

The passages in which it occurs are all late, and possibly all Madinan. It always means a portion of revelation, and thus was used by Muḥammad as a technical term.

The Muslim authorities are quite ignorant of the origin of the word.¹ Some took it as connected with سور, meaning a *town wall* (cf. Rāghib, *Mufradāt*, 248), others made it mean *منزلة*, an astronomical *statio* (cf. *Muḥīt*, sub voc.), while others, reading the word سورة, would derive it from أسأر to *leave over* (Rāghib, op. cit. ; cf. also *Itqān*, 121).

The older European opinion was that it was a Jewish word derived from שורה, which is used in the Mishnah for *row, rank, file*. Buxtorf in his *Lexicon* suggested this equivalence, and it was accepted by Nöldeke in 1860 in his *Geschichte des Qorans*, p. 24; he has been followed by many later writers.² Lagarde, *Mittheilungen*, iii, 205, however, pointed out the difficulties of this theory, and thought that the origin of the word was to be found in Heb. שרה (which he would read in Is. xxviii, 25), and then, referring to Buxtorf's שרת הדין *lineae quas transsilire impune possumus*, he suggests that the meaning is κανών. שרה, however, is such a doubtful word that one cannot place much reliance on this derivation.

A further difficulty with Nöldeke's theory is that שורה seems not to be used in connection with Scripture, whereas the Qur'ānic سورة is exclusively so associated, a fact which has led Hirschfeld (*New Researches*, 2, n. 6) to think that the word is meant to represent the Jewish סדרה, the well-known technical term for the section marks in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is connected with his theory that פרקאן is meant to represent the division marks called פרקים, which is certainly not the case, and though his suggestion that سورة

¹ Fraenkel, *Vocab*, 22—cuius derivationem Arabes ignorant.

² See also his *Neue Beiträge*, 26, and Fraenkel, *Vocab*, 22; *Fremdw*, 237, 238; Pautz, *Offenbarung*, 89; von Kremer, *Ideen*, 226; Vollers, *ZDMG*, li, 324; Klein, *Religion of Islam*, 3; Cheikho, *Naṣrāniya*, 182; Fischer, *Glossar*, 60a; Horowitz, *JPN*, 211; Ahrens, *Christliches*, 19.