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Two Types of Inner-Qur'ānic Interpretation[1]

1 Introduction

The conference from which the present volume has emerged was entitled *Exegetical Crossroads*. Unlike other contributions to this book, mine will not examine intersections between post-Biblical and post-Qur'ānic scriptural interpretation in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity; rather, I shall focus on processes of interpretive engagement with Qur'ānic passages that are traceable within the Qur'ān itself. Yet this, too, will afford us the opportunity to inspect a crossroads of sorts: for one of the respects in which the Qur'ān intersects with Biblical literature is precisely insofar as it contains intriguing cases of scriptural self-interpretation. Since that phenomenon is much better researched with regard to the Bible, my main objective here is to present some of the ways in which it manifests itself in the Islamic scripture.[2] In doing so, I shall draw attention to some salient similarities and differences between the Hebrew Bible and the Qur'ān. My interest is squarely in the Qur'ān, however; I do not pretend to even remotely offer anything resembling a full account of inner-Biblical interpretation.

1 This book chapter was completed in January 2015 and only minor corrections were made afterwards. I would like to express my gratitude to Andrew Bannister for an extended response to a draft version of this chapter, as a result of which I have substantially refined, reconstructed, and expanded my argument in several places. I am likewise grateful to Marianna Klar for miscellaneous corrections and customarily thoughtful comments on a previous version of this chapter. To Georges Tamer I am indebted for tolerating a steady influx of supposedly final versions that were quickly superseded. – My English translations of Qur'ānic passages are based, with frequent modifications, on *The Qurʾān*, trans. by Alan Jones. Cambridge: Gibb Memorial Trust, 2007. Like Jones, I employ superscript "s" and "p" in order to mark verbs and pronouns for which singular and plural forms are undistinguishable in modern English.

2 For an overview of inner-Biblical interpretation see Fishbane, Michael, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis," in *Hebrew Bible / Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation. From the Beginnings to the Middle Ages (Until 1300)*, ed. by Magne Sæbø, vol. 1, pp. 33–48. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996, which conveniently epitomises Fishbane, Michael, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988; Menn, Esther, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis in the Tanak," in *A History of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. by Alan J. Hauser and Duane F. Watson, pp. 55–79. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003. For a preliminary treatment of inner-Qur'ānic interpretation see Sinai, Nicolai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung: Studien zur frühen Koraninterpretation,* Diskurse der Arabistik 16. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009, pp. 1–22, 59–160, with further references to previous Biblical and Qur'ānic scholarship.

https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110564341-013

Before commencing, it may be useful to point out that I take for granted the possibility of making chronological distinctions within the Qur'ānic corpus, based on the assumption that the mean verse length of Qur'ānic sūras increased over time.[3] In addition, I shall assume that the growth of the Qur'ānic corpus paralleled the prophetic career of Muḥammad. In particular, I shall be operating with the customary contrast between Meccan and Medinan sūras, or sūras proclaimed before and after the *hijra* – the latter being distinguished from the former by their consistently high verse length, the ascription to the Qur'ānic messenger of a role of political and military leadership, injunctions to religious militancy, an interest in the detailed regulation of human behaviour, explicit polemics against Judaism and Christianity, references to a prior expulsion or emigration of the Qur'ānic community from the "sacred place of prostration" (e.g., Q 2:217–218), and various terminological peculiarities related to all of the preceding thematic features.

My contribution falls into two parts addressing two different types of Qur'ānic self-interpretation. Let us assume that a given Qur'ānic passage B plays a broadly interpretive role with respect to some temporally earlier passage A, meaning that B in some sense elucidates, re-interprets, or qualifies A. If B was incorporated into the same sūra as A, we are faced with a case of interpretively motivated secondary expansion and revision, which forms the subject of Section 2. If, by contrast, B occurs in a separate and formally independent Qur'ānic sūra, I shall speak of "interpretive backreferencing," to which Section 3 is dedicated. Throughout, I employ an intentionally broad notion of interpretation.

2 Interpretation by Means of Secondary Additions

The study of how existing textual units were subsequently revised and reshaped is a staple of modern Biblical scholarship.[4] Frequently, such revision was carried

3 See Sinai, Nicolai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology," forthcoming in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. by Muhammad Abdel Haleem and Mustafa Shah. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4 Not being a Biblical scholar myself, I shall not attempt to intervene in the debate about how compellingly we can demonstrate specific phrases, verses, or verse groups in the Hebrew Bible – or more specifically in the Book of Amos, from which many of my subsequent Biblical examples will be drawn – to be later editorial insertions rather than integral components of the original version of the passage at hand. While such arguments always permit residual doubts, it strikes me as generally convincing to view a text like the Book of Amos as a product of editorial growth

out not by suppressing or changing an existing portion of text but rather by expanding it with new material that elucidates, updates, qualifies, complements, or amplifies the original text. In terms of their length, such additions may range from just a few words to entire chapters. At the microstructural end of the spectrum, one finds what Michael Fishbane has termed "scribal comments and corrections" consisting, for instance, in explanatory glosses of ancient toponyms.[5] Here are three Biblical examples:

> Josh 18:13: "[...] to the south side of Luz, that is [*hîʾ*], Beth El [...]"
> 1 Chr 11:4: "And David and all Israel went to Jerusalem, that is [*hîʾ*], Jebus ..."
> Gen 14:17: "The king of Sodom went out to meet him [...] at the Valley of Shaveh – that is [*hûʾ*], the King's Valley."

Such glosses are plausibly regarded as later insertions made in the process of scribal transmission in order to explain expressions that had grown obsolete.[6] At the opposite end of the spectrum we encounter macrostructural textual growth as in Isaiah 40 – 66, traditionally designated as Deutero-Isaiah (40 – 55) and Trito-Isaiah (56 – 66) and normally dated significantly later than the book's original nucleus.[7] At least according to one prominent scholar, the Deutero-Isaianic chapters were composed in close conversation with, and as a deliberate continuation of, the literary deposit of the original Isaiah of Jerusalem.[8]

In between the addition of brief glosses and that of entire chapters, the Hebrew Bible also exhibits what one might call mesostructural insertions consisting of individual clauses, verses, or paragraph-sized blocks of text. An example is provided by the following announcement of judgement, which occurs towards the end of the Book of Amos (9:8):

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over time. For an analysis of the Book of Amos that is generally wary of invoking editorial hypotheses, see Paul, Shalom M., *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos*, ed. by Frank Moore Cross. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

5 Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, pp. 23 – 88 (Part One).

6 The inference that glosses must be secondary interpolations is questioned in Eslinger, Lyle, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis and Inner-Biblical Allusion: The Question of Category." *Vetus Testamentum* 42 (1992): pp. 47 – 58. For a convincing rejoinder, see Sommer, Benjamin D., "Exegesis, Allusion and Intertextuality in the Bible: A Response." *Vetus Testamentum* 46 (1996): pp. 479 – 489.

7 For a brief survey of Isa 40 – 66 see Collins, John C., *Introduction to the Hebrew Bible*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004, pp. 379 – 400.

8 Williamson, Hugh G. M., *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah's Role in Composition and Redaction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994, esp. the conclusion at pp. 240 – 244. On different accounts of the genesis of the Book of Isaiah see Jüngling, Hans-Winfried, "Das Buch Jesaja," in *Einleitung in das Alte Testament*, ed. by Erich Zenger et al., 5th edition, pp. 427 – 451. Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2004, at pp. 443 – 445.

> Behold, the eyes of the Lord God are upon the sinful kingdom,
> and I will destroy it from off the face of the earth;
> except [*ʾepes kî*] that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob,
> says the Lord.

Many Biblical scholars would be inclined to construe the indented exceptive clause to be the product of a later editor and to have been inserted in order to mitigate the original passage's categorical announcement of judgement.[9] For a paragraph-length addition, one may point to the announcement of a future restoration of Israel concluding the Book of Amos (9:11–15).[10] Presumably, the point of the insertion was the same as in Amos 9:8, namely, to counterbalance the book's pervasive message of doom with a hope of future salvation that was appropriate to the post-exilic period of Israelite history. Another example of meso-structural expansion is provided by the oracles of judgement in Amos 1:2–2:16. The series consists of eight stanzas, some of which – especially the one directed against Judah in 2:4–5, conspicuous by its Deuteronomistic language – are often considered to be secondary.[11] Once again, the main purpose underlying this insertion would have been to adapt the original text to changing historical circumstances: an original series of oracles directed against the neighbours of the northern kingdom Israel, possibly climaxing with an announcement of the destruction of Israel itself, is updated to include an announcement of the fall of the southern kingdom Judah more than a century later.

9 Collins, *Hebrew Bible*, p. 294: "It is unthinkable that the prophet from Tekoa would have added 'except that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob.' To do so would have taken the sting out of the oracle of judgment. For a later editor, however, the addition was necessary. After all, Judah was also part of the house of Jacob." See, however, Paul, *Amos*, pp. 284–285, who argues that the exceptive phrase following *ʾepes kî* is "not a subsequent addition to the text but rather an integral component part characterizing a contrasting element to the prior statement."

10 See, for example, Collins, *Introduction*, p. 295. Once more, Shalom Paul disagrees (*Amos*, p. 288, with references to previous scholarship).

11 See the summary assessment in Blenkinsopp, Joseph, *A History of Prophecy in Israel*, revised edition. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996, p. 75. For a more detailed discussion see Schmidt, Werner H., "Die deuteronomistische Redaktion des Amosbuches." *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 77 (1965): pp. 168–193. A case in favour of the passage's genetic unity is made in Paul, *Amos*, pp. 11–27.

2.1 Interpretive Expansion in the Qur'ān: Some Examples

To what extent does the Qur'ānic corpus contain equivalent phenomena? Interestingly, glossary insertions of the sort illustrated above are not conspicuous in the canonical recension of the Qur'ān, although it is possible that future research will modify this impression.[12] Nonetheless, it is striking that not even the enigmatic reference to a place named *bakka* at Q 3:96 – which Islamic exegetes identify with Mecca – is accompanied by a gloss similar to the Biblical examples presented above. However, textual variants of a glossary character are reported to have been contained in the alternative recensions of the Qur'ān's consonantal skeleton (*rasm*) with which the Islamic tradition credits various Companions of the Prophet.[13] If Goldziher is right in viewing these variants as secondary attempts at elucidation rather than as potentially representing the original wording of the verses in question,[14] then some early transmitters of the Qur'ān would have applied techniques of glossary interpretation that are in certain respects comparable to those found in the Hebrew Bible. In contrast to the Bible, however, these glosses did not succeed in asserting themselves as part of the authoritative recension of the Islamic scripture, despite the fact that they would certainly have reduced ambiguity and facilitated comprehension. This confirms the traditional assumption that the canonical version of the Qur'ānic *rasm* stabilised much more rapidly than the text of the Hebrew Bible, a conclusion also corroborated by other considerations.[15]

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12 For example, a recent study of mine argues that Q 5:3 contains a secondary insertion part of which can be characterised as playing a "glossary" function (although this insertion is significantly longer than the Biblical examples reviewed above and thus belongs to the category of mesostructural additions). See Sinai, Nicolai, "Processes of Literary Growth and Editorial Expansion in Two Medinan Surahs," in *Islam and its Past: Jahiliyya, Late Antiquity, and the Qur'an*, ed. by Carol Bakhos and Michael Cook. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017, pp. 69 – 119.

