How should scholars best approach the Qur’ān: in its present, codified form, or as a textual witness to the development of the early Muslim community? This question has been a topic of debate in Qur’anic studies.

Nora K. Schmid (Freie Universität Berlin) will discuss different approaches to scholarly analysis of the Qur’ān, focusing particularly on Theodor Nöldeke’s (1836-1930) chronological analysis. Taking the first sura (chapter) of the Qur’ān as a case study, she will read it not as the first chapter of the book, but as a significant step in the formation of the community marked by the beginnings of communal prayer. This opens up cultural, historical and epistemic dimensions vital to our understanding of the Qur’ān.