

# Investigating Cohesiveness of QS. Al-Mā'idah: A Review on Michel Cuypers Implementation of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)

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## Investigating Cohesiveness of QS. Al-Mā'idah: A Review on Michel Cuypers Implementation of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)

*Menelusuri Kohesitas Surah Al-Mā'idah: Tinjauan atas Penerapan Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) oleh Michel Cuypers*

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### Abstract

This article examines Michel Cuypers' interpretation of the Qur'an which is the result of the application of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) in QS. Al-Mā'idah. Although SRA's implementation has demonstrated the coherence of the Qur'anic text; however, no one has properly articulated the cohesiveness of the Qur'anic text as the basis of that coherence. Thus, to ascertain the text's cohesiveness in terms of positions and forms from the SRA's perspective, this study applied cohesion text theories to Cuypers' implementation of SRA in QS. Al-Mā'idah. A thesis of the paper is that, according to SRA, the cohesiveness of a Qur'anic text in QS Al-Mā'idah can be shown through the pairings of words or sentences inside particular groupings of text particles following the principles of Semitic Rhetoric. The Semitic Rhetoric's principle of parallel, concentric, or mirror symmetry in those text particle groups determined which words or phrases are paired in a text particle group. As a result, from an SRA perspective, the Qur'anic text's cohesiveness may be discovered at each level of the text particle group, demonstrating multi-layered cohesiveness. In Cuypers' reading of QS Al-Mā'idah, synonyms and repetition are used to maintain lexical cohesion, while ellipsis, substitution, and reference established grammatical cohesion.

Keywords: Cohesion; Cohesiveness; Cuypers; Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA); QS. Al-Mā'idah

### Abstrak:

Artikel ini mengkaji interpretasi Al-Qur'an Michel Cuypers yang merupakan hasil dari penerapan Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) pada QS Al-Mā'idah. Walaupun penerapan SRA telah menunjukkan koherensi teks Al-Qur'an; namun, belum ada yang secara jelas mengartikulasikan kohesivitas teks Al-Qur'an sebagai dasar koherensi itu. Oleh karena itu, untuk menemukan kohesitas teks menurut SRA dari segi posisi dan bentuknya, penelitian ini menerapkan teori teks kohesi pada penerapan SRA oleh Cuypers dalam QS. Al-Mā'idah. Tesis makalah ini adalah, menurut SRA, kohesitas teks Al-Qur'an dalam QS Al-Mā'idah dapat ditunjukkan melalui pasangan kata atau kalimat di dalam pengelompokan partikel teks tertentu mengikuti prinsip-prinsip Retorika Semit. Prinsip Retorika Semit tentang paralel, konsentris, atau simetri cermin dalam kelompok partikel teks tersebut menentukan kata atau frasa mana yang dipasangkan dalam suatu kelompok partikel teks. Dengan demikian, kohesivitas teks Al-Qur'an dari perspektif SRA dapat ditemukan pada setiap tingkatan kelompok partikel teks dan menunjukkan kohesivitas yang berlapis-lapis. Dalam pembacaan Cuypers QS Al-Mā'idah, sinonim dan repetisi digunakan untuk mempertahankan kohesi leksikal, sedangkan



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ellipsis, substitusi, dan referensi membentuk kohesi gramatikal.

Kata Kunci: Kohesi; Kohesitas; Cuypers; Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA); QS. Al-Mā'idah

## Introduction

Michel Cuypers studied the structure of the qur'anic text and the relationship between the parts of the text to attain the best possible interpretation of the Qur'an.<sup>1</sup> Adnan Mokrani called Cuypers approach by 'Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)'. He regarded it as a contemporary approach that exemplifies a new interaction, especially the methodological dialogue between Biblical and Qur'anic studies.<sup>2</sup> Meanwhile, Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau appreciated Cuypers' works as a proven approach for objectively examining the Bible and the Qur'an, not simply an ideological translation of certain components of Biblical exegesis onto Qur'anic exegesis.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, Halla Attallah saw it as an effective theoretical approach in the field of qur'anic studies that is valuable to anyone who analyses the Qur'an through a structuralism-linguistic lens.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, Nicolai Sinai argued that Cuypers went too far in arguing his argument that the Qur'an contains a ring structure. Cuypers, according to Sinai, arbitrarily partitioned the verses and purposefully neglected the urgency of the Qur'an's rhymes in order to prove his theory.<sup>5</sup>

Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi responded to Sinai's critics by applying SRA to QS. Al-Qiyāmah and found the coherency of the surah in addition to the mirror, concentric, and parallel symmetrical composition without neglecting rhymes and arbitrarily cutting verses.<sup>6</sup> He also re-analysed the structure of QS. Al-'Alaq using SRA due to scientific problems raised from the previous study of this surah conducted by Cuypers.<sup>7</sup> He and Idri examined the principles of Semitic rhetoric used by Cuypers

1 Michel Cuypers, *The Composition of the Qur'an* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 155.

2 Adnane Mokrani, "Semitic Rhetoric and the Qur'an: The Scholarship of Michel Cuypers," in *New Trends in Qur'anic Studies: Text, Context, and Interpretation*, by Mun'im Sirry (Atlanta, Georgia: Lockwood Press, 2019), 61–81.