13 For example see Goldziher, Ignaz, *Die Richtungen der islamischen Koranauslegung*. Leiden: Brill, 1920, pp. 8 – 16.

14 The underlying assumption that of two textual variants the more ambiguous one is likely to be more original than the less ambiguous one is certainly plausible. Nevertheless, a fresh discussion and examination of the cases in point is now required in the light of Sadeghi, Behnam and Uwe Bergmann, "The Codex of a Companion of the Prophet and the Qurʾān of the Prophet," *Arabica* 57 (2010): pp. 343 – 436. Sadeghi posits that at least during the earliest stage of the Qur'ān's textual transmission scribes, whom he considers to have worked from dictation, were more likely to have inadvertently omitted brief textual segments than to have deliberately added them for interpretive purposes (ibid., pp. 387, 400 – 402, 403 – 404).

15 Sinai, Nicolai, "When Did the Consonantal Skeleton of the Quran Reach Closure?" *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 77 (2014): pp. 273 – 292 and 509 – 521.

The Qur'ān does however exhibit what I have called mesostructural additions. For instance, scholars have identified a number of exceptive clauses similar to Amos 9:8 as likely to constitute secondary additions.[16] One such case occurs at the end of Q 84, which belongs to the early, eschatologically dominated stratum of the Qur'ān:

[20] What is the matter with them that they do not believe,
[21] And that they do not bow down when the Recitation is recited to them?
[22] No! The Unbelievers are in denial.
[23] But God knows well what they hide.
[24] So give them the tidings of a painful punishment.
[25] Though that will not be so (*illā*) for those who believe and do good deeds. They will have an unfailing reward.

Read in isolation from the final verse, the perspective of the passage is grim: it may well be understood to imply that its audience consists exclusively of unbelievers destined for damnation. Verse 25 modifies this message by explicitly recognising that a positive response to the Qur'ānic preaching is possible and reassures the addressees that this will entail a corresponding reward (meaning, of course, entrance to paradise).[17] That v. 25 is in fact a later addition is indicated by a number of observations. First, the verse, coming as it does at the very end of the sūra, can obviously be removed from its context without leaving behind a gap. Secondly, the length of the verse is more than twice the average length of the sūra's remaining verses and thus stands out stylistically.[18] Thirdly, the phrase "those who believe and do good deeds" (*alladhīna āmanū wa-ʿamilū l-ṣāliḥāt*) tends to occur in sūras that are conventionally dated to the Qur'ān's late Meccan and Medinan stages. Even more strikingly, the assertion that "those who believe and do good deeds" will be given an "unfailing reward" also occurs in Q 41:8, virtually a doublet of Q 84:25.[19] The overlap suggests that both verses might be

16 See Neuwirth, Angelika, *Studien zur Komposition der mekkanischen Suren: Die literarische Form des Koran-ein Zeugnis seiner Historizität?*, 2nd edition. Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007, pp. 201–202.

17 The prospect of salvation is held out already by vv. 7–9, which there is no reason to view as a secondary insertion. But in what was presumably its original form, the sūra does not give any sign of acknowledging that any of its addressees belonged to those who would be saved.

18 Measuring verse length in the manner explained in Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology" (briefly, in terms of the number of transcription letters per verse, excluding space characters and hyphens) yields a length of 57 transcription letters for v. 25 and an average length of 26 for vv. 1–24.

19 In Arabic, Q 84:25 runs *illā lladhīna āmanū wa-ʿamilū l-ṣāliḥāti lahum ajrun ghayru mamnūn*, while Q 41:8 has *inna lladhīna āmanū wa-ʿamilū l-ṣāliḥāti lahum ajrun ghayru mamnūn*. On the phrase "those who believe and do good deeds" see Nöldeke, Theodor and Friedrich Schwally,

roughly contemporary, which would date the addition to Q 84 to the later part of Muḥammad's Meccan period. The function of the presumptive addendum is obviously to tone down the exclusively minatory perspective of the original text, which may reflect the emergence of a Qur'ānic community who would naturally have expected to escape damnation. The verse thus plays a role similar to Amos 9:8, namely, to mitigate a statement that, under changed historical circumstances, would have appeared unacceptably, even unintelligibly, harsh.

Another interesting case of secondary expansion occurs in Q 37:112–113. The verses belong to the sūra's middle part, composed of a cycle of prophetic narratives whose individual episodes are separated by a refrain.[20] The longest pericope in this cycle treats Abraham's confrontation with his idolatrous compatriots (37:83–98) and the near-sacrifice of his own son (37:99–107, corresponding to Gen 22). After the episode's concluding refrain (37:108–111) but prior to the next narrative we encounter the following two verses:

> [112] And We gave him the good news of Isaac as a righteous prophet,
> [113] And We blessed him and Isaac.
> And amongst their offspring (*dhurriya*) are those who do good and those who manifestly commit wrong against themselves (*ẓālimun li-nafsihī mubīn*).

That these verses form a later insertion is already suggested by their appendix-like position following the episode's refrain,[21] on account of which they satisfy the minimum requirement that any hypothetical insertion must meet, namely, of being removable from their context without generating an untenable *non sequitur*. In addition, the couplet has a parallel in Q 2:124, which likewise insists, in the context of what appears to be a concise allusion to Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son, that Abraham's offspring (*dhurriya*) includes wrongdoers

Geschichte des Qorāns, vol. 1: *Über den Ursprung des Qorāns*. Leipzig: Dieterich'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1909, p. 97. Apart from Q 41:8, the formula occurs, for instance, in Q 42:22.23.26, 45:21.30, 47:12, 48:29, 65:11, and 98:7. Q 90:17, 95:6 and 103:3, which also employ the phrase but occur in early sūras, are as likely as Q 84:25 to be later insertions (in the case of Q 90, the insertion probably includes vv. 18–20 as well; see Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 228).

20 On the structure of the sūra see Neuwirth, *Studien*, pp. 280–281.

21 See Bell, Richard, *A Commentary on the Qurʾān*, ed. by C. Edmund Bosworth and M. E. J. Richardson, vol. 2. Manchester: University of Manchester, 1991, p. 159; cf. Bell, Richard, *The Qurʾān: Translated, with a Critical Re-Arrangement of the Surahs*, vol. 2 Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1937, p. 446.

(*ẓālimūn*).[22] Very likely, Q 37:112–113 are contemporary with the Abraham narrative in Q 2:124ff., which must be considerably later than the rest of Q 37 and is best assigned to the Medinan period.

What is the purpose of the insertion? First, Q 37:112–113 make an interpretive point with respect to the preceding narrative about Abraham's near-sacrifice of his son. Since the latter is only introduced as a "prudent son" (Q 37:101), his identity remains elusive as long as the sūra is read without vv. 112–113. The latter verses, however, impose a relatively unequivocal answer: placing the annunciation and birth of Isaac after the near-sacrifice signals that the "prudent son" cannot have been Isaac, who is only introduced in v. 112, but must have been Abraham's other son, Ishmael.[23] Incidentally, this indirect identification of the "prudent son" from Q 37 with Ishmael fits well with the previously mentioned link between Q 37:112–113 and Q 2:124ff., as Q 2:127 casts Ishmael in the important role of assisting Abraham in erecting the Meccan sanctuary. The insertion also makes a second point, though: like Q 2:124 and also Q 57:26 (likewise plausibly considered to be Medinan), it rejects the idea that the merit that Abraham acquired by obeying God's command to sacrifice his son is automatically passed on to his descendants. Given that this notion is a Rabbinic tenet and that Q 37:112–113 are likely to be contemporary with Q 2:124ff., the expansion of Q 37 by vv. 112–113, too, is best placed in a Medinan context, where Q 37's retelling of Genesis 22 could easily have been appropriated by Jewish members of the Qur'ānic audience as supporting the idea that the physical descendants of Abraham occupy a uniquely privileged status.[24] In this sense, the insertion of Q 37:112–113 likewise responds to the need to make sense of an existing portion of text under novel historical circumstances.

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22 "And [recall] when Abraham was tested by his Lord with words, and he fulfilled them. He [God] said: 'I am making you[s] a leader for the people.' He [Abraham] said: 'And of my offspring (*dhurriya*)?' He [God] said: 'My covenant does not extend to those who commit wrong.'"

23 Neuwirth, *Studien*, p. 281. Note that Reuven Firestone disagrees, insisting that "it is impossible to determine conclusively from the Qur'an which son was intended"; see Firestone, Reuven, "Abraham's Son as the Intended Sacrifice (*al-Dhabīḥ*, Qurʾān 37:99–113): Issues in Qurʾānic Exegesis." *Journal of Semitic Studies* 34 (1989): pp. 95–131, at p. 98. Based on an examination of what the post-Qur'ānic tradition has to say about the identity of the intended victim of Abraham's sacrifice, Firestone argues for a general development from reports in favour of Isaac to reports favouring Ishmael.

24 See in greater detail Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, pp. 139–142. In discounting the view that descent from Abraham entails any privileged status, the force of Q 37:113 is similar to the statement that Matt 3:9 ascribes to John the Baptist: "And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

A more extended portion of text was added at the end of Q 73. The concluding verse of the text, v. 20, stands out already by its inordinate length, which amounts to more than 50% of the entire rest of the sūra,[25] as well as by its use of terminology that is otherwise characteristic of much later texts. For example, the phrase "fighting in the way of God (*yuqātilūna fī sabīli llāh*)" and the verb *tāba* (here used of God in the sense of "to relent towards") are not otherwise found in the short and eschatologically oriented sūras to which the remainder of Q 73 would seem to belong by virtue of its verse length.[26] Coming at the end of the sūra, v. 20 can be extricated without leaving behind an unsustainable gap. Finally, it is easy to think of a motive for why the passage may have been inserted, namely, in order to mitigate the stringent liturgical requirements formulated at the beginning of the sūra, in Q 73:2–4, according to which most of the night (v. 2), or at least half of it (vv. 3–4) are to be spent in vigils. By contrast to these rather severe expectations, which are reminiscent of the devotional practices of Christian ascetics and monks, v. 20 reassures its audience that not everyone is expected to spend "two thirds of the night" in prayer and that it will be sufficient to "recite from the Qur'ān what is possible (*mā tayassara*)" and to "perform prayer and to give alms." In justification of this alleviation, the verse invokes the presence of sick persons, travellers, and fighters among the Qur'ān's addressees. Clearly, v. 20, like many Medinan passages, presupposes the existence of a broad and socially inclusive religious community and therefore adjusts the earlier practice of extended vigils accordingly.

