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Catherine Pennacchio

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Catherine Pennacchio

# Lexical Borrowing in the Qur'ān

## The Problematic Aspects of Arthur Jeffery's List

Traduction de Judith Grumbach

- 1 The foreign vocabulary of the Qur'ān has been investigated since the birth of Islam, first in the Islamic tradition and much later by scholars of Oriental Studies. In the first case, loanwords were at the center of the ideological debate on the Arab characteristic of the sacred text. Later, intellectuals studied loanwords in connection with their research on the origin of Islam and, more specifically, on the influences of Judaism and Christianity on Islam.
- 2 Arthur Jeffery's *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (1938) is the latest work addressing the topic; it is a unique reference in the field. Jeffery himself established most of the list; today, the latter needs to be revised and updated.
- 3 The 20<sup>th</sup> century linguistic discoveries – about the Ugaritic language in 1928 and about North Arabian and South Arabian epigraphy with thousands of inscriptions, in particular – invite us to re-examine the lexical borrowings in the Qur'ān. These borrowings must be placed in their political and socio-cultural contexts,<sup>1</sup> in the light of every available material: texts, epigraphy, archeology, linguistics, and even with regards to the history of the words that have seldom been studied for themselves. This renewal in research is important since the successive waves of borrowings in the Arabic language are the historical testimonies of the contacts that existed between the Arab populations and their neighbors.
- 4 This article is an evaluation that aims to shed light on the problematic aspects of both Jeffery's list and the hypotheses on the origins of the loanwords.

## Overview of the Subject

### Research on the origins of the Qur'ān

- 5 Jeffery's work fits within the search of the origins of the Qur'ān in Judaism and in Christianity. Orientalists, who often served as priests, Jesuits, or rabbis, or who were brought up in Orthodox Judaism, initiated this search. They studied the Bible, the Gospels. Their knowledge of the Scriptures and of ancient languages – Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Ge'ez – naturally led them to study the Arabic language and the Qur'ān, viewing the latter as a historical book to be used in interreligious comparisons.
- 6 The theory of the Jewish influence on the Qur'ān first prevailed with Abraham Geiger's *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthume aufgenommen?* (1833). Considering the widespread theory about the monogenesis of Hebrew, connecting the origin of Islam with Judaism was completely logical. This idea influenced the first edition of a history of the Qur'ān, *Geschichte des Qorans* (1860), by Theodor Nöldeke, although the latter mentioned Christianity as well. Then, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, scholars such as Christiaan Snouck-Hurgronje, Ignaz Goldziher, Julius Wellhausen, Louis Cheikho, Henri Lammens, and Tor Andrae favored the hypothesis of the Christian influences. In 1933, Charles Cutler Torrey published *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*,<sup>2</sup> a series of four lectures, in which he declared that the time had come to acknowledge the Jewish origins of Islam. This work, criticized by Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes,<sup>3</sup> contradicted the common views on the question at the time but was based on topics of today's research: the role played by the Jews of Medina and South Arabian epigraphy.
- 7 In the Islamic tradition, the first exegetes had no difficulty identifying foreign words in the Qur'ān, which they regarded as the testimony of the contacts between the *Hiğaz*<sup>4</sup> and its cultural environment. Similarly, the first grammarians, who knew of their existence long before Islam, freely noted these foreign words. However, the members of the various religious schools that were then set up raised objections. Al-Šafi'ī (m. 820), a representative of this current of thought, stated that the Qur'ān was Arab and was written in plain Arabic speech<sup>5</sup>, as

the Qur'an itself stated it<sup>6</sup>. A debate on the language of the Qur'an centered on loanwords then developed. Al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505) reconciled both theories: according to him, philologists rightly highlighted the occurrence of foreign Persian, Syrian, Abyssinian, or Hebrew words – as far as etymology was concerned; theologians were also right: if these words were integrated into the Arab language, it is because they were Arabic. His *Al-Mutawakkilī*<sup>7</sup> is the most comprehensive work on the topic and is a proof that the scholar freed himself from the debate<sup>8</sup>; indeed, Al-Suyūṭī was the first to classify the loanwords according to their donor language.

8 Arthur Jeffery came after this long tradition. He produced a lexicon of the 275 foreign words of the Qur'an (not including proper nouns), in which he compiled and presented all of his predecessors' studies. This work synthesized everything that had so far been written on the subject of lexical borrowing in the Qur'an and it was the large amount of sources that accounted for its success.