3 Anne-Sylvie Boisliveau, "Michel Cuypers, Le Festin: Une Lecture de La Sourate al-Mā'idah," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 9, no. 1 (April 1, 2007): 119–123.

4 Halla Attallah, "Michel Cuypers, The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis, translated by Jerry Ryan. London/New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015, ISBN 9784147227483 (hardcover).," *Der Islam* 95, no. 1 (March 22, 2018): 211–217.

5 Nicolai Sinai, "Review Essay: 'Going Round in Circles': Michel Cuypers, The Composition of the Qur'an: Rhetorical Analysis, and Raymond Farrin, Structure and Qur'anic Interpretation: A Study of Symmetry and Coherence in Islam's Holy Text," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 19, no. 2 (June 2017): 106–122.

6 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, "Penerapan Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) Pada Surah Al-Qiyamah," *Mutawatir* 8, no. 1 (June 19, 2018): 143–169.

7 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi, "Re-Analyzing the Structure of Surah al-'Alaq Using Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA): A Critical Study on Cuypers' Methodology of Analyzing Qur'anic Structure," *QURANICA - International Journal of Quranic Research* 13, no. 1 (June 30, 2021): 165–194.

In SRA and discovered the subjectivity and inconsistency of Cuypers in using the principles. However, those principles contribute to proving the coherence of the Qur'anic text<sup>8</sup>

None of the previous studies dealt with cohesion from the SRA perspective; even cohesion is one factor that gives rise to text coherence and shows how it takes shape. Cohesion and coherence do not have to be mutually incompatible, as cohesive aspects contribute to the dialogue. Both are a collection of elements that lead to the text's overall functionality.<sup>9</sup> This study, hence, is investigating Cuypers' interpretation of QS. Al-Mā'idah to determine SRA's point of view to the cohesiveness of Qur'anic text.

Cohesion can be classified into two major groups; grammatical cohesion and lexical cohesion, with each type having its cohesive ties and methods.<sup>10</sup> Grammatical cohesion involves methods such as substitution, reference, ellipsis, and conjunction. Meanwhile, lexical cohesion involves tools such as reiteration and collocation.<sup>11</sup> This classification and methods of cohesive text became the basis for researchers in this paper to analyse the application of SRA in QS. Al-Mā'idah and bring up the SRA perspective in the cohesion of the Qur'anic text.

## Michel Cuypers and Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)

### *Short Biography of Michel Cuypers and His Works*

Michel Cuypers is from Belgium and has lived in Iran for 12 years. Born in 1941, he spent twelve years in Iran, earning a PhD in Persian literature from the University of Tehran (graduated in 1983) and then working at the Iranian University Press. After leaving Iran in 1986, he studied Arabic in Syria and Egypt. In 1989, he began working as a researcher in Islamology at the *Institute Dominicain d'Études Orientales* (IDEO), a Cairo-based center for oriental studies. He is also a member of the association Fraternity of the Little Brothers of Jesus, a Catholic fraternity influenced by Charles de Foucauld's ideas.<sup>12</sup>

8 Aqdi Rofiq Asnawi and Idri, "Examining Semitic Rhetoric: A Qur'anic Sciences Perspective," *Jurnal Ushuluddin* 28, no. 2 (December 31, 2020): 127–139.

9 Koen Kerremans, "Applying Computer-Assisted Coreferential Analysis to a Study of Terminological Variation in Multilingual Parallel Corpora," in *New Perspectives on Cohesion and Coherence: Implications for Translation*, ed. Katrin Menzel, Ekaterina Lapshinova-Koltunski, and Kerstin Anna Kunz (Berlin: Language Science Press, 2017), 53.

10 Cristina Grisot, *Cohesion, Coherence and Temporal Reference from an Experimental Corpus Pragmatics Perspective* (New York: Springer, 2018), viii–xi.

11 M.A.K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman, 1976), 6, 288.

12 Asnawi and Idri, "Examining Semitic Rhetoric," 129–130; Mustafa Shah and Muhammad Abdel Haleem, eds., "List of Contributors," in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press,

Cuypers has authored three books and dozens of journal articles of international repute. Most of these works talk about the Qur'an and Semitic Rhetoric and are written in French. However, many have been translated into Arabic and English. Here are the books he wrote:

1. *Le Festin. Une lecture de la sourate al-Mā'idah* (Paris: Lethielleux, 2007).

This first book contains Cuypers' explanation of the structure of Surah al-Mā'idah when viewed from a Rhetoric Semitic perspective. Before discussing surah al-Mā'idah, Cuypers outlined the basic principles of Semitic Rhetoric and its general application to the text of the Qur'an. Cuypers' analysis of the structure of the text of Surah al-Mā'idah led him to interpret Surah al-Mā'idah.

This book is in French and has been translated into English by Patricia Kelly under the title *The Banquet: A Reading of the Fifth Sura of the Qur'an* (Miami: Convivium Press, 2008). Meanwhile 'Amr Abd al-'Āṭi S{āliḥ translated it into Arabic with the title *Fī Naẓm Sūrah al-Mā'idah: Naẓm Āyi al-Qur'ān fī Ḍaw' Manhajī al-Taḥlīl al-Balāghī* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2016). In 2009, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in the Republic of Iran awarded an international award to Cuypers for this book.