2.2 Interpretive Expansion in the Qur'ān: General Comments

A review of all putative cases in which a Qur'ānic passage underwent secondary expansion would be far beyond the scope of this contribution. Instead, I should like to make a number of general comments. The first question that should probably be explicitly addressed is whether additions like Q 84:25, 37:112–113, and 73:20 must have been made while Muḥammad was still alive or whether they might not attest to a post-prophetic appropriation of the Qur'ānic corpus. The analysis presented above obviously leans in the former direction insofar as I have invoked a Medinan setting for Q 37:112–113 and Q 73:20, and a late Meccan

25 The total length of vv. 1–19 is 781 transcription letters, while that of v. 20 alone is 497 letters. Once again, see Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology," for details about the measurement procedure.

26 On Q 73:20 as an insertion see Nöldeke and Schwally, *Geschichte des Qorāns*, vol. 1, p. 98; Bell, *Commentary*, vol. 2, pp. 446–447.

one for Q 84:25, based on significant similarities in content and diction between these three additions and other parts of the Qur'ān. For example, if one is content to date Q 2:124 ff. to Muḥammad's Medinan stage, the insertion Q 37:112–113 is best assigned to the same period rather than seen as post-prophetic. Thus, additions of the sort discussed above may well have been made while the Qur'ānic corpus was still in a state of textual growth, rather than constituting finishing touches that a late editor put to an otherwise stable textual corpus.

In this context it may be appropriate to briefly review a recent monograph by the Biblical scholar Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, who argues that scribal circles consisting of Jewish and Christian converts continued to shape and expand the Qur'ānic corpus after the death of Muḥammad.[27] In support of the claim that the Qur'ān underwent a significant degree of post-prophetic editing, Pohlmann cites two observations: first, he underlines the far-reaching familiarity with Jewish and Christian traditions that is displayed by many Qur'ānic passages; secondly, he points to what he sees as a pervasive presence in the Qur'ānic corpus of later additions that have been woven into their textual environment by means of literary techniques familiar from Biblical literature. For example, according to Pohlmann's analysis, many Qur'ānic passages exhibit a procedure that he calls *Wiederaufnahme*, where an existing piece of text is prefaced with a later insertion that echoes the opening of the earlier passage or its characteristic diction.

Pohlmann's general scenario of an editorial reworking of Qur'ānic material by scripturally literate converts is certainly not inherently improbable, and the pertinence of his interest in literary revision as well as the value of some of his textual observations must be unequivocally acknowledged. Nevertheless, a number of significant objections to his general argument spring to mind. First, Pohlmann's very trigger-happy approach to identifying later additions does not inspire confidence. In particular, one wonders whether many of the textual phenomena that he takes to indicate later interpolations – for example, the partial parallelism between Q 2:40 and 2:47[28] – might not equally well be accounted for without invoking later redactional interventions, for instance, as deliberate literary devices.[29] Secondly, it is far from obvious that such redactional activity must have constituted a post-prophetic phenomenon, as Pohlmann appears to assume

27 Pohlmann, Karl-Friedrich, *Die Entstehung des Korans: Neue Erkenntnisse aus Sicht der historisch-kritischen Bibelwissenschaft*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012, pp. 140–144, 184–185, 191–193.

28 Pohlmann, *Entstehung*, pp. 156–157.

29 This is not to deny that in particular the Medinan sūras exhibit numerous traits that justify a redactional analysis and that Pohlmann's work offers helpful suggestions on which such an analysis might be built.

without much argument, rather than possibly having gotten under way while Muḥammad was still alive. Thirdly, there is little reason to assume that familiarity with Jewish and Christian narrative traditions really amounts to "specialist knowledge" (*Spezialwissen*)[30] that could not have been accessible during the lifetime of Muḥammad.[31]

It is true that we ought to remain open-minded about the possibility that the Qur'ānic corpus could have undergone a certain amount of redactional work after the death of Muḥammad.[32] Yet we should also resist the temptation of simply transferring the conclusions of Biblical scholarship to the Qur'ān. Attempts to reconstruct the literary growth of one of the prophetic books of the Hebrew Bible, such as Amos, by Biblical scholars will typically involve the identification of an original core of brief mantic utterances that are assumed to have been subsequently expanded and reshaped by successive generations of scribally trained disciples. We need to be cautious about imposing this model of a linear sequence of charismatic proclamation and scribal revision on the Qur'ānic corpus, given that the latter came into being during a much shorter period and at a time when the Bible, in its Jewish and Christian incarnations, had for centuries been an object of sophisticated exegetical activity. The fact that a Hadith report depicts Muḥammad as instructing his scribes to incorporate newly revealed passages into existing sūras illustrates that early Muslims saw nothing incongruous in the notion that Muḥammad himself would cause revisions and interpolations to be made to existing revelations.[33] I am not of course suggesting that this tra-

30 Thus Pohlmann, *Entstehung*, p. 139.

31 True, some Medinan passages contain surprisingly specific allusions to Jewish traditions. Examples for this are a near-quotation from the Mishnah in Q 5:32, or the cross-linguistic pun in Q 2:93 that exchanges the Hebrew *šāmaʿnū ve-ʿaśīnū*, "We hear and obey" (Deut 5:24) for the phonetically similar *samiʿnā wa-ʿaṣaynā*, "We hear and disobey," and thereby polemically inverts its meaning; see Speyer, Heinrich, *Die biblischen Erzählungen im Qoran*. Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 1988, pp. 87–88 and 301. However, Islamic sources describe Medina as home to a large number of Jewish inhabitants, at least some of whom may have joined the nascent Islamic *umma* already while Muḥammad was still alive. As long as there is no compelling case for dismissing all contextual information for the Qur'ān that is derived from the Islamic tradition, there is every reason to assume that Muḥammad's followers, especially those among them who were themselves converts from Judaism, would have engaged in protracted disputes with the Medinan Jews. This tallies well with the substantial amount of anti-Jewish polemic contained in the Medinan stratum of the Qur'ān (in particular, in Q 2). As a result of such disputes, a fairly detailed knowledge of certain Rabbinic traditions could perfectly well have entered Qur'ānic discourse while Muḥammad was still active.

32 See Sinai, "Consonantal Skeleton," p. 521.

33 See al-Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, ed. by Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir et al., 5 vols. Cairo: al-Ḥalabī, 1978, vol. 5, p. 272, no. 3086 (48:10: *Kitāb tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, on Q 9). Interestingly, the di-

dition may confidently be taken as historically accurate. But we certainly need to envisage the possibility that in the case of the Qur'ān the two activities of prophetic proclamation and scribal revision could at least partly have proceeded in parallel rather than having formed strictly consecutive phases. This is supported by the fact, underscored above, that insertions like Q 84:25, 37:112–113, and 73:20 are very plausibly placed during Muḥammad's lifetime. The editorial revision of existing Qur'ānic proclamations by means of secondary additions therefore began while Muḥammad was still alive, whether or not it continued after his death.

The preceding remarks imply that the three insertions discussed above, as well as similar ones, can tell us something about the status of the Qur'ānic material prior to Muḥammad's death. I would highlight three points in this regard. First, as in comparable Biblical cases, the procedure of interpretive expansion that can be observed in Q 84:37 and 73 only makes sense if the texts into which the putative additions were incorporated continued to be accessible to and recognised as authoritative by the Qur'ānic community beyond the occasion of their first recitation: texts that have dropped out of circulation or are not invested with a special authority are not generally updated and re-interpreted. It is true that all the insertions examined above are found in relatively early sūras, but there is no *prima facie* reason for suspecting that the longer and more complex sūras that were promulgated subsequently would have been treated differently, especially given that Medinan insertions have also been posited in two later Meccan sūras, Q 20 and Q 7.[34] Hence, at least those sūras displaying similar additions, but more probably all or most of Muḥammad's recitations, did not function as one-off addresses that were submerged by subsequent Qur'ānic texts.[35] Second, as in the Hebrew Bible, it appears that Qur'ānic proclamations were not generally amenable to wholesale rewriting or expurgation but had to

vision of labour emerging from this report bears a certain resemblance to the manner in which Jer 36 describes the cooperation between the eponymous prophet and his scribe Baruch: the chapter narrates the destruction of a scroll containing Jeremiah's prophecies and Baruch's subsequent production of a new scroll comprising the content of the previous one in addition to "many like words" (Jer 36:32).

34 Neuwirth, Angelika, "Meccan Texts – Medinan Additions? Politics and the Re-reading of Liturgical Communications," in *Words, Texts, and Concepts Cruising the Mediterranean Sea: Studies on the Sources, Contents, and Influences of Islamic Civilization and Arabic Philosophy and Science*, Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta 139, ed. by Rüdiger Arnzen and Jörn Thielmann, pp. 71–93. Leuven: Peeters, 2004.

35 See Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, p. 81 (cf. also ibid., pp. 1–2).

be modified and re-interpreted through the insertion of additional material.[36] Once recited in public, the Qur'ānic texts must have been difficult to withdraw from communal circulation and in this sense ceased to be under the exclusive control of Muḥammad (although a number of Qur'ānic passages do acknowledge that in certain cases existing recitations were in fact suppressed and replaced[37]). Thirdly, our ability to identify specific textual segments as additions, based on stylistic and terminological discrepancies with their immediate literary context, implies that their host sūras were by and large preserved with a high degree of verbal accuracy and did not undergo incremental and subconscious adjustment in diction and content.[38]

3 Interpretive Backreferencing

As adumbrated in my introduction, I apply the term "interpretive backreferencing" to cases in which a later Qur'ānic passage B modifies the meaning of some temporally antecedent passage A or a cluster of several such passages, with A and B occurring in independent Qur'ānic proclamations or sūras.[39] Normally, B will signal the identity of A by a more or less conspicuous overlap in diction. To draw on Benjamin Sommer's helpful treatment of allusions in the Hebrew Bible, "[m]arkers (usually borrowed vocabulary) point the reader to the older text, though only if the reader is familiar with them."[40]

36 This is also confirmed by the case of Abraham's intercession for his idolatrous father, which is reported in Q 14:41, 19:47, and Q 26:86 and is discussed in the second part of this chapter: the pertinent passages could not be excised but had to be qualified and re-interpreted (namely, in Q 9:114 and 60:4).

37 See Q 2:106 and 16:101. Q 22:52 might also be relevant. Since such suppressed passages are by definition unavailable to us, it seems unlikely that we shall ever be in a position to ascertain the causes for suppression as opposed to interpretive expansion.

