

Theodor Nöldeke

Theodor Nöldeke (2 March 1836 – 25 December 1930) was a German orientalist, who was born in Harburg and studied in Göttingen, Vienna, Leiden and Berlin.

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Biography

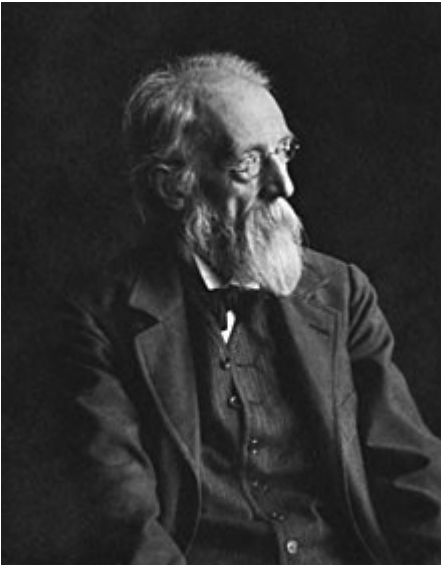
In 1859 his history of the Qur'an won for him the prize of the French *Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, and in the following year he rewrote it in German (*Geschichte des Qorâns*) and published it with additions at Göttingen. In 1861 he began to lecture at the university of this town, where three years later he was appointed extraordinary professor. In 1868 he became ordinary professor at Kiel, and in 1872 was appointed to the chair of Oriental Languages at Strassburg, which he resigned in 1906.

Nöldeke's range of studies were wide and varied, but the main focus of his work has followed the two lines indicated by his prize essay, *Semitic languages, and the history and civilization of Islam*. While a great deal of his work (e.g. his *Grammatik der neusyrischen Sprache*, 1868, his *Mandäische Grammatik*, 1874, and his translations from the Arabic of Tabari, 1881–1882) is meant for specialists, many of his books are of interest to the general reader.

Some of Nöldeke's studies are included in *The Origins of The Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book* edited by Ibn Warraq.

Several of his essays first appeared in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, and his article on the Qur'an, with some others, was republished in a volume called *Oriental Sketches*. The articles dealing with Persia were republished in a German volume, *Aufsätze zur persischen Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1887).

Theodor Nöldeke



Born	2 March 1836 <div>Harburg, Bavaria,<div>Donau-Ries district,<div>Bavaria, Germany</div></div></div>
Died	25 December 1930 (aged 94) <div>Karlsruhe, Baden-Württemberg, Germany</div>
Occupation	German Orientalist
Notable works	Geschichte Qorâns, <div>Das Leben Mohammeds</div>

Nöldeke died in Karlsruhe. Charles Cutler Torrey and Friedrich Zacharias Schwally were his students, as well as Louis Ginzberg.

Nöldeke Chronology

The Nöldeke Chronology is a modern application of Qur'anic organization. Presented by Theodor Nöldeke in the middle of the nineteenth century, this perspective considers the sequence of revelation with the development of content and the origination of new linguistic styles. Using this approach, the suras can be more closely ordered to match their true historical occurrence. For example, Sura 21: "The Prophets," although it is featured as the 21st chapter of a total 114 in the text of the Qur'an, is number 65 according to the Nöldeke Chronology. From here, Nöldeke then divided the suras into two periods: The Meccan, broken into three phases, and the Medinan.

According to the Nöldeke Chronology, the 114 Suras of the Qur'an are divided into four groupings:

- 48 Suras under the First Meccan Period
- 21 Suras under the Second Meccan Period
- 21 Suras under the Third Meccan Period
- 24 Suras under the Medinan Period

The Egyptian Edition, which was crafted 1924, is an adaptation of Nöldeke's work.

The Nöldeke Chronology institutes a sort of "canonical order" that comes to systematize the sequence of revelation in a more coherent and comprehensive arrangement, thus aiding in the scholarly (theological, literary, and historical) interpretation of the Qur'an.^[1] Although it does not have universal acceptance, the Nöldeke Chronology is used as a general guide within current scholarship.^[2]