2. *La Composition du Coran. Naẓmu al-Qur'ān* (Paris: Gabalda, 2012).

This second work contains a more detailed explanation of Semitic Rhetoric and how it exists in the Qur'an. Cuypers deliberately collected questions regarding analysing the qur'anic structure, including the question of the Quranic text's coherence and the interpretation that can be generated.

The English edition is entitled *The Composition of the Qur'an, Rhetorical Analysis* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), translated by Jerry Ryan. The translation into Arabic was carried out by 'Adnān al-Muqrānī and Ṭāriq Manzū with the title *Fī Naẓm al-Qur'ān* (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2018).

3. *Une apocalypse coranique. Une lecture des trente-trois dernières sourates du Coran* (Paris: Gabalda, 2014).

After studying surah al-Mā'idah using Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) and explaining the analysis method in a special book, Cuypers wrote the application of SRA to surah al-Takwīr to surah al-Nās.

Jerry Ryan also translated this book into English untitled *A Qur'ānic Apocalypse: A Reading of the Thirty-three Last Sūrahs of the Qur'ān* (Atlanta: Lockwood Press, 2018). This book is one of the book series "Studies in the Qur'an" issued by

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2020), xvii; "Michel Cuypers, P.F.J. – Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies," n.d., accessed October 7, 2021, <https://www.ideo-cairo.org/en/michel-cuypers-p-f-j-2/>; "Michel Cuypers," *Fondazione Internazionale Oasis*, accessed October 7, 2021, <http://www.oasiscenter.eu/en/michel-cuypers>.

the International Qur'anic Studies Association (IQSA).

In addition to publishing books, Cuypers also published many articles in journals and volumes. These include: "The Semitic Rhetoric in the Koran and A Pharaonic Papyrus" in *US-China Foreign Language*, Vol. 8, No. 1 (January 2010), 8-13; "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Nazm of the Qur'anic Text" in *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (2011), 1-24; "Qur'anic Syntax" in *The Oxford Handbook of Qur'anic Studies*, ed. Mustafa Shah & Muhammad Abdel Haleem (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

Based on his works above, Cuypers is seriously studying the Qur'an, especially in the study of the structure or composition of the Qur'anic text according to the principles of Semitic Rhetoric Analysis. His works and thoughts received appreciation from the academic world since his book has been translated into Arabic and English and being part of a series of books published by IQSA recently.

#### ***SRA as The Method Analysis of Qur'anic Text and Structure***

Michel Cuypers used the Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA) method to study Qur'anic structure in the Qur'an. This method is based on certain principles and has a long history of almost three centuries. The researchers in Biblical studies in the 18<sup>th</sup> century called those principles "Biblical Rhetoric". Johann Albrecht Bengel (d. 1752) published his book *Exegetical Annotations on the New Testament* (1742), arguing that the New Testament is composed of several parts of the text that form a pattern of concentric or ring symmetry and mirrors.<sup>13</sup> This opinion is supported by Robert Lowth (d. 1787) in his work *Reading on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews* (1753), even he found the same thing in the sacred Jewish texts, which includes what is contained in the Bible.<sup>14</sup> The concept was established with the work of John Jebb (d. 1833) entitled *Sacred Literature* (1820), so Meynet called him the founding father of Biblical Rhetoric.<sup>15</sup> Since then, attention to the biblical structure has continued and did not stop until the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>16</sup>

After that, several studies emerged showing three symmetry patterns in ancient texts other than the Bible. For example, texts in Akkadian, Ugaritic, Pharaonic / Ancient Egyptian, and Arabic. Since these texts are still in the same language family, the Semitic language family, the rhetoric of compiling this text is called Semitic

13 Roland Meynet et al., *Tarīqah Al-Taḥlīl al-Balāghī Wa al-Tafsīr*, trans. Jarjawrah Ḥardān and Hanri 'Uways (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2004), 62.

14 Ibid., 56; Michel Cuypers, "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Nazm of the Qur'anic Text," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 13, no. 1 (April 2011): 3.

15 Meynet et al., *Tarīqah Al-Taḥlīl al-Balāghī Wa al-Tafsīr*, 67.

16 Michel Cuypers, *The Banquet: A Reading of the Fifth Sura of the Qur'an*, trans. Patricia Kelly (Miami: Convivium Press, 2008), 28.

Rhetoric.<sup>17</sup> The term Semitic Rhetorical Analysis, with its abbreviation SRA, was first popularised by Adnane Mokrani when assessing what Michel Cuypers did as a method of text analysis using Semitic Rhetoric principles.<sup>18</sup>

The main principle in SRA that distinguishes it from other analytical methods in studying text structure is the principle of symmetry or the existence of pairs of text parts. Two parts of the text are paired if they have a relationship or connection. The relationship can be in the repetition of the same word, similarity in pronunciation or writing, antonyms, synonyms, or paronyms, homonyms, time sequences, causal relationships, descriptions, and others.<sup>19</sup> When a text contains a series of symmetrical groupings at multiple textual levels, it is constructed according to Semitic Rhetoric.<sup>20</sup>

There are three symmetry construction or composition figures: parallel composition, ring or concentric composition, and mirror composition. Parallel composition refers to the occurrence of similar text elements in the same order (ABC/A'B'C'). The text is in the ring or concentric composition when text units are placed around a central point (ABC/x/C'B'A'), but occasionally just (ABC/x/A'B'C'). It is called mirror composition when the core element is omitted, and the relationship between the text's segments remains intact (ABC/C'B'A').<sup>21</sup>