38 Admittedly, we can only speculate about how the Qur'ānic proclamations, after their initial promulgation, were preserved and reused during Muḥammad's lifetime. Even if Muḥammad's recitations were from a certain point transcribed and stored in writing, widespread communal access to written copies of Qur'ānic material appears less likely than access by means of repeated recitation and some degree of collective memorisation.

39 The phenomenon is not dissimilar to the interpretive relations obtaining between different Qur'ānic verses that al-Suyūṭī describes by the term *iqtiṣāṣ*. See Abdel Haleem, Muhammad, *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Styles*. London: I. B. Tauris, 1999, p. 161.

40 Cf. Sommer, Benjamin, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40 – 66*, Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. With respect to the earliest recipients of the Qur'ān, "reader" would probably need to be substituted by "hearer."

Such interpretive backreferencing also occurs in the Hebrew Bible. It has a particularly fertile breeding ground in the three major legal corpora included in the Pentateuch, normally designated as the Covenant Code (Exod 20 – 23), the Holiness Code (Lev 17 – 26), and the Deuteronomic Code (Deut 12 – 26). In many cases, these three collections of legal material regulate on the same issues (e. g., the release of slaves) and display conspicuous terminological and phraseological similarities yet diverge in crucial details. Assuming that the composers of the Holiness Code and of the Deuteronomic Code were not only drawing on the Covenant Code but also expected their readers to recognise this, it is plausible to see later laws as engaged in a deliberate clarification, extension, and updating of earlier ones.[41] At least broadly speaking, I find it justified to characterise this as an interpretive process.

Rather than attempting a cursory presentation of some pertinent Biblical specimens, as in the last section of this article, I shall immediately turn to the Qur'ān now and argue that interpretive backreferencing is an important feature of the Islamic scripture as well. I commence with what I hope will be seen as a relatively straightforward example and then go on to reiterate an earlier claim of mine that the phenomenon is also exhibited by the Qur'ānic Adam narratives. Throughout this section, I shall be particularly concerned to defuse what might appear to be serious objections to the general notion of targeted interpretive backreferencing.

3.1 An Initial Example: Abraham's Intercession for His Father

By way of an initial instance of interpretive backreferencing, let us consider Q 9:114: "Abraham's seeking of forgiveness (*istighfār*) for his father was only because of a promise he had made to him. When it became clear to him that his father was an enemy of God, he dissociated himself from him (*tabarraʾa minhu*) – and Abraham was kind-hearted and prudent." The context in which this statement occurs is the assertion, in the immediately preceding verse, that the Prophet and the Believers may not "seek forgiveness for the Associators (*an yastaghfirū li-l-mushrikīn*), even if they were to be near kinsmen, after it has become clear to them that they are companions of the Fire." V. 114 is obviously concerned to clarify that Abraham did not violate the injunction expressed

41 See summarily Fishbane, "Inner-Biblical Exegesis," pp. 38 – 43. For an accessible presentation of some examples see Ska, Jean-Louis, *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*, trans. by Pascale Dominique. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2006, pp. 40 – 52.

in v. 113. However, rather than simply denying that Abraham sought forgiveness for his father at all, v. 114 emphasises that he only did so in order to honour a prior promise and that he did not hesitate to sever all ties to his father when he realised the full extent of his opposition to God. It would therefore seem, first, that v. 114 assumes its audience to be familiar with a tradition according to which Abraham pleaded with God to forgive his idolatrous father and, secondly, that the verse attempts to negate the irenic implications of this act.[42] A similar neutralisation of Abraham's intercession is contained in Q 60:4. In both cases, simple denial of Abraham's intercession does not seem to have been on the cards, although this would arguably have served the two verses' basic objective – namely, to insist on Abraham's unhesitating dissociation from his people and his father[43] – in a much simpler fashion.

Now, Abraham's act of intercession is actually described in various earlier Qur'ānic passages, namely, in Q 19:47, where Abraham announces to his father that he will "ask my Lord to forgive you" (*sa-astaghfiru laka rabbī*), and in Q 14:41 and Q 26:86, where Abraham petitions God to "forgive" (*ghafara li-)* his father and his parents. Not only is there an obvious thematic relationship between Q 9:114 and 60:4, on the one hand, and these earlier passages, on the other, but there also exists a crucial overlap in diction: all verses make prominent use of the root *gh-f-r*, with three of them (Q 9:114, 19:47, and 60:4) employing the form *istaghfara*. Furthermore, the interpretive realignment of existing sūras by means of additions, as discussed in Section 2, presupposes that many, if not most, of Muḥammad's proclamations remained in communal circulation well after their initial publication. It is therefore reasonable to posit that the addressees of Q 9:114 and 60:4 were assumed to have remained familiar with the earlier passages Q 14:41, 19:47, and 26:86. This also explains why Q 9:114 and 60:4 are, apparently, unable to simply deny that Abraham interceded on behalf of his father: earlier Qur'ānic proclamations having described that such an intercession took place, subsequent ones had to respect the basic facts of the matter. But if the audience of Q 9:114 and 60:4 were aware of the earlier passages describing Abraham's intercession for his father, they would naturally have perceived the former as comments on the latter – that is, they would have perceived them as playing a broadly interpretive role. In this sense, Q 9:114 and 60:4 qualify as instances of inner-scriptural interpretation. Interestingly, the Qur'ān itself appears to reflect this phenomenon of interpretive backreferencing, for Q 75:16 – 19,

42 This coheres well with the fact that Q 9 devotes significant space to chastising its audience for their unwillingness to fight the "Unbelievers" (cf. 9:38 ff.).

43 Note that Q 60:4, like 9:114, makes use of a derivative of the root *b-r-ʾ*.

a relatively early passage, emphasises that when a Qur'ānic revelation stands in need of subsequent "clarification" (*bayān*), this will be provided by a further revelation.[44]

It must be recognised that neither Q 9:114 nor 60:4 signal their likely antecedents by some sort of text-referential tag; 9:114 does not say, as one might perhaps expect it to, "Abraham's seeking of forgiveness for his father, *as mentioned in a previous sūra* [...]," or some such thing. Instead, the two earlier verses that 9:114 is latching on to are only picked out implicitly, by the occurrence of a verbal derivative of *gh-f-r* in connection with Abraham and his father. We are thus faced with a distinctly allusive kind of interpretive backreferencing. As a matter of fact, overt tagging hardly ever occurs in the Qur'ān: even Biblically derived material is almost never accompanied by explicit formulae of citation or textual reference.[45] This is plausibly taken to be symptomatic of the fact that the Qur'ānic milieu was a predominantly oral one and that within it knowledge of Biblical literature, too, was mediated orally – although the Qur'ān does of course bear witness to a clear awareness of the *existence* of earlier scriptures like the *tawrāh* and the *injīl*.[46] Situating the Qur'ān in a largely oral milieu would certainly account for its general lack of explicit formulae of citation: in a cultural environment in which the quo-

44 The passage runs as follows:

[16] Do[s] not move your tongue about it to hasten it.

[17] Upon Us is its putting together and its recitation.

[18] When We recite it, follow[s] its recitation.

[19] Upon Us is its explanation.

Not only do these verses stake out an unequivocal claim to verbal inspiration, in the sense that Muḥammad's role is envisaged as merely consisting in the faithful transmission of divine utterances, but they also assign to God the prerogative of clarifying existing revelations. Presumably, then, any interpretation of existing Qur'ān texts must occur in further Qur'ānic pronouncements. The statement is best read as an attempt to withhold interpretive control over the emerging Qur'ānic corpus from the community that was gradually forming around it. Naturally, such a model of divine self-interpretation proved to be applicable only while Muḥammad was still alive.

45 An exception is Q 21:105, which introduces a quotation of Ps 37:29 as something that "We have written in the *zabūr*." Cf. also Q 5:32 (paraphrasing Mishna Sanhedrin 4:5) and 5:45 (a variation on Exod 21:23–25 and cognate passages), both of which employ *katabnā* (although its meaning in these two cases may be closer to "We have decreed").

46 On the orality of the Qur'ānic milieu, see Griffith, Sidney, *The Bible in Arabic: The Scriptures of the "People of the Book" in the Language of Islam*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2013, pp. 42–43, 55–56, and Bannister, Andrew, *An Oral-Formulaic Study of the Qur'an*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014, pp. 43–64, 107–128. Note, however, that part of the reason why the Qur'ān is so noticeably reticent to explicitly cite previous scriptures might be theological: given the Qur'ān's self-presentation as divine speech and its self-description as a "sending down" (*tanzīl*) of the celestial scripture (*kitāb*), it makes sense for it not to defer to previous revelations by explicitly quoting and exegeting them.

tation of fixed texts is not a widespread practice, the modern expectation that such references ought to be expressly flagged up will hardly be applicable.

It is moreover significant that in the Bible an explicit signalling of quotations seems to be most frequent in cases where a New Testament text is referring to an Old Testament / Hebrew Bible one, a good example being the so-called fulfilment citations in the Gospel of Matthew, or the citations from the Hebrew Bible in the Epistle to the Hebrews.[47] Within the Hebrew Bible, by contrast, one often finds untagged allusions.[48] It is tempting to venture the following hypothesis: where some passage B quotes or alludes to some earlier passage A, explicit signalling of the cross-reference is more likely in cases in which A is conceptualised as belonging to a closed literary corpus distinct from B, as opposed to cases in which both passages are viewed as belonging to one and the same textual corpus that is still in a state of growth. For all we can tell, the phenomenon of inner-Qur'ānic backreferencing falls into the latter rubric, which further accounts for the fact that in the Qur'ān interpretive backreferences such as Q 9:114 and Q 60:4 are generally untagged.

Assuming that the Qur'ānic proclamations are to be situated in a predominantly oral milieu, is this difficult to reconcile with the fact that they exhibit a significant amount of targeted (albeit implicit) cross-quotation and cross-allusion? I would submit that there is no need to assume that the two are incompatible. This is most easily appreciated if we take into account Angelika Neuwirth's convincing insistence that the Qur'ānic corpus documents the gradual crystallisation of a closely-knit religious community that grew increasingly distinct from its pagan environment of origin.[49] The focal point of this newly emerging collective identity would have been Muḥammad's revelatory utterances: drawing on the work of Neuwirth, we may say that the Qur'ānic community progressively withdrew from its immediate social habitat into a literary world defined by the Qur'ānic revelations. This scenario cogently explains why it makes eminent sense to view Muḥammad's followers as having possessed the intimate textual familiarity with previous Qur'ānic proclamations that my above analysis presup-

47 On Matthew's fulfilment citations see Ehrman, Bart D., *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 5th edition. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, p. 118.

48 For a study of the use of allusion in Isa 40 – 66 to earlier portions of the Hebrew Bible, in particular to the book of Jeremiah, see Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture* (who emphasises that allusion can serve many other than just exegetical functions). Many of the examples of inner-scriptural interpretation discussed in Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation*, are also relevant.