## A Large Amount of Sources

9 The author of *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an* provides first-hand information as he compiles all available references for each word. He quotes Muslim grammarians<sup>9</sup> such as Al-Ġawālīqī (1073-1145), author of *Kitāb al-Mu'arrab* (literally: The Book of Arabized Words), and Al-Suyūṭī, who authored several books on lexical borrowing. Jeffery also refers to expert orientalist: Abraham Geiger, the first to reference fourteen loanwords from Hebrew; Rudolf Dvorak, the first to devote an entire work of philology to lexical borrowing in the Qur'an: *Über die Fremdwörter im Koran* (1885), in which ten loanwords are presented. Jeffery also cites Theodor Nöldeke's *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (1910), in which an entire chapter – "Lehnwörter in und aus dem Äthiopischen" – deals with loanwords from Ethiopian; Alphonse Mingana, who inventories the religious terms of the Qur'an borrowed from Syriac in "Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'an" (1927); and Joseph Horowitz,<sup>10</sup> who published "Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran" (1925). In addition, Jeffery quotes the major works in Semitic philology: Ignazio Guidi's *Della sede primitiva dei popoli semitici* (1879), Theodor Nöldeke's *Geschichte des Qorans* (1860), Siegmund Fraenkel's *Die Aramäische Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (1886), and Heinrich Zimmern's *Akkadische Fremdwörter als Beweis für Babylonischen Kultureinfluss* (1917), to mention the most important ones. The list of Jeffery's references is long; a glance at his bibliography is enough to give a sense of its extent. The reader cannot but notice that the author thoroughly went through each source. The lexicon mentions all of the languages from which Arabic borrowed the Qur'anic loanwords. Each loanword is given in its original form in the donor language, following its writing system. A total of 56 languages are represented (Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Greek, Persian, Avestan, Pahlavi, Ethiopian, Armenian, South Arabic, Sanskrit, etc.) without resorting to transliteration. Anyone who wishes to benefit from all this information must be quite learned him/herself.

10 Loanwords are presented in a methodical and meticulous way. Jeffery first analyzes the root of each term phonologically and semantically before providing the Arab grammarians' points of views on the question. He then conveys the opinions of the Oriental scholars and attempts to conclude on the possible origin of the word. Finally, Jeffery indicates whether the loanword can be found in pre-Islamic poetry in order to ascertain the date of the borrowing. If it is the case, he quotes the South Arabian and North Arabian inscriptions in which the word appears. All loanwords are presented according to the same formula since Jeffery first aims to make everyone's opinion known. This study provides a wealth of information based on the sources themselves but it has its limitations: indeed, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an* is a foundational work, a starting point in the research on the topic.

## A Pioneer's Work

11 In the preface of his book, Jeffery himself states that his work is his contribution to what he hopes will be a glossary of the Qur'an "comparable with the great *Wörterbücher* we have of the Old and New Testaments," in which all the resources of philology, epigraphy, and textual criticism will be mentioned. "Little further advance can be made in our interpretation

of the Qur'an or of the life of Muḥammad, until an exhaustive study has been made on the vocabulary of the Qur'an," he writes.<sup>11</sup> His goal is to gather up all the available sources on lexical borrowing scattered in various publications and essays, and present them to students and researchers. He humbly notes that only a scholar like Nöldeke could have adequately treated a work of this kind.<sup>12</sup> Jeffery meant his essay to be a tool encouraging further research on the topic yet later scholars perceived it as an accomplished work. This very misconception is this glossary's main problem: it failed to revitalize research on lexical borrowing in the Qur'an and no further study on the topic was undertaken.