One of those three symmetrical compositions must exist at all levels of text. The following are the names of the part of the text in the Semitic Rhetoric from lower levels (smaller parts) to higher levels (larger parts): *member, segment, piece, part, passage, sequence, section, and book*.<sup>22</sup>

According to the principles outlined above, the text comprises numerous components that establish a specific symmetry. It is studied by splitting the text into various parts, from the smallest to the largest (multiple parts at a text level must form a part at the level above it), and then determining the symmetrical construction formed by the text sections at any level.<sup>23</sup> These steps may set Semitic Rhetoric apart from other approaches to text analysis.

17 Cuypers, "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Naẓm of the Qur'anic Text," 3.

18 Mokrani, "Semitic Rhetoric and the Qur'ān: The Scholarship of Michel Cuypers," 61–81.

19 Michel Cuypers, *Fi Naẓm al-Qur'ān*, trans. Adnane Mokrani and Tāriq Manzū (Beirut: Dār al-Mashriq, 2018), 18,85; Cuypers, "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Naẓm of the Qur'anic Text," 4.

20 Cuypers, "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Naẓm of the Qur'anic Text," 2–4.

21 Asnawi and Idri, "Examining Semitic Rhetoric," 130–131; Cuypers, "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Naẓm of the Qur'anic Text," 4; Cuypers, *The Composition of the Qur'an*, 30–85.

22 Roland Meynet, *Treatise on Biblical Rhetoric*, trans. Leo Arnold (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2012), 51–127; Cuypers, "Semitic Rhetoric as a Key to the Question of the Naẓm of the Qur'anic Text," 4.

23 Asnawi and Idri, "Examining Semitic Rhetoric," 131.

### Structure of QS. Al-Mā'idah in SRA Perspective

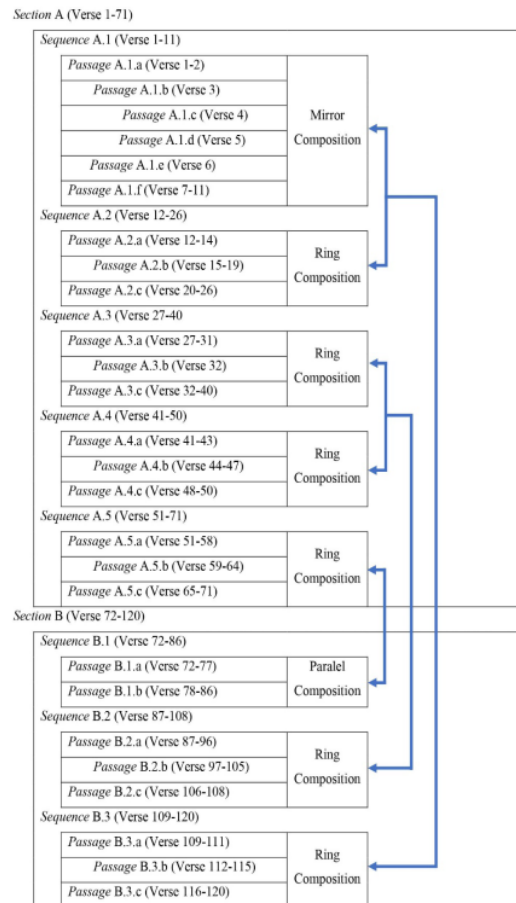
Based on SRA's principles, Michel Cuypers considered QS Al-Mā'idah as a book consisting of two sections and eight sequences. The two sections are symmetrical with a mirror symmetry pattern, where the constituent sequences are paired up like mirrors. Sequences A.1 and A.2 in section A are symmetrical with sequences B.3 in section B. Sequences A.3 and A.4 in section A are symmetrical with sequences B.2 in section B. Sequence A.5 in section A is symmetrical with sequence B.1 in section B.<sup>24</sup>

Table 1: Sequence pairs in QS. Al-Mā'idah based on SRA

1 <sup>st</sup> Pair								
2 <sup>nd</sup> Pair								
3 <sup>rd</sup> Pair								
Sequence	A.1	A.2	A.3	A.4	A.5	B.1	B.2	B.3
Verse	1-11	12-26	27-40	41-50	51-71	72-86	87-108	109-120
	Section A					Section B		

Each sequence is in a mirror, parallel, or ring composition that formed by the constituent passages. The following picture illustrated the structure of the whole sura and the symmetry pattern in each sequence based on the principles of SRA:

<sup>24</sup> Cuypers, *The Banquet*, 451.