49 See the articles collected in Neuwirth, Angelika, *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014.

poses, despite the fact that the cultural milieu from which they hailed would have been a largely oral one. In sum, there is no need to doubt that at least a significant part of the addressees of Q 9:114 and 60:4 would have been in a position to recognise these verses' allusive reference to earlier Qur'ānic statements about Abraham.

3.2 The Qur'ānic Adam Narratives

The obvious question arising at this point is whether the phenomenon of interpretive backreferencing exhibited by Q 9:114 and 60:4 is discernible elsewhere in the Qur'ān. In a previous publication I have argued that it is fairly widespread particularly in Qur'ānic narratives.[50] By way of an example, I shall consider the Qur'ān's retellings of the creation of Adam and his temptation by Iblīs (*diabolos*), which have previously been examined by Edmund Beck, Angelika Neuwirth, myself, Andrew Bannister, and Joseph Witztum.[51] I shall first present the relevant material, which is scattered across eight different sūras, and defend my assumption that later proclamations in this series would, in the Qur'ān's original historical context, have been understood against the background of earlier ones. The next and final section of my contribution will then consider various ways in which the passages at hand can be seen to be engaged in interpretive backreferencing.

Table 1 synoptically maps out the eight Qur'ānic version of the narrative, in a suitably summarised shape and subdivided into two parts: (1) Adam's creation and the fall of Iblīs; (2) Adam succumbs to temptation by the devil and eats from the tree of eternal life.[52] Sūras are listed, from left to right, in their probable

50 See Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, pp. 59–160.

51 See Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, pp. 86–96; Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 1–18, 243–270; Witztum, Joseph, "Variant Traditions, Relative Chronology, and the Study of Intra-Quranic Parallels," in *Islamic Cultures, Islamic Contexts: Essays in Honor of Professor Patricia Crone*, Islamic History and Civilization: Studies and Texts 114, ed. by Behnam Sadeghi, Asad Q. Ahmed, Adam Silverstein and Robert Hoyland, pp. 1–50. Leiden: Brill, 2015, pp. 14–27. For a discussion of earlier studies of the Qur'ānic Adam narratives by Edmund Beck and Angelika Neuwirth see the publications by Sinai and Witztum.

52 It is conspicuous that the first part of the story utilises the name Iblīs, whereas the second part employs *al-shayṭān*. This apparent change in name corresponds to the *Cave of Treasures*, where the devil only receives the name "Satan" after his expulsion from paradise (but prior to the temptation of Adam). See Bezold, Carl (ed. and trans.), *Die Schatzhöhle*. Leipzig: Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1883, pp. 16f. (Arabic and Syriac) and 4 (German translation). I owe this observation to a tutorial essay by Rachel Dryden.

chronological order, based on the general assumption that the mean verse length of Qur'ānic sūras tended to increase over time.[53] (It is worthwhile to flag up that my relative dating of the texts puts me in conflict with Witztum's suggestion that the narratives about Adam and about the Israelite's worshipping of the Golden Calf in Q 20 are later than the corresponding accounts in Q 7.[54]) Note that where different sūras share a narrative element, the respective verses very often display significant literal overlap.[55] This is illustrated by Table 2, which follows the same structure and translates the openings of each version of the story.

53 Precise values for the mean verse length of the sūras in question, which underpin my chronological ordering, are provided in Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology." In some cases, the mean verse length of adjacent sūras is so close that their chronological relationship may well have been the reverse. This is particularly true for Q 17 and Q 18. Whether the disparity in mean verse length between Q 7, on the one hand, and Q 17 and Q 18, on the other, is sufficiently large to entail that Q 7 must be the latest of the three texts also requires further consideration. However, these minor qualifications do not undermine the general developmental trajectory emerging from my table. That Q 15 is earlier than Q 38 I do not doubt, given that the 95% confidence intervals of both sūras' mean verse length (see Sinai, "Inner-Qur'anic Chronology") show only very scant overlap. On the relative dating of Q 7 and Q 20 see the following note.

54 See Witztum, "Variant Traditions." Both in the case of the story of the disobedience of Adam and that of the Golden Calf, Witztum maintains that the versions in Q 7 are in some salient regard closer to the Biblical text (especially in its Syriac version) than the versions in Q 20. For example, Witztum convincingly argues that the devil's promise in Q 7:20 is closer to Gen 3:5 than in Q 20:120 (Witztum, "Variant Traditions," pp. 25f.). He suggests that such observations are best explained by assuming a development leading away from the Bible, i.e., from the relevant passages of Q 7 to the relevant passages of Q 20. Although unable to engage in detail with Witztum's perspicacious treatment of the material, I would still insist on the possibility of secondary Biblicisation, i.e., of the Qur'ān moving closer to the Biblical text over time rather than away from it. This is far from a novel scenario; as pointed out by Witztum himself, the "classic example given for the Quran's growing awareness of the Bible is the figure of Ishmael and his relationship to Abraham, or lack thereof" (Witztum, "Variant Traditions," p. 27). Against Witztum, I am not convinced that such a model is less capable of making sense of the textual evidence than the opposite trajectory. Obviously, if Witztum's relative dating is correct, my claim that mean verse length is a reliable chronological indicator will have been refuted, given that Q 7's mean verse length is significantly higher than that of Q 20 (104.27 transcription letters as opposed to 61.04).

55 The table is an expanded and modified version of the one in Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, p. 96 (the latter omitting the concise reminiscences in Q 17:61–65 and 18:50, which are summary parallels to the relevant sections of Q 15 and 38). A similar breakdown that cites the relevant passages in full can be found in Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 13–18. Note that Bannister does not attempt a chronological ordering.

Table 1: A thematic synopsis of the Qur'ānic Adam-Iblīs narratives.

Q 55	Q 15	Q 38	Q 20	Q 17	Q 18	Q 7	Q 2
[14–15] Humans and jinn created from clay and fire.	[26–27] Introductory preview: humans and jinn created from clay and fire.						
			[115] Introduction: Adam forgot to keep his covenant with God.			[10] God's grace and man's ingratitude.	
			(1) The creation of Adam and the fall of Iblīs				
	[28] God announces to the angels His intention to create man from clay.	[71] God announces to the angels His intention to create man from clay.				[11] Addressees reminded of their creation by God.	[30] God announces to the angels His intention to establish a successor on earth.
							[30] Protest of the angels, rejoinder by God.
							[31–33] God teaches Adam "all the names" and demonstrates the angels' ignorance.
	[29] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before man.	[72] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before man.	[116] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam.	[61] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam.	[50] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam.	[11] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam.	[34] The angels ordered to prostrate themselves before Adam.

Q 55	Q 15	Q 38	Q 20	Q 17	Q 18	Q 7	Q 2
	[30–31] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.	[73–74] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.	[116] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.	[61] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.	[50] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.	[11] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.	[34] The angels prostrate themselves, but Iblīs disobeys.
	[32–33] Exchange between God and Iblīs.	[75–76] Exchange between God and Iblīs.		[61] Statement by Iblīs.		[12] Exchange between God and Iblīs.	
	[34–35] Iblīs banned.	[77–78] Iblīs banned.				[13] Iblīs banned.	
	[36–43] Iblīs announces his intention to lead mankind astray; God's servants are exempt.	[79–85] Iblīs announces his intention to lead mankind astray; God's servants are exempt.		[62–65] Iblīs announces his intention to "devour" (*iḫtanaka*?) mankind; God's servants are exempt.		[14–18] Iblīs announces his intention to lead mankind astray.	
	(2) Adam succumbs to temptation and eats from the tree of eternal life						
			[117–119] Adam warned of the enmity of Iblīs and admonished not to forfeit paradise.			[19] Adam given usufruct of paradise but admonished not to approach "this tree"	[35] Adam given usufruct of paradise but admonished not to approach "this tree."
			[120] Adam tempted by the devil to eat from the "tree of eternal life."			[20–21] Adam and Eve tempted by the devil to eat from the tree.	[36] Adam and Eve forfeit paradise due to the devil's seduction.

Q 55	Q 15	Q 38	Q 20	Q 17	Q 18	Q 7	Q 2
			[121] Adam and Eve eat from the tree.			[22] Adam and Eve eat from the tree and are reproached by God.	
						[23] Adam and Eve incriminate themselves and ask for God's forgiveness.	
			[122] God relents towards Adam.				(cf. v. 37)
			[123] Adam and Eve driven from paradise, declaration of enmity between humans and the devil.			[24] Adam and Eve driven from paradise, declaration of enmity between humans and the devil.	[36]Adam and Eve driven from paradise, declaration of enmity between humans and the devil.
						[24–25] God decrees human mortality.	[36] God decrees human mortality.
			(cf. v. 122)				[37] God relents towards Adam. [38] Reprise: Adam and Eve driven from paradise.*
			[123–124] God exhorts humans to follow His guidance.				[38–39] God exhorts humans to follow His guidance.

* On this reprise see Witztum, "Variant Traditions", 19–21.

Table 2: Overlaps in diction between the openings of the Qur'ānic Adam-Iblīs narratives.
Note: Where a column has underlined expressions and phrases, these overlap with another column further left.[56]

Q 55	Q 15	Q 38	Q 20	Q 17	Q 18	Q 7	Q 2
[14] He created man from clay (*ṣalṣāl*) like pottery [or: like a potter], [15] And He created the jinn from a mixture of fire.	[26] We have created man from clay (*ṣalṣāl*), from moulded mud; [27] We created the jinn before from the fire of the scorching wind.						
						[11] We created you[P] and shaped you[P] and then	
	[28] And [recall] when your[S] Lord said to the angels:	[71] And [recall] when your Lord[S] said to the angels:	[116] And [recall] when We said to the angels:	[61] And [recall] when We said to the angels:	[50] And [recall] when We said to the angels:	We said to the angels:	[30] And [recall] when your[S] Lord said to the angels:
	"I am creating man from clay (*ṣalṣāl*), from moulded mud.	"I am creating man from clay (*ṭīn*).					"I am putting a successor on the earth." They said: [...]
							[34] And when We said to the angels:
	[29] So when I have formed him and breathed into him some of My spirit,	[72] So when I have formed him and breathed into him some of My spirit,					
	then fall down in prostration to him (*fa-qaʿū lahu sājidīn*)."	then fall down in prostration to him."	"Prostrate yourselves (*usjudu*) to Adam,"	"Prostrate yourselves to Adam,"	"Prostrate yourselves to Adam,"	"Prostrate yourselves to Adam,"	"Prostrate yourselves to Adam,"

56 Note that Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 13–18 (who transcribes the original Arabic rather than giving a translation) makes a slightly different use of underlines.

