets spread (*zarābiyyu mabthūthah*), and no idle talk (*lā tasma'u fihā lāghiyah*). These *surur marfū'ah* could be argued to correspond to the *surur mawdūnah* of Q 56:15, where goblets are similarly present, rather than to the *furush marfū'ah* that occur later in the same surah, but for this point see the following note.
- 32 Although ‘Abdah b. al-Ṭayyib describes revellers reclining on *al-fursh* [see Charles Lyall, ed. and trans., *The Mufaḍḍalīyāt: An Anthology of Ancient Arabian Odes*, 3 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1921), vol. 1, 290 (Arabic); vol. 2, 97 (English translation)], in the absence of any conclusive evidence to the contrary, I am at present inclined to follow the exegetical tradition in rendering the *furush* of Q 56:32 metaphorically, to convey the meaning “women (*al-nisā'*).” This understanding of the term is attested in the early *tafsīr* works of, for example, al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), al-Tha‘labī (d. 427/1035), al-Māwardī (d. 450/1058), and al-Bayḍāwī (d. 685/1286), and it is elaborated on in some depth in the *Tafsīr* of al-Qurtubī (d. 671/1273). Lane’s Arabic-English lexicon provides backing for a metaphorical reading of the term *firāsh* as meaning “a man’s wife,” “a woman’s husband,” or “a female slave’s master or owner.” See Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2,371. Meanwhile, the concordance of Jāhilī poetry produced by Albert Arazi and Salmān Muṣāliḥah includes four verses which contain the word *firāsh*. Of these four, two collocate the term *firāsh* with *ḍajī'uhā* (“her bedfellow”). A further verse refers to *firāshihā* in such a way that the presence of a bed companion silently observing the poetic scene is not out of the question. See the *dīwāns* of Imru' al-Qays (5: 152 and 6: 148) and al-Nābighah (12: 20) as cited in Albert Arazi and Salmān Muṣāliḥah, *al-'Iqd al-thamīn fī dawāwīn al-shu'arā' al-sittah al-jāhiliyyīn* (Jerusalem, 1999), 836. For these verses in context see Wilhelm Ahlwardt, *The Divans of the Six Ancient Arabic Poets Ennābiga, 'Antara, Tharafa, Zuhair, 'Alqama and Imru-ulqais: Chiefly According to the Mss. of Paris, Gotha. and Leyden; and the Collection of Their Fragments with a List of the Various Readings of the Text* (London: Trübner & Co., 1870), but also Imru' al-Qays, *Dīwān*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Shāfi (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 2004), 116 and 123, and al-Nābighah al-Dhubayānī, *Dīwān*, ed. 'Abbās 'Abd al-Sātir (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1996), 57. Note, however, that the copy of al-Nābighah’s *Dīwān* I initially consulted has *al-fatāh* (“young woman”) where Arazi and Muṣāliḥah have *al-firāsh*. This variant is reflected in al-Nābighah al-Dhubayānī, *Dīwān*, ed. and annot. Ḥannā

- Naṣr al-Ḥittī, 130, but not in the footnotes to Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 20 [Arabic pagination], nor in his list of corrections (Ahlwardt, *Divans*, 13).
- 33 See the preceding two notes. If the *furush marfū'ah* are to be understood, in contrast, as elevated carpets or mattresses, this consideration does not arise.
- 34 This structure whereby a tight Qur'anic unit is extended by a further two verses is in no way uncommon. See Marianna Klar, "Lexical Layers vs Structural Paradigms in the Opening of Sūrat al-Baqara: Typically Medinan Structures in Q 2, Q 3, and Some Shorter Medinan Compositions," in *Unlocking the Medinan Qur'an*, ed. Nicolai Sinai (forthcoming).
- 35 The other solution would be to classify this as a complex *saj'* structure in which the grammatically parallel *saj'* of vv. 35 and 36 extends seamlessly into the linear *saj'* of v. 37 before shifting, equally seamlessly, into the stepped *saj'* of v. 38. I would depict this as AABBC.
- 36 The presence of matched accentual beats throughout Q 56:27–38 is worthy of note.
- 37 See Stewart, "Saj' in the Qur'ān," 121, citing the opinions of Ibn al-Athīr, al-Bāqillānī, and Abū Hilāl al-ʿAskarī.
- 38 Thus the string of *wa*-s at Q 52:1–6, Q 74:32–34, Q 85:1–3, Q 86:1.11–12, Q 91:1–7, Q 92:1–3, Q 93:1–2, and Q 95:1–3.
- 39 Thus the initial *wa*- followed by a string of *fa*-s at Q 37:1–3, Q 51:1–4, and Q 100:1–5.
- 40 Thus Q 79:1–5 displays a series of initial *wa*-s followed by a string of *fa*-s.
- 41 The fact that here we have an initial *fa*- followed by a *wa*- has not escaped my notice. Neither is an oath-marker, however, so the previously argued rule—that *fa*- consistently serves to connect one Qur'anic oath to another and is never series-initial—can be considered to still hold. An initial *fa*- was similarly followed by a *wa*- in Q 93:9–10 above.
- 42 See Angelika Neuwirth, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren* (2nd edn. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012 [1981]), 207.
- 43 See al-Qalqashandī, *Kitāb Ṣubḥ al-a'shā*, 270; Stewart, "Saj' in the Qur' ān," 108.
- 44 Indeed, Ibn al-Athīr's cited example of Q 9:128–29 seems difficult to justify as *masjū'*. One possibility would be to break these verses up colometrically, such that the rhythml parallelism between the two verses is increased. This is demonstrated in Table C.