The section A consists of 5 sequences: (a) verses 1-11, (b) verses 12-26, (c) verses 27-40, (d) verses 41-50, and (e) verses 51-71. The sequence A.1 consists of six passages: (a) verses 1-2, (b) verse 3, (c) verse 4, (d) verse 5, (e) verse 5, (f) verse 6, and (g) verses 7-11. The passage A.1.a consists of two parts: (a) verse 1 and (b) verse 2. QS. Al-Mā'idah: 1 is a part consisting of three pieces as shown in the following table:

Table 2: Arabic text division of first part/verse in QS. Al-Mā'idah

No. Piece	QS. Al-Mā'idah: 1
1	يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
	أَوْفُوا بِالْعُقُودِ

2	أُحِلَّتْ لَكُمْ بَهِيمَةُ الْأَنْعَامِ
	إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَى عَلَيْكُمْ
	غَيْرِ مُحْلَى الصَّيِّدِ
	وَأَنْتُمْ حُرْمٌ
3	﴿ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَحْكُمُ مَا يُرِيدُ ۝ ١ ﴾

According to Cuypers, the first piece consists of one segment formed by two members: (a) *yā ayyuha alladhīn 'āmanū* and (b) *awfū bi al-'uqūd*.<sup>25</sup>

Cuypers' analysis of QS. Al-Mā'idah's structural text above is different from the study carried out by Sa'īd Ḥawwa, who studied the same surah without SRA methodology. Ḥawwa divided the text of this surah into three *qisms* and *al-khātimah*. *Qism* I (verses 1-40) consists of three *maqṭa'*, *qism* II (verses 41-66) consists of two *maqṭa'*, *qism* III (verses 67-108) consists of two *maqṭa'*, and *al-khātimah* included verses 109-120.<sup>26</sup>

The text division into several parts above is based on the meaning and signs in verse, as Ḥawwa explained in his method of interpretation. Each part of the text shows the coherence of meaning which is realised with a certain theme. The whole section is also related to the axis of the text of QS. Al-Mā'idah. According to him, the axis of the text of this surah comes from QS. Al-Baqarah: 26-27 about the wicked who violate the covenant of Allah. Therefore, QS. Al-Mā'idah contains this covenant a lot.<sup>27</sup>

Neal Robinson also analysed the structure of QS. Al-Mā'idah by dividing the text into eleven sections. The ten sections from these eleven are paired with each other to form a mirror text structure; section A is paired with section A', section B is paired with section B', and so on. This division is based on the coherence of meaning in several verses to form a certain section. Then the pairs between sections are based on the relationship of meaning and similarity of themes to seem repeated.<sup>28</sup>

Robinson did not divide the text of QS. Al-Mā'idah based on the Semitic rhetoric principle starting from the smallest text group (member) but has divided it directly into several text groups that he calls sections. However, he found a mirror-symmetrical structure in this surah as Cuypers found by the SRA approach. However,

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 65-66.

<sup>26</sup> Sa'īd Ḥawwā, *Al-Asās Fī al-Taḥqīq*, vol. 3 (Cairo: Dār al-Salām, 1424), 1298.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 3:1295.

<sup>28</sup>

the symmetrical pairs between parts that Robinson found were different from Cuypers's.

Table 3: Comparison of qur'anic text division of QS. Al-Mā'idah in Cuypers, Ḥawwā, and Robinson studies.

Michel Cuypers		Sa'id Ḥawwā		Neal Robinson	
<i>Section</i>	<i>Sequence</i>	<i>Qism</i>	<i>Maqṭa'</i>	<i>Symbol</i>	<i>Section</i>
A	v. 1-11	I	v. 1-11	A	v. 1-9
	v. 12-26		v. 12-34	X	v. 10
	v. 27-40		v. 35-40	B	v. 11-19
	v. 41-50	II	v. 41-50	C	v. 20-26
	v. 51-71		v. 51-66	D	v. 27-32
B	v. 72-86	III	v. 67-86	E	v. 33-40
	v. 87-108		v. 87-108	E'	v. 41-50
	v. 109-120	<i>Khātimah</i>	v. 109-120	D'	v. 51-58
				C'	v. 59-68
				B'	v. 69-85
				X'	v. 86
				A'	v. 87-108
				B''	v. 109-120

The table above indicates similarity between three studies in a grouping of verses 41-50, 87-108, and 109-120, although the naming of the group is different. For example, Cuypers and Ḥawwā considered verses 1-11 as one group, but Cuypers named this group sequence, while Ḥawwā considered it a first *maqṭa'* in the first *qism*.

In addition to surah's division into verse groups and its names, the difference in the studies of Cuypers, Ḥawwā, and Robinson lies in the relationship between groups of verses. In other words, the group of interconnected verses in Cuypers' study is not the same as the study of Ḥawwā and Robinson. For example, the group of verses 41-50 is related to verses 87-108 according to Cuypers due to the principle of mirror symmetry in Semitic rhetoric. In the study of Ḥawwā this group of verses is related to verses 51-66 because they are in the same *qism*. Meanwhile, Robinson considered it paired with verses 33-40.

### The Cohesion of Qur'anic Text in QS. Al-Mā'idah's Structure Analysed by SRA

Cuypers' analysis of QS. Al-Mā'idah consequently rose to qur'anic interpretations and showed the relation between qur'anic text. His implementation of SRA and interpretation will be studied by researchers based on text cohesion theories.

Only several verses will be discussed instead of all verses in the surah. However, the following discussion can represent that study of the whole surah.