Q 55	Q 15	Q 38	Q 20	Q 17	Q 18	Q 7	Q 2
	[30] All the angels prostrated themselves, all together,	[73] All the angels prostrated themselves, all together,	and they prostrated themselves,	and they prostrated themselves,	and they prostrated themselves,	and they prostrated themselves,	and they prostrated themselves,
	[31] Except Iblīs;	[74] Except Iblīs;	except Iblīs;	except Iblīs.	except Iblīs.	except Iblīs;	except Iblīs;
	he refused to be with those who prostrated themselves.		he refused.			he was not amongst those who prostrated themselves.	he refused
		he was haughty and one of the Unbelievers.			he was one of the jinn, and he sinned against the command of his Lord. [...]		and was haughty and one of the Unbelievers.

At the risk of slaying the slain, I would once again argue that a significant part of the addressees of each of these passages would have been aware of previous Qur'ānic proclamations touching on the same subject. This position is supported both by the phenomenon of interpretive expansion as studied in Section 2 and by my preceding analysis of Q 9:114, both of which establish that Qur'ānic proclamations continued to circulate, and to be regarded as authoritative, beyond their initial recitation and that they could become, at least on occasion, the object of later Qur'ānic clarification, comment, and qualification.

My view is also confirmed by the fact that Qur'ānic narratives often appear to assume familiarity with previous versions of the story in question, insofar as they seem content to leave narrative gaps where these can be easily filled in by someone acquainted with earlier Qur'ānic retellings. For example, Q 20 employs the brief epitome of Iblīs' act of disobedience that also occurs in Q 17, 18, 7, and 2,[57] and then goes on to narrate, for the first time, Adam's subsequent temptation by Iblīs, here referred to as "the Satan." What Q 20 omits, though, is the motif linking the first and the second part of the story, namely, Iblīs' announcement that he will henceforth strive to lead man into temptation. Plausibly, the audience of Q 20 would simply have filled this gap on the basis of their acquaintance with the earlier versions of the story contained in Q 15 and Q 38, both of which contain the motif in question. If, by contrast, later versions of a Qur'ānic narrative had been intended to replace the preceding ones rather than presupposing and complementing them, we might have expected a much more sustained attempt at incorporating essential narrative elements from earlier versions into subsequent ones. This is patently not the case, for even Q 7, which offers the most comprehensive retelling of the plot as it had so far crystallised, is far from self-sufficient: it omits God's initial creation of Adam from clay, although this is later presupposed by Iblīs' statement in v. 12 ("I am better than him; You created me from fire and him from clay"); and it reports Adam and Eve's self-incrimination and their prayer for God's forgiveness (Q 7:23), but omits God's renewed election of Adam as reported in Q 20:122.[58] We are therefore jus-

57 Q 20:116: "And [recall] when We said to the angels: 'Prostrate yourselves to Adam', and they prostrated themselves, except Iblīs; he refused."

58 The background knowledge presupposed by Qur'ānic narratives or narrative reminiscences is certainly not always itself Qur'ānic. For example, Q 73:15–18, 79:15–26, 85:17–18, 87:18–19, 89:6–14, and 91:11–15 would all appear to assume some amount of prior knowledge on the part of their audience about Noah, Abraham, and Moses, as well as about the destruction of Thamūd, ʿĀd, and Iram; and given that these passages are to be dated earlier than the more comprehensive treatment of these figures and peoples in other sūras, this background knowl-

tified in positing that a substantial part the audience of each successive version of the Adam-Iblīs narrative would have had some awareness of the preceding ones: later versions would generally have been understood in the light of earlier ones. At the same time, however, earlier ones, when re-recited, would also have been understood in the light of later ones.[59]

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edge must originally have consisted in extra-Qur'ānic narrative traditions. (For an example of what these may have looked like, see Sinai, Nicolai, "Religious Poetry from the Quranic Milieu: Umayya b. Abī l-Ṣalt on the Fate of the Thamūd." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 74 (2011): pp. 397–416.) One might therefore object that the gap occasioned by Q 20's omission of Iblīs' statement at the end of the first part of the narrative may well have been filled by recourse to pre-Qur'ānic traditions as documented, for instance, in the *Life of Adam and Eve* (see Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 54–58). In other words, why assume that the gap was filled specifically by recourse to Q 15 and 38? The objection does not hold, though. Where a Qur'ānic text presupposes information not contained in an earlier sūra, we must certainly assume that Muḥammad's audience was familiar with extra-Qur'ānic traditions that would have allowed them to understand what was being said. Yet once Qur'ānic discourse had addressed a given topic – say, the disobedience of Iblīs – it is far more likely that the Qur'ānic community's background knowledge about the matter at hand would have been primarily governed by previous Qur'ānic statements, over and against any pertinent extra-Qur'ānic traditions. After all, the Qur'ānic texts claim to be divine speech. At least in the eyes of Muḥammad's adherents, Qur'ānic pronouncements would thus have been clearly superior in authority to non-Qur'ānic traditions or texts.

59 Witztum notes that my monograph inclines towards a complementary, even "harmonistic" reading of different Qur'ānic versions of the same narrative, a stance regarding which he expresses some reservations (Witztum, "Variant Traditions," pp. 12 and 43). It may be useful to underscore that I do not of course mean to deny that different Qur'ānic sūras tell stories from significantly different angles. An obvious case in point are the Calf narratives in Q 7 and Q 20, the latter being distinguished from the former by the appearance of the notoriously enigmatic figure of al-Sāmirī, who is entirely absent from Q 7 (see Witztum, "Variant Traditions," p. 35). However, even in the view of such conspicuous divergence we can still ask how the Qur'ān's recipients would have been likely to respond to it. Assuming that Q 7 is posterior to Q 20 (which Witztum denies), how would Muḥammad's hearers have perceived Q 7's omission of al-Sāmirī? I maintain that they would have naturally assumed the later sūra to *complement* rather than to *contradict* the earlier one; that is, they would have naturally tended to view Q 7 as simply presupposing the existence of al-Sāmirī rather than as implicitly denying his involvement in, and even his ultimate responsibility for, the making of the Calf. To adduce a further example, consider the different ways in which God admonishes Adam in Q 20:117 ("Let him not drive the two of you from the garden") and in Q 7:19 ("Do not approach this tree"). Here, too, I would submit that after the proclamation of Q 7, the Qur'ānic audience is likely to have assumed that the admonishment in Q 20:117 was to all intents and purposes equivalent to the more specific prohibition contained in the later verse Q 7:19. (This again assumes, against Witztum, that Q 7 contains the later account.) Such an attitude of implicit harmonisation on the part of Muḥammad's adherents would have been decisively facilitated by the fact that more often than not, later Qur'ānic narratives do not directly contradict earlier ones. For example, *pace* Witztum, Q 7:148 does not ac-

Still, the claim that the various texts making up the Adam-Iblīs complex exhibit interpretive backreferencing might seem vulnerable to an objection rooted in the highly formulaic character of many parts of the Qur'ān. This feature of the text has recently been studied by Andrew Bannister[60] and may well be reflected in the Qur'ānic self-description as a "scripture consimilar in its oft-repeated" (Q 39:23), as Arberry translates the enigmatic statement that God has sent down a *kitāban muthashābihan mathāniya*.[61] Against this background, one might wonder whether even conspicuous overlaps between an earlier and a later verse or passage are really sufficient to establish that the later text is *alluding to* or even *quoting* the earlier one.

I would respond, first of all, by insisting on the usefulness of a diachronic approach to distinguishing between instances of genuine allusion and of formu-

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tually state that the Israelites themselves *made* the Calf, which would jar with the statement in Q 20:88 that al-Sāmirī "produced for them a calf, a body that made a lowing sound (*fa-akhraja lahum ʿijlan jasadan lahū khuwārun*)." Rather, what Q 7:148 says is that the Israelites "*adopted* a calf [made] from their ornaments (*wa-ttakhadha qawmu mūsā min baʿdihī min ḥuliyyihim ʿijlan jasadan lahū khuwārun*)." Strictly speaking, then, Q 7:148 does not have to be construed as directly disagreeing with Q 20:88. I do not of course have any apologetic interest in denying that the Qur'ānic corpus does contain substantial internal tensions and even unequivocal inconsistencies. But I find it significant that obvious contradictions appear to be relatively infrequent between different Qur'ānic retellings of one and the same story. This, I maintain, would have encouraged the Qur'ānic community to process such variant narratives in a complementary or harmonistic manner (which is not to say that we, as critical scholars, should overlook the different theological and anthropological messages that may be expressed by different versions of the same narrative). The hypothesis that the Qur'ānic hearers would have processed variant stories in a complementary manner is also corroborated by the fact that the Qur'ān itself stakes out an explicit claim to be devoid of inconsistency (*ikhtilāf*) in Q 4:82. This latter verse is also highlighted by Witztum, "Variant Traditions", pp. 43 f., who rightly insists that we must "distinguish between what the text tells us it is doing and what it actually does." Yet what the text tells us it is doing may permit conjectures about how it would have been viewed and interpreted by the Qur'ānic *Urgemeinde*, who was presumably committed to the basic truth of what the text was telling them.

60 Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*.

61 Building on previous scholars' construal of the *mathānī* as referring to the Qur'ānic punishment stories, an earlier publication of mine links the phrase primarily to the relationship of complementarity that may be seen to obtain between different Qur'ānic versions of the same narrative; see Sinai, "Qurʾānic Self-Referentiality as a Strategy of Self-Authorization," in *Self-Referentiality in the Qurʾān*, ed. by Stefan Wild, pp. 103–134. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006, at pp. 130–131. Yet a broader interpretation, which takes the phrase to highlight the formulaic character of Qur'ānic discourse more generally, is perhaps equally possible. The merit of such a broader reading of the phrase was brought to my attention by a presentation entitled "The Self-Similar Qur'an", which was given by Giuliano Lancioni at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the International Qur'anic Studies Association (21–24 November, San Diego).

laic diction. By way of an example, let us consider the opening of the Adam narrative as given in Table 2, "And [recall] when your[s] Lord said to the angels [...] (*wa-idh qāla rabbuka li-l-malāʾikati* ...)." If my dating of the material is sound, this overture first occurred in Q 15:28. When it was subsequently repeated in Q 38:71, it may well have been perceived as a targeted allusion to Q 15:28. Yet subsequently, the phrase – like the sequence *usjudū li-Ādama fa-sajadū illā Iblīsa* ("'Prostrate yourselves to Adam', and they prostrated themselves, except Iblīs") – clearly established itself as a stereotypical component of all further versions of the story. As a result, it would have become increasingly unsuitable as a means of gesturing towards a specific earlier sūra and instead would have merely pointed, at most, towards a whole cluster of thematically related passages. Hence, the formulaic quality of Qur'ānic discourse does not as such rule out the presence of targeted backreferencing, as long as the potential term or phrase had not yet achieved formulaic status at the time of the occurrence at hand. In order to determine whether the latter was or was not the case, we must examine the occurrence of the phrase at hand, not in the entire Qur'ānic corpus, but in the subset of those Qur'ānic proclamations that are likely to predate or to be roughly contemporary with the passage at hand.