Organization of the Suras

First Meccan Period

96, 74, 111, 106, 108, 104, 107, 102, 105, 92,

90, 94, 93, 97, 86, 91, 80, 68, 87, 95,

103, 85, 73, 101, 99, 82, 81, 53, 84, 100,

79, 77, 78, 88, 89, 75, 83, 69, 51, 52,

56, 70, 55, 112, 109, 113, 114, 1

Second Meccan Period

54, 37, 71, 76, 44, 50, 20, 26, 15, 19,

38, 36, 43, 72, 67, 23, 21, 25, 17, 27, 18

Third Meccan Period

32, 41, 45, 16, 30, 11, 14, 12, 40, 28,

39, 29, 31, 42, 10, 34, 35, 7, 46, 6, 13

Medinan Period

2, 98, 64, 62, 8, 47, 3, 61, 57, 4, 65, 59, 33,

63, 24, 58, 22, 48, 66, 60, 110, 49, 9, 5

Nöldeke's Impression of Koran's Stylistic Aspect

From: *Sketches from Eastern History*, Engl. translation by John Sutherland Black, p. 32 (London & Edinburgh, 1892), (also available online (<http://answering-islam.org/Books/Noeldeke/quran.htm>)):

"In point of style and artistic effect, the different parts of the Qur'an are of very unequal value. An unprejudiced and critical reader will certainly find very few passages where his aesthetic susceptibilities are thoroughly satisfied. But he will often be struck, especially in the older pieces, by a wild force of passion, and a vigorous, if not rich, imagination. Descriptions of heaven and hell, and allusions to God's working in Nature, not infrequently show a certain amount of poetic power. In other places also the style is sometimes lively and impressive, though it is rare indeed that we come across such strains of touching simplicity as in the middle of xciii. The greater part of the Qur'an's message is decidedly prosaic; and so indeed is its style. Of course, with such a variety of material, we cannot expect every part to be equally vivacious, or imaginative, or poetic. A decree about the right of inheritance, or point of ritual, must necessarily be expressed in prose, if it is to be intelligible. No one complains of the civil laws in Exodus or the sacrificial ritual in Leviticus because they want the fire of Isaiah or the tenderness of Deuteronomy. But Muhammad's mistake consists in persistent and slavish adherence to the semi-poetic form which he had at first adopted in accordance with his own taste and that of his hearers. For instance, he employs rhyme in dealing with the most prosaic subjects, and thus produces the disagreeable effect of incongruity between style and matter."

Selected Works of Theodor Nöldeke


- *Geschichte des Qorâns* (1860, second revised edition 1909; English translation by Wolfgang H. Behn: *The History of the Qur'ân*, Leiden: Brill 2013)
- *Das Leben Mohammeds* (1863)
- *Beiträge zur Kenntnis der Poesie der alten Araber* (1864)
- *Die alttestamentliche Literatur* (1868)
- *Untersuchungen zur Kritik des Alten Testaments* (1869)
- *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden. Aus der arabischen Chronik des Tabari übersetzt* (1879)
- Review of J. Wellhausen's *Reste Arabischen Heidentums* (1887) in ZDMG, Vol. 41 (1887), pp. 707-26.
- *Zur Grammatik des klassischen Arabisch* (1896)
- *Fünf Mo'allaqat, übersetzt und erklärt* (1899–1901)
- Articles in the *Encyclopaedia Biblica* (1903)
- *Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (1904)
- *Compendious Syriac Grammar* (1880, 1888, 1904 [translation])

He contributed frequently to the *Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft*, the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* and the *Expositor*.

References

1. Ernst 2011, p. 43.
2. Böwering 2008, p. 73.

Sources

- Böwering, Gerhard (2008). "Recent research on the construction of the Qur'ān". In Reynolds, Gabriel Said. *The Qur'ān in Its Historical Context*. Routledge. pp. 70–87. ISBN 9780203939604.
- Ernst, Carl W. (2011). *How to Read the Qur'an: A New Guide, with Select Translations*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press. ISBN 9780807869079.
-  This article incorporates text from a publication now in the public domain: Chisholm, Hugh, ed. (1911). "Nöldeke, Theodor". *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11th ed.). Cambridge University Press.

External links

- Works by Theodor Nöldeke (<http://fadedpage.com/csearch.php?author=N%C3%B6ldeke%20Theodor>) at Faded Page (Canada)
 - Marco Frenschkowski (1993). "Nöldeke, Theodor". In Bautz, Traugott. *Biographisch-Bibliographisches Kirchenlexikon (BBKL)* (http://www.bbkl.de/n/noeldeke_t.shtml) (in German). 6. Herzberg: Bautz. cols. 979–983. ISBN 3-88309-044-1.
 - History of Sasanian's State (<http://www.armenology.net>)
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