Cuypers stated that the first verse in QS. Al-Mā'idah is symmetrical with the seventh verse so that the promises *al-'uqūd* (دوق عا) that believers must accomplish are agreements *al-mithāq* (قاااa

Table 4: Structure of sequence A.1

Passage A.1.a (verse 1-2)
Passage A.1.b (verse 3)
Passage A.1.c (verse 4)
Passage A.1.d (verse 5)
Passage A.1.e (verse 6)
Passage A.1.f (verse 7-11)

Al-Ṭabarī (d. 310 AH) and al-Zamakhsharī (d. 528 AH) also linked between *al-'uqūd* and *al-mithāq* in their interpretation of QS. Al-Mā'idah: 1, but did not connect the two verses (first and seventh).<sup>31</sup> In comparison, al-Tha'labī interpreted *al-'uqūd* as *al-mithāq* in QS. Āli 'Imrān verses 81 and 187.<sup>32</sup>

In the point of view of text cohesion (*al-sabk al-naṣṣī*), the relationship between *al-'uqūd* and *al-mithāq* is included in lexical cohesion in the form of reiteration, namely the form of repetition of meaning in the text, either in whole or in part.<sup>33</sup> Reiteration, in this case, is performed by a synonym or *tarāduf*. The word *al-'uqūd* is the plural form of *al-'aqd* (دق عا) which is synonymous with the word *al-mithāq*.<sup>34</sup> Cuypers indirectly used the cohesive relationship of the text to explain its meaning.

In studying the text structure of verses 1-11 (sequence A.1), Cuypers found the actualisation of Lund's fourth law: the thought idea at the center of a text will

<sup>29</sup> Cuypers, *The Banquet*, 72–73.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 61.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān 'An Ṭu'wīl Āy al-Qur'ān*, vol. 8 (Cairo: Dār al-Hijr, 2001), 10; al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshaf*, vol. 1 (Beirut: Dār al-Kitāb al-'Arabī, 1407 AH), 600.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Tha'labī, *Al-Kashf Wa al-Bayān 'An Tafsīr al-Qur'ān*, vol. 4 (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabī, 2002), 6.

<sup>33</sup> Okke Kusuma Sumantri Zaimar and Ayu Basoeki Harahap, *Telaah Wacana* (Jakarta: The Intercultural Institute, 2009), 140.

<sup>34</sup> Sa'di al-Ḍanāwī and Jūzif Mālik, *Mu'jam al-Mutarādifāt Wa al-Aḍdād* (Lebanon: al-Muassasah al-Hadithiyah Lī al-Kitāb, 2013), 448.

reappear at the edge of the arrangement in its paired text.<sup>35</sup> The word *al-yaum* (يومئذ) in the center of verse 3 reappears at the edge of verse 5. Cuypers concluded that on the day of the announcement of Islam's founding, it was also emphasised that the common life between Muslims and People of the Book (*Ahlu Kitāb*) would continue in peace, ensuring the continuation of their religion.<sup>36</sup>

Cuypers' opinion regarding verses 3 and 5 is different from Ibn 'Āshūr's interpretation. According to him, *al-yaum* in verse 3: *al-yaum akmalu* ... is not the same as *al-yaum* in verse 5: *al-yaum uḥillalakum al-ṭayyibāt* .... Halalization of good things (verse 5) took place before general announcements in verse 3. The repetition of the word *al-yaum* in verse 5 indicates a great grace (*minnab*) as in *al-yaum* in verse 3. The delivery of several laws globally, as in verse 5, is a blessing in understanding religion.<sup>37</sup>

However, in the text cohesion perspective, Cuypers' meaning above can be classified as an attempt to build lexical cohesion. Indirectly, Cuypers shows the existence of lexical cohesion in the text of QS. Al-Mā'idah with the repetition of the word *al-yaum*, which means the same. That lexical cohesion is in the form of reiteration, namely the repetition of meaning in the text either in whole or part.<sup>38</sup> More precisely, in the form of repetition of lingual units. Repetition is the reappearance of lingual units (sounds, syllables, words, or parts of sentences) that are considered important to give stress in an appropriate context.<sup>39</sup>

The text cohesion theory is also seen in Cuypers' interpretation of QS. Al-Mā'idah: 8. According to him, the purpose of the people in verse is to prevent the Muslims from entering the Masjid al-Haram (the great mosque of Mecca). This interpretation came from the symmetry between verse 8 and verse 2, which also contains the expression *lā yajrimannakum shana'ānu qawm* (لَا يُجْرِمَنَّكُمْ شَنَاٰنُہُمْ): do not let hatred of any people incite you. The symmetry between two verses is based on the symmetry of passage A.1.a with passage A.1.f in sequence A.1 (verse 1-11), which forms a mirror text structure.<sup>40</sup> In the theory of text cohesion (*al-sabk al-naṣṣī*), this connection is classified as the reiteration of lexical cohesion in the form of repetition (*al-tikrār*).

Repetition as lexical cohesion is also in the reappearance of the word *qawm*

35 Cuypers, *The Composition of the Qur'an*, 115–116.

36 Cuypers, *The Banquet*, 122.

37 Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr Wa al-Tanwīr*, vol. 6 (Tunis: al-Dār al-Tūnisīyyah li al-Nashr, 1984), 119.