But might not already the earliest Qur'ānic occurrence of a phrase or a "formulaic system"[62] recurring in later proclamations have been grounded in a pre-Qur'ānic stock of formulaic diction? Do phrases really ever *achieve* formulaic status in the Qur'ān, or do they perhaps possess this status from the start? Once more, let us consider the earliest Qur'ānic attestations of the phrase "And [recall] when your[s] Lord said to the angels [...]" in Q 15:28 and Q 38:71. Perhaps this was simply how oral retellings of the creation of Adam had commenced for decades and decades before Muḥammad recited the earliest Qur'ānic sūra? Clearly, it would be foolish to rule out that Qur'ānic discourse might be reliant, even heavily reliant, on ambient phraseology and patterns of expression. For example, hymnic locutions starting with *tabāraka* and *al-ḥamdu li-llāh*, followed by a relative clause or an epithet like *rabb al-ʿālamīn*, patently correspond to the form of standard Jewish and Christian eulogies and doxologies.[63] While all of our evidence for these latter is in Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, it is highly credible that such phrases had become well entrenched in Arabic already in pre-Qur'ānic

62 On "formulaic systems" see Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 207–242. Bannister's standard example for a formulaic system – essentially, a substitution pattern – is the sequence consisting in a derivative of *j-h-d* + a particle + a derivative of *s-b-l* + Allāh.

63 Baumstark, Anton, "Jüdischer und christlicher Gebetstypus im Koran." *Der Islam* 16 (1927): pp. 229–248.

times. Possibly, the same might apply to the opening phrase of the Qur'ānic Adam pericopes, "And [recall] when your[s] Lord said to the angels [...]"

Still, the abstract possibility that this might have been the case does not justify the default assumption that *any* multiply occurrent Qur'ānic concatenation was routinely used in pre-Qur'ānic times. For the formulaic quality of the Qur'ān could at least in part be due to the Qur'ānic proclamations gradually building up an increasingly extensive repertoire of formulaic diction, resulting from the fact that later texts tended to echo the phraseology of earlier ones. This hypothesis is attractive because a comparable trajectory of innovation and standardisation may also be discerned with respect to the compositional structure of the Qur'ānic texts: whereas the earliest Qur'ānic sūras are brief and structurally fairly simple, later Meccan texts increasingly conform to a tripartite pattern centred around a narrative middle part. At the same time, a range of standard literary forms emerged, which included, for instance, introductory self-descriptions or superscripts containing the terms *kitāb* and/or *nazzala/anzala* (cf. Q 44:2, 15:1, or 40:2 and their multiple parallels).[64] The supposition that the Qur'ānic recitations are not simply relying on a well-established thesaurus of formulae but are themselves engaged in building up such a thesaurus is also buttressed by the fact that when the Qur'ānic corpus is viewed diachronically, many formulae and formulaic systems are divided across the corpus very unevenly: they seem to emerge at certain points in time and lose popularity at others.[65] To assume that each and every phrase that achieves formulaic status at some point during the genesis of the Qur'ān had already possessed this status in pre-Qur'ānic times incurs the risk of underestimating the importance of histor-

64 Since Muḥammad's revelations were very likely recited orally (whether or not they were also composed orally), the gradual crystallisation of a repertoire of stock phrases would have well suited their primary mode of display – and it may of course, over time, have facilitated a much higher degree of spontaneous composition than at the beginning of the process.

65 For example, the transition from the Meccan to the Medinan sūras appears to have entailed a palpable rupture in the Qur'ān's formulaic repertoire as it had crystallised so far. This is evident already from the formulaic systems examined in Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 220 – 236, many of which, when viewed diachronically, present cases of arrested development: they occur in Meccan sūras and then cease to be productive. This applies, for instance, to systems no. 1, 2, and 4, whose thematic habitat are the so-called *āyāt* passages (affirmations of miscellaneous manifestations of God's power and grace in nature). The reason for the phraseological rupture must be that *āyāt* passages are generally less frequent in the Medinan Qur'ān; not unlike the Meccan punishment legends studied in Marshall, David, *God, Muhammad and the Unbelievers: A Qur'anic Study.* Richmond: Curzon Press, 1999, they cease to be relevant – probably because their appellatory function was no longer a pressing need in the Medinan environment, where the notion of a unique and omnipotent creator god did not need to be argued.

ical development. By way of an objection, one might of course adduce Milman Parry's insistence that the formulaic systems found in the Homeric epics must be the work of generations of bards rather than of one individual.[66] However, Parry's strongest argument for this claim is surely that the development of a formulaic repertoire that would permit the poet to respect the metrical requirements of different positions in Homeric hexameter requires an amount of literary ingenuity and invention that is best seen as being the result of a long tradition. Given that the Qur'ān is not a metrical text, the formulaic phrases and systems populating it could certainly have emerged much more rapidly.

In any event, to insist that the Qur'ānic corpus exhibits targeted backreferencing should not be understood as requiring a denial of its formulaic character. For even if the latter is acknowledged, as I think it needs to be, it seems plausible that there would still remain cases in which a parallel between two passages, all things considered, is better accounted for by assuming a deliberate allusion than reliance on shared formulaic diction. In my view, the overlap between Q 55:14 – 15 and Q 15:26 – 27 (quoted in Table 2 and again in Section 3.3.1 below) is such a case, given that the juxtaposition of the creation of man from clay with that of the jinn from fire has no further Qur'ānic parallel. Of course, we might need to opt for a different assessment if, for instance, two or three other Qur'ānic retellings of the creation of Adam opened with similar couplets, or if the same juxtaposition could be documented, say, in pre-Islamic poetry. I would therefore propose the following rules of thumb for distinguishing between formulaic diction and genuine allusions: In the absence of any relevant pre-Qur'ānic intertexts, if a pair of Qur'ānic passages displays lexical overlap that is conspicuous enough in order not to be accidental, then we are probably faced with a targeted allusion.[67] Again barring any relevant pre-Qur'ānic intertexts, if such overlap is

66 See Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 69 – 71.

67 I should highlight that this is deliberately incompatible with the low repeat threshold that Bannister tends to demand for considering a phrase to be a formula (cf. Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 140, where a formula is preliminarily defined as "a sequence of three Arabic bases [= words] that occurs at least twice in the qur'anic text"). Notwithstanding the arguments put forward in Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 146 – 149, I have grave doubts whether two occurrences of a particular phrase within the Qur'ān suffice to endow it the status of a genuine "formula." It is true, of course, that the Qur'ānic corpus is not large (Bannister, *Oral-Formulaic Study*, pp. 148 – 149), but I am not convinced by Bannister's proposal that we should compensate for the ensuing difficulty of demonstrating the formulaic character of a given phrase by in effect building an oral-formulaic prejudice into our analysis. For doing so would effectively foreclose any possibility that the Qur'ānic corpus might be found to contain not only formulaic language, but also targeted allusions and deliberate self-quotations. Especially in the light of the relatively

displayed by three or four passages, then we are either faced with a manifestation of pre-Qur'ānic formulaic diction or a case of a gradual crystallisation of formulaic diction resulting from later Qur'ānic passages echoing or alluding to earlier ones. Against Bannister's preference for the former possibility, I confess to a certain prejudice in favour of the latter (although appropriate pre-Qur'ānic evidence would be sufficient to prove me wrong). This inclines me to view the Adam narrative in Q 38 as intentionally reproducing part of the earlier one in Q 15 while also including interpretively motivated variations. Yet I would certainly agree that by the time we arrive at the Adam narrative in Q 2, we have definitely crossed the line from targeted allusion and quotation to the redeployment of stock diction.

3.3 The Interpretive Dimension of the Qur'ānic Adam Narratives

Thus far, I have argued, with special reference to the Qur'ānic Adam-Iblīs complex, that we may assume at least a substantial part of the addressees of a given text in the series to have been familiar with the texts preceding it, and that conspicuous overlaps between a later text and an earlier one could in principle constitute a case of deliberate allusion. I shall now attempt to highlight some specific aspects in which the Qur'ānic Adam narratives can be seen to be, in part, engaged in interpretive backreferencing. It is convenient to distinguish three main stages in the Qur'ānic development of the Adam-Iblīs complex, leaving out the brief allusion in Q 18:

(1) Q 15, 38, and 17 recount the first part of the story consisting in the creation of Adam and the fall of Iblīs.
(2) In a second stage of development, which partly overlaps with (1), Q 7 and Q 20 append a sequel to the story, consisting in Satan's successful temptation of Adam and Eve.
(3) Finally, Q 2 expands the first part by narrating the angels' opposition to the creation of Adam and their subsequent humiliation by God.

unambiguous cases of Qur'ānic self-interpretation presented above, such a methodological decision strikes me as highly problematic.

3.3.1 Q 15, Q 38, and Q 17

The Adam pericope in Q 15 presents itself relatively unequivocally as latching on to and unpacking Q 55:14–15's concise reference to the creation of man from clay (overlaps underlined):

Q 55:14–15	Q 15:26–28
[14] He created man *(al-insān)* from clay like pottery [or: like a potter],	[26] We have created man *(al-insān)* from clay, from moulded mud;
[15] And He created the jinn from a mixture of fire.	[27] We created the jinn before from the fire of the scorching wind.
	[28] And [recall] when your[s] Lord said to the angels: I am creating a human *(basharan)* from clay, from moulded mud.
	[...]
	[33] He [Iblīs] said: 'I am not one to prostrate myself to a human *(li-basharin)* whom You have created from clay, from moulded mud.'