Q 9:128		Q 9:129	
5	<i>laqad jā'akum rasūlun min anfusikum</i>	2+3	<i>fā-in tawallaw + fa-qul ḥasbiya llāhu</i>
4	<i>'azīzun 'alayhi mā 'anittum</i>	4	<i>lā ilāha illā huwa</i>
2	<i>ḥarīṣun 'alaykum</i>	2	<i>'alayhi tawakkaltu</i>
3	<i>bi-l-mu'minīna ra'ūfun rahīm</i>	4	<i>wa-huwa rabbu l-'arshi l-'azīm</i>

Such a solution draws attention to the deeper rhythmic parallelism between vv. 128 and 129, which obviously goes beyond its 14–15 near-matched accentual beats. It also highlights, however, the weakness of any grammatical parallelism between these two verses. A reliable methodology for identifying *saj'* structures in longer Qur'anic verses remains a work in progress, outside the confines of the present essay.

- 45 Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Mathal al-sā'ir*, vol. 1, 210. Prior to providing these individual examples he mentions that Q 54 and Q 55, among other surahs, are composed entirely in *saj'*.

- 46 The Qur'anic *l* and the Qur'anic *r* are of course usually considered to rhyme with one another. See Stewart, "Saj' in the Qur' ān," 109. It should be observed that this state of play is not reflected in the examples of the *saj'* of the *kuhhān* provided by Stewart (Chapter 8) and by Nora K. Schmid (Chapter 5), this volume. While penultimate *l* and *r* do occur in close proximity, this is never in rhyme position, and the *l* and *r* are always interspersed with other, presumably non-rhyming, consonants. Thus, for example, Stewart cites a pronouncement in which Musaylimah states: *wa-l-layli / l-aḥam // wa-l-dhi'bi / l-adlam // wa-l-jadha'i / l-azlam // mā / ntahakat / usayyid / min / maḥram //*. The final three *saj'ahs* rhyme in *Cvlam/Cvram*, but there would appear to be no corresponding extended rhyme in the initial *saj'ah* of the unit, which terminates in the rhyme word *al-aḥam*. See Stewart (Chapter 8, this volume, p. 284).
- 47 See also n. 16 above. It is worth noting that the orthographically elongated *fathahs* of Q 33:66 and 67 are not reflected in the Sanaa Palimpsest. See Behnam Sadeghi and Mohsen Goudarzi, "Ṣan'ā' 1 and the Origins of the Qur'ān," *Der Islam* 87 (2012), 80 (displaying folio 9b, lines 16 and 18), although both can be discerned in the much later MS Berlin: Staatsbibliothek Peterman 1 38, folio 97r, accessed via [www.corpus-coranicum.de/handschriften](http://www.corpus-coranicum.de/handschriften).
- 48 Compare, for instance, the *inclusio* created by the repetition of *al-qur'ān* in Q 27:1 and Q 27:6. My research into *surah* introductions also remains a work in progress, but see my forthcoming article in *Unlocking the Medinan Qur'an* for further elaboration.
- 49 The two internal occurrences of *wa'id* (at vv. 20 and 28) appear to be of no structural significance. A number of small internal paragraphs within the central section and the tail are, however, closed by verses opening *wa-la-qad* (vv. 16, 22, and 38). The destruction of prior communities is mentioned both in the introduction (at vv. 12–14) and in the tail (at v. 36). The Qur'an arguably reoccurs as the *dhikr* in v. 37, further marking the presence of a tail to the *surah* from v. 36 onward.
- 50 Angelika Neuwirth breaks the *surah* into four sections with subdivisions: section I (vv. 1, 2–3, and 4–5), section IIA (vv. 6–8, 9–11, and 12–14), section IIB (vv. 15–16, 17–22, 23–26, 27–30, and 31–35), section III (vv. 36–38, 39–40, 41–44, and 45). See Neuwirth, *Studien*, 285. The divisions proposed by Neuwirth are not in any evident disagreement with my structurally informed scheme, although this may of course be coincidental.
- 51 A counterfoil to this proposition that I have not yet rationalized is Stewart's citation of an example of pseudo-Qur'anic *saj'* composed by al-Mutanabbī (d. 354/965) where non-rhyming elements seem to sit in complete lack of self-consciousness amid rhyming elements. See Stewart (Chapter 8, this volume, p. 287).

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