38 Zaimar and Harahap, *Telaah Wacana*, 140.

39 Sumarlam, *Teori Dan Praktik Analisis Wacana* (Surakarta: Pustaka Cakra, 2003), 34.

40 Cuypers, *The Banquet*, 109.

(جوق). This word is repeated three times: in verses 2, 8, and 11. According to Cuypers, all three of them meant the same thing, namely the infidels of Mecca who prevented the Prophet and his companions from entering the Masjid al-Haram due to the symmetry of passage A.1.a with passage A.1.f in sequence A.1 (verses 1-11) based on SRA analysis.<sup>41</sup>

Cuypers' interpretation of the word *qawm* above is different from the opinion of Qatādah and Mujahid. They said that word referred to the Jewish people.<sup>42</sup> Meanwhile, Ibn Kathīr mentioned a narration that showed that the word *qawm* in verse 11 is about Ghawrath bin al-Ḥārith who wanted to kill the Prophet.<sup>43</sup>

In the interpretation of verse 23, the two people mentioned in verse 23 are included in the twelve leaders of the Children of Israel mentioned in verse 12: *ithnay 'ashara naqīban* (ابنيقن رشع ينشا).

Table 5: Translation of QS. Al-Mā'idah: 12 and 23

Verse 23	Yet two men whom God had blessed among those who were afraid said, 'Go in to them through the gate and when you go in you will overcome them. If you are true believers, put your trust in God.'
Verse 12	God took a pledge from the Children of Israel. We made twelve leaders arise among them, and God said, 'I am with you: if you keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, believe in My messengers and support them, and lend God a good loan, a I will wipe out your sins and admit you into Gardens graced with flowing streams. Any of you who now ignore this [pledge] will be far from the right path.' <sup>1</sup>

This relation is because verse 23 is in passage A.2.c, which is symmetrical with passage A.2.a which includes verse 12 in sequence A.2. Sequence A.2 consists of three passages and forms a concentric structure with the center of the text at passage A.2.b.<sup>44</sup>

Table 6: Structure of sequence A.2

Passage A.2.a (verse 12-14)
Passage A.2.b (verse 15-19)
Passage A.2.c (verse 20-26)

Cuypers' interpretation is similar to what is mentioned by al-Razi. He mentioned a narration that Prophet Musa sent twelve *naqīb* (leaders) to gather

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 114-115.

<sup>42</sup> Al-Qurṭubī, *Al-Jāmi' Lī Ahkām al-Qur'ān*, vol. 6 (Cairo: Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyyah, 1964), 111.

<sup>43</sup> Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr Al-Qur'ān al-Azīm*, vol. 3 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-Ilmiyyah, 1419), 57.

<sup>44</sup> Cuypers, *The Banquet*, 170-172.

information about the condition of the people of Sham. After completing the mission, Prophet Musa told them not to divulge the information to the Children of Israel till they would not be afraid to enter Sham. However, ten of them divulged the secret while the other two did not; in fact, both motivated the Children of Israel, as stated in verse 23. They were Yūsha' bin Nūn and Kālib bin Yūfinā.<sup>45</sup>

In the text cohesion point of view, Cuypers' interpretation implied the grammatical cohesion in the form of ellipsis of certain elements or constituents that have been mentioned.<sup>46</sup> The ellipsis or *al-ḥadhf* (فدح) referred to is the word *naqībāni* (نابقن) after *rojulāni* (نالجر) in verse 23. In other words, after the word *rojulāni* in verse 23, an ellipsis *naqībani* word. This ellipsis word refers to the same people (namely *naqīb*) in verse 12, according to Cuypers.

In that meaning, there is also a sign of grammatical cohesion (*al-sabk al-naḥwī*) in the form of nominal substitution (*al-istibdāl*). The word *rojul* (الجر) in verse 23 is a substitute for the word *naqīb* (نابقن) in verse 12 where both refer to the same person. Thus, Cuypers' interpretation contains elements of text cohesion used to explain the meaning of the Qur'an.

The study of the structure of the text in QS. Al-Mā'idah: 46 shows that the word "*him*" in the sentence: *waqaffaynā 'alā āthārihim* (ممراتنا على آثارهم) is referred to prophets in verse 44 since verse 44 is symmetrical with verse 46 in passage A.4.b. This passage consists of three parts: verses 44, verses 45, and verses 46-47. The center of the passage is in verse 45 with a concentric symmetrical structure.<sup>47</sup>

Along with Cuypers, Al-Zamakhsharī and Ibn 'Aṭiyyah mentioned clearly that *ḍamīr* in *āthārihim* are the Prophets mentioned in verse 44: *yaḥkum bibā al-nabiyyūn*.<sup>48</sup> Meanwhile, according to Ibn 'Āshūr, *ḍamīr* in *āthārihim* referred to the Prophets, pious people, and priests.<sup>49</sup> Thus, Cuypers' interpretation of this verse is not something agreed upon by the commentators and is not a new interpretation either. That interpretation was obtained through a study of the structure of the Qur'anic text using SRA.

From the perspective of cohesion theories, these two verses (verses 44 and 46) are grammatically cohesive, called: *al-Iḥālah* (reference). Reference is the return of a word to another word where the first word's meaning can only be known in its

45 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *Mafātīḥ Al-Ghayb*, vol. 11 (Beirut: Dār Ihya' al-Turāth al-'Arabīy, 1420), 332.