In light of what was said above, we can assume that at least part of Muḥammad's audience would have recognised this reprise, thus endowing the putatively earliest Qur'ānic Adam narrative with the status of a midrash-like amplification of an earlier couplet about the creation of man and the jinn. It is noteworthy that man's creation from clay is not only echoed by Q 15:26 and then reiterated in Q 15:28 but also invoked by Iblīs in justification of his refusal to prostrate himself to Adam (Q 15:33), thus tying the Adam episode in Q 15 even more closely to Q 55:14–15. An additional link is created in Q 38:76, where Iblīs explicitly contrasts Adam's creation from clay with his own creation from fire, thus drawing Q 55:15, too, into the narrative. Furthermore, while the Adam episodes in Q 15, 38, and 17 display far-reaching overlap and may thus largely appear as variants of each other, some of the divergences between Q 15's version of the narrative and the two subsequent accounts can also be read as having an interpretive significance.[68]

68 To adduce but two respects in which the Adam episode in Q 38, a large part of which simply reproduces that in Q 15, might be seen as engaged in interpretively motivated modification: (1) While Q 15:31 simply reports that Iblīs "refused to be among those who prostrated themselves" to Adam, Q 38:74 makes explicit the motivation underlying this refusal and its consequence: "He was haughty (*istakbara*) and one of the unbelievers." The charge of haughtiness also recurs in God's statement in Q 38:75. Note that in terms of rhyme, it would have been unproblematic to simply reproduce the wording of Q 15:31, making it probable that the point of the variant is interpretive. (2) Q 38 replaces the phrase *min ṣalṣālin min ḥama'in masnūn* ("from clay,

To avoid misunderstanding, I should like to concede that the question of how far we can press minute differences in wording to yield an interpretive point is apposite; the line between close reading and over-interpretation is, as usual, a fine one. It would also be exaggerated to suggest that the Adam sections in Q 15, 38, and 17 are doing *nothing but* interpreting earlier Qur'ānic passages. They also employ the Adam narrative as an appropriate medium for making a general theological point that is not interpretive in nature, namely, in order to draw a rigid boundary between God's "servants" (*ʿibād*), who are presented as immune against temptation by Iblīs, and the rest of humanity, who will be consigned to hell.[69]

3.3.2 Q 20 and Q 7

The Adam pericopes in Q 20 and 7 signal their link to the earlier Adam narratives in Q 15 and 38 by opening with a tightly abbreviated reprise of Q 15:28–31 / Q 38:71–74, which is likely to have marked them as a follow-up to these earlier texts. Q 20 and 7 then focus on the second part of the story, Adam's succumbing to the temptation to eat from the "tree of eternal life" (*shajarat al-khuld*, Q 20:120). This provides the story of Adam's creation with a sequel reporting how Iblīs' climactic announcement that he would from now on strive to lead man astray (*aghwā*), as narrated in Q 15:36–43 and 38:79–85, plays out (note that Q 20:121 uses the first-form verb *ghawā*). Of particular interest is the introductory verse of the Adam pericope in Q 20, which places the story of Adam under the heading of man's inherent forgetfulness and thus imposes on the narrative a highly explicit interpretation of its basic message (Q 20:115): "Formerly We made a covenant with Adam, but he forgot and We found in him no constancy." As a matter of fact, the verb *nasiya*, "to forget," reverberates throughout

from moulded mud") as it appears in Q 15 by *min ṭīn* (cf. 38:71.76 with 15:28.33). This might bespeak an attempt at lexical simplification, given that the phrase *min ṣalṣālin min ḥamaʾin masnūn* does not recur subsequently to Q 15; the word *ṭīn* prevails. Again, this substitution cannot have been due to requirements of rhyme.

69 See Q 15:40.42, Q 38:83, and Q 17:65; cf. Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, pp. 86–87. In all three sūras, the term *ʿibād* also occurs outside the Adam pericopes: see Q 15:49, Q 38:45, and Q 17:5.17.30.53.96 (although some of the occurrences in Q 17 would appear to refer indiscriminately to all humans). See the general remarks in Neuwirth, Angelika "Referentiality and Textuality in *Sūrat al-Ḥijr* (Q. 15): Observations on the Qur'ānic 'Canonical Process' and the Emergence of a Community," in Angelika Neuwirth, *Scripture, Poetry and the Making of a Community: Reading the Qur'an as a Literary Text*, pp. 184–215. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014, at pp. 206–207.

Q 20; in this sense, the basic anthropological message of Q 20's account of Adam's temptation is well integrated into the sūra as a whole.[70]

In contrast to Q 15 and 38, which present God's faithful "servants" as virtually immune to temptation, the Adam pericopes of Q 7 and 20 therefore recognise that all humans are prone to temporary lapses but may still receive God's merciful forgiveness, as Adam does in Q 20:122.[71] Q 7, which expands the narrative's second part by slotting in a quotation of Adam and Eve's dramatic self-incrimination (Q 7:23),[72] makes the further point that divine forgiveness and mercy need to be earned by an act of genuine repentance, thus forestalling the impression that it will simply be granted as a matter of course. Membership in the community of God's faithful "servants" is thus not predicated on total immunity to temptation but merely on the willingness to repent in a timely manner. Just as the verb *nasiya* occurs at several junctures in Q 20, so the topic of human repentance and divine forgiveness pervades the entire Q 7, meaning that, again, the particular angle from which the story of Adam is treated in Q 7 is integrated into the text as a whole.[73]

3.3.3 Q 2

The latest version of the Adam story in Q 2 amplifies the opening element of the narrative, God's announcement to the angels to create man. In a noticeable de-

70 In addition to v. 115, see also vv. 52, 88, and 126.

71 Q 20:122: "Then his Lord chose him [Adam] and He [God] relented towards him [Adam] and guided him." Jones' translation ("... and he [Adam] turned to Him [God] in repentance ...") is decidedly less likely, for *tāba ʿalā* as used in the verse at hand appears to be reserved for God as subject, whereas human repentance is described by *tāba ilā;* see Ambros, Arne A. and Stephan Procházka, *A Concise Dictionary of Koranic Arabic*. Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2004, p. 51.

72 Q 7:23: "They said: 'Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves. If You do not forgive us and have mercy on us, we shall be among the losers.'"

73 V. 23 is partially identical with v. 149, the Israelites' plea for forgiveness after worshipping the Golden Calf; cf. also Aaron's plea for forgiveness in v. 151. The underlying message of Q 7's retelling of Adam's temptation and the story of the Golden Calf is explicitly stated in v. 153: "Those who do evil deeds and subsequently repent and believe – your Lord is subsequently forgiving and merciful." Note that according to Neuwirth, "Meccan Texts – Medinan Additions?," Q 7's treatment of the Golden Calf underwent a significant amount of secondary expansion, although the precise delineation of what is original and what is secondary may perhaps not yet be finally settled (Neuwirth herself views v. 153 as secondary, but not v. 149 and v. 151). In any case, divine forgiveness is clearly a major topic of the sūra, as documented by the multiple occurrences of the root *gh-f-r* in it (see vv. 23, 149, 151, 153, 155, 161, 167, and 169). See also Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, pp. 88–90.

parture from the opening clause of the Qur'ān Adam narratives in Q 15 and 38, Q 2:30 modifies God's announcement from "I am creating a human from clay" to "I am establishing a successor on earth" – which is to be understood in the sense that man substitutes the angels as the highest-ranking creature.[74] This is not of course to be read as denying the earlier statement but as motivating it: God's creation of a being from clay is explained as serving the purpose of establishing a successor. From the outset, the Adam episode in Q 2 endows man with a markedly more elevated status than its antecedents, which anticipates the statement made in v. 31 that Adam participates in God's knowledge ("And He taught Adam all the names"). This statement occurs in a kind of prelude to God's command of prostration as reported in earlier recitations: the angels object to God's plan of creating man, whereupon God teaches them a lesson about the extent of their ignorance: God orders the angels to name the things created by Him, but only Adam is able to do so because God had previously "taught Adam all the names" (Q 2:31). The interposition of this episode between God's announcement of Adam's creation and His command to the angels to prostrate to Adam clarifies the ultimate meaning of the angel's prostration: it is not an act of worship directed at a creature, which would flagrantly clash with the Qur'ān's repeated injunctions not to "associate" any creature with God, but rather an act of submission to God's unfathomable knowledge – a message underlined by the multiple occurrences of *ʿ-l-m* that permeate Q 2:30 – 33.[75] The episode concludes with a brief retelling of the story's second part.

4 Conclusion

Virtually all component elements of the Qur'ānic Adam-Iblīs narratives have parallels in earlier Christian and Rabbinic traditions.[76] In this sense, it is certainly

74 On the meaning of the Arabic term *khalīfa* see Paret, Rudi, "Signification coranique de *ḫalīfa* et d'autre dérivés de la racine *ḫalafa*." *Studia Islamica* 31 (1970): pp. 211 – 217. Paret convincingly argues that the word's meaning within the Qur'ān is more accurately rendered by translating it as "successor" rather than "vicegerent."

75 As argued in Sinai, *Fortschreibung und Auslegung*, pp. 90 – 91, the Adam narrative in Q 2 may also be read as the vehicle of an anthropological reflection on human freedom: man's special status seems to be intimately bound up with his susceptibility to temptation, as illustrated in Q 7 and 20, and to "cause corruption" on the earth and to "shed blood" (Q 2:30).

76 As always, a convenient conspectus is provided in Speyer, *Die biblischen Erzählungen*, pp. 41 – 83. For a discussion of the relationship between Q 2:30 – 33 and its Rabbinic precedents see Sinai, Nicolai, *The Qur'an: A Historical-Critical Introduction*, New Edinburgh Islamic Surveys. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2017, pp. 148 – 150.

the case that the passages examined above draw on pre-existing traditions, which are likely to have reached the Qur'ānic milieu by oral transmission, probably in Arabic and perhaps in a shape that already included some of the lexical features that surface in the Qur'ān. Nevertheless, the way in which the Qur'ānic proclamations successively appropriate this stock of narrative material partly serves the function of interpreting earlier Qur'ānic material – both by clarifying and elucidating it and by teasing new theological and anthropological aspects out of a story that had already been narrated in earlier recitations. The Adam-Iblīs complex thus illustrates that in studying inner-Qur'ānic interpretation we must not limit our perspective to insertions of the sort discussed in Section 2.

To reiterate the basic claim implicit in my chapter title, Qur'ānic self-interpretation comes in two modalities, interpretive expansion and interpretive back-referencing. Both of these modalities are not unique to the Qur'ān: as previous scholarship has amply demonstrated, they are found in the Hebrew Bible, and there is good reason to expect that they can also be traced in other literary corpora that are distinguished by the two following characteristics: first, having emerged over an extended period of time (whether that period spanned decades or centuries); and second, having emerged in close interaction with a community of hearers or readers who were committed to the truth and exceptional religious, moral, or philosophical significance of the textual corpus at hand, and who related to it accordingly.

The present study thus raises two main avenues for further research. On the one hand, we clearly do not yet possess an understanding of Qur'ānic self-interpretation that is on a par with that of Biblical self-interpretation; we require a close study of many more cases of the two types of Qur'ānic self-interpretation distinguished above, which will also afford us opportunities to refine the analytic categories I have proposed. On the other hand, there is reason to expect that it would be fruitful to study such phenomena against a broad comparative horizon that is not limited to Biblical literature but also includes texts from other periods and cultures. Of course, the objective of adopting such a comparative perspective should not consist merely in the identification of relevant commonalities – for instance, in attempting to show that the Bible and the Qur'ān share certain typological features. Rather, a comparative backdrop will ultimately help to throw into much sharper relief the peculiarities of each individual corpus.[77]

77 An example for this would be the above observation that scribal comments and glosses are much more infrequent in the Qur'ānic corpus than in the Hebrew Bible.