

The grammar of the elements: New historical evidence on the inspiration between Mendeleev's periodic table

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The periodic table is one of the great organizing principles of the natural world as well as a cultural icon. Although not the first to conceive the idea of the table, Mendeleev more than anyone else recognized periodicity as a law of nature and used that insight to predict as yet undiscovered elements. What led to his great intellectual breakthrough? The heart of this talk will focus on newly discovered, heretofore unpublished evidence suggesting that his ideas originated from interactions with Saint Petersburg intellectuals far outside chemistry, who studied Oriental and Siberian languages. The talk will conclude with examples of how the periodic table continues to inspire contemporary research, from the development new catalysts to new radiopharmaceuticals.

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