46 Sumarlam, *Teori Dan Praktik Analisis Wacana*, 89.

47 Cuypers, *The Banquet*, 236-238.

48 Al-Zamakhsharī, *Al-Kashshāf*, 1:639; Ibn 'Aṭiyyah, *Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz Fi Tafsīr al-Kitāb al-'Azīz*, vol. 2 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyyah, 1984), 199.

49 Ibn 'Āshūr, *Al-Taḥrīr Wa al-Tanwīr*, 6:219.

entirety by referring to the other word.<sup>50</sup> The word referred to in this verse is *ḍamīr* "him", who returns to the Prophets. This reference is called a personal reference because the word in question is in the form of *ḍamīr* and returns to a certain person or group of people.

Based on the explanation above, the cohesion of the text QS. Al-Mā'idah, based on SRA, is influenced by word/sentence pairs that have been determined previously by Cuypers. The pairs of text particles also give rise to text interpretation due to the relationship between the two pairs from various sides. According to SRA, the researcher also found text cohesion in various groups of text particles such as piece, part, passage, sequence, and section.

### Critical Notes on SRA's Implementation in QS Al-Mā'idah

Although it has demonstrated some relationship between qur'anic text in certain symmetrical laws, SRA also affected the reduction of whole verse meaning in QS Al-Mā'idah as Cuypers has done. For instance, in the interpretation of the word "*al-yaum*" (today) in verse 3. Rather than explaining its repetition in the same verse, Cuypers just linked this word to the same word in verse 5. In this case, he tried to give a meaning that all good things are made lawful for believers on the day of completion of religion (Islam), including food and the women of the People of Book (*Ahlu Kitāb*), and both communities will live closely.<sup>51</sup> That interpretation indicated the connection between the second "*al-yaum*" in verse 3 and neglected the first one. He should scholarly mention the rhetorical analysis on the despairing of unbelievers to Islam in the first "*al-yaum*".

In interpreting the verses of the Qur'an through SRA, Cuypers neglected the Prophet's hadith as a reference. Whereas referring to the hadith of the Prophet is also a part of the interpretation process since the hadith of the Prophet serves to explain the contents of the Qur'an.<sup>52</sup>

However, to strengthen his interpretation in several verses, he mentioned the narrations conveyed by Muslim scholars, which originate from the traditions of the Prophet. For example, when interpreting "*al-yaum akmaltu lakum dīnakum ...*" (Today I have completed your religion for you ...) in verse 3, Cuypers conveyed the narration to corroborate his opinion that the verse shows a feast day for Muslims since it symmetrical connection with verse 114: "*takūn lanā ṭīdan li'awwalinā wa ākhirinā*" (it will be a feast for us, for the first of us and the last of us). In that narration, a Jew

50 Syarifah Balhūt, "Al-Iḥālāh: Dirāsah Naẓariyyah" (University of Aljazair, 2006), 23–120.

51 Cuypers, *The Banquet*, 122.

52 Mannā' al-Qaṭṭān, *Mabāḥith Fī 'Ulūm al-Qur'ān* (Cairo: Maktabah Wahbah, n.d.), 358.

came to 'Umar ibn Khaṭṭāb saying that if the third verse in QS Al-Mā'idah had been revealed to the Jews, they would have made the day that the verse was revealed as a feast day.<sup>53</sup>

Cuypers also has not paid attention to the different readings (*qiroāt*) of the Qur'an, which has a quite influence on different interpretations. In analysing verse 6, he just used one variant reading of the word "*arjulikum*", instead of discussing "*arjulakum*", a second variant reading in the same word.<sup>54</sup> He employed that variant reading to prove his rhetorical analysis and neglected others.

In order to improve the application of SRA to analyse qur'anic text, the user should keep the whole meaning of a verse and give extra meaning from relation to other verses based on Semitic Rhetoric principles. He can use the prophetic hadith and variant readings (*qiroāt*) of the Qur'an to enrich the relationship between parts of the text in various symmetrical relations.

## Conclusion

The cohesion of the Qur'anic text in QS Al-Mā'idah, according to SRA, is shown through pairs of words or sentences in certain groups of text particles. The determination of which words or sentences are paired in a text particle group is arranged based on the principle of parallel, concentric, or mirror symmetry in specific text particle groups: member, segment, piece, part, passage, sequence, section, and book. Thus, the cohesiveness of the Qur'anic text from the SRA perspective can be found at each level of the text particle group to show multi-layered cohesiveness. The researchers found text cohesion in Cuypers' interpretation in lexical cohesion in the form of synonyms and repetition; and grammatical cohesion in the form of ellipsis, substitution, and reference.

## Supplementary Materials

The data presented in this study are available in [insert article or supplementary material here] (Usually the datasets were analysed from library research can be found in the whole data references )

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### Authors' contributions

All listed authors contributed to this article. A.R.A. wrote the original draft, reviewed and edited it, wrote the formal analysis, compiled the resources, conceptualised the study, and managed the project administration. H.A. was responsible for the methodology and validation. A.M.H. supervised the project

<sup>53</sup> Cuypers, *The Banquet*, 86–87.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 103.

### Data availability statement

Data sharing is not applicable to this article as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

### Conflict of interests

None of the authors of this study has a financial or personal relationship with other people that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of the study.

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# Investigating Cohesiveness of QS. Al-Mā'idah: A Review on Michel Cuypers Implementation of Semitic Rhetorical Analysis (SRA)

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