## The Problematic Aspects of Arthur Jeffery's Glossary

### A Non-Exhaustive List

- 12 We should approach Jeffery's glossary with caution. Nowhere does the author define the notion of lexical borrowing.<sup>13</sup> It seems that every "non-Arabic" material is classified in the "foreign word" category. All types<sup>14</sup> of borrowings are included and presented in alphabetical order. Jeffery identifies three types of borrowing in the Qur'an<sup>15</sup>: 1) words that are entirely foreign, such as *ḡibr*<sup>16</sup> and *istabraq*,<sup>17</sup> for example; 2) Semitic words whose roots may exist in Arabic but whose meaning in the Qur'an comes from another language: *darasa*,<sup>18</sup> *bāraka*<sup>19</sup>; 3) Arabic words whose meaning in the Qur'an is influenced by other languages: for example, the term *nūr* ("light") with the meaning of "religion" (9-32). Jeffery also quotes three neologisms – three completely new lexical creations. He explains that according to Nöldeke,<sup>20</sup> the Prophet was fond of "strange and mysterious" words and seemed to enjoy mystifying his audience with new words. He would have invented the following words: *ḡasīq* "darkness" (113-3), *tasnīm* "Tasnīm," the name of a fountain in heaven (83-27), and *salsabīl* "Salsabīl," the name of a spring<sup>21</sup> (76-18).
- 13 Jeffery does not provide any information on the way he put his list together. On the one hand, he seems to have gathered up all the available studies on each word; on the other hand, there is every indication that the author selected only some sources, for known loanwords do not appear on the list (i.e. *ummiyy* "Gentile,"<sup>22</sup> *ḥaḡḡ* "pilgrimage," *sab*<sup>ς</sup> "abundance," *mihṛāb* "sanctuary"). Jeffery makes an exception for the list compiled by Al-Suyūṭī, for which he details the reason for which certain words were not included<sup>23</sup>: some are rare Arabic words perceived as foreign because of their rarity (i.e. *taht* "belly, inside,"<sup>24</sup> *hayta laka* "come!,"<sup>25</sup> *sayyid* "husband"<sup>26</sup>), while others simply are Arab words (*sakar* "wine,"<sup>27</sup> *ḥaram* "to consecrate, to dedicate to God," *alīm* "painful").
- 14 Arthur Jeffery's work claims to be exhaustive but it does not include the entirety of some studies on loanwords that should be further analyzed.<sup>28</sup> In particular, Al-Suyūṭī's works are worth researching. His three books *Risāla muḥaḏḏab fī al-#alfāz al-mu#arrab* (literally "Pure Treatise on Arabized Words"), *Al-Itqān fī #ulūm al-qur#ān* [The Perfect Guide to the Sciences of the Qur'an], and *Al-Mutawakkilī* include a total of 138 loanwords. Words such as *al-#āḡira* "last (life)" and *fūm* "wheat, garlic," should be revised. Indeed, one of the meanings of the former is "the end of days"<sup>29</sup> like in Judaism; as for the second term, its meaning is ambiguous.<sup>30</sup> We know that if ancient Muslim savants were not familiar with foreign languages, they were proficient in their native language; their perception of specific terms is therefore valuable. The list put together by Joseph Horowitz, which compiles the Qur'ānic loanwords (including proper nouns) borrowed from Judaism, should be reviewed as well. Horowitz lists terms mentioned by his predecessors and adds a few loanwords he discovered himself. His list totals 57 loanwords; not all of them are cited in Jeffery's work. Karl Ahrens' "Christliches in Quran," (1930), an extensive study on the borrowing from Christianity, should be studied as well.
- 15 Since Arthur Jeffery's work came out, many studies were published on the topic, elaborating on the basis of his research. The latter is often quoted but few scholars have investigated the topic much further than he did. As early as 1939, D. S. Margoliouth published "Some Additions to Professor Jeffery's *Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*," in which he mentioned

eight additional loanwords<sup>31</sup> and disputed the origin of three words listed in Jeffery's book.<sup>32</sup> Michael Carter<sup>33</sup> inventories all these additions; he classifies the loanwords chronologically and according to the donor language. Martin Zammit<sup>34</sup> also dedicates a chapter to foreign words in the Qur'ān, with a special emphasis on Jeffery's work.

16 Many loanwords remain to be studied. It is the case of *ḡalā#* "exile," hapax legomenon in the Qur'ān (59-3), which seems to be a lexical borrowing<sup>35</sup> from the Hebrew *gōlā*, *gālūt*, a concept specific to Judaism. In the Qur'ān, *ḡalā#* is used in a Jewish context to describe the exodus of a Jewish tribe – the *al-Naḏīr* – driven out of the Prophet's strongholds near Medina. Sura 59 was revealed at that occasion. In later works,<sup>36</sup> the word is spelled both *ḡalā#* and *ḡalwa* (meaning "exile" as well). The spelling with *-wa* points to an orthographic borrowing from Aramaic. It is typical in the Qur'ān and several other examples of this process were identified<sup>37</sup>: *zakawt / zakāt* "alms"; *ṣalaw / ṣalāt* "prayer"; *ḥayawt / ḥayāt* "life." These examples support my assumption, even if *ḡalwa* is found in works written after the Qur'ān. Besides, neither Lane, nor Dozy,<sup>38</sup> nor Kazimirski<sup>39</sup> included *ḡalwa* in their lists.

### Revising Jeffery's loanwords

17 The entire list must be revised in the light of modern linguistics. For all their encyclopedic knowledge, scholars of the past centuries did not display the rigor found in today's methods. Today, loanwords can be identified thanks to the correspondence rules of comparatism.<sup>40</sup> When loanwords are borrowed from non-Semitic languages, their morphology is the first indication of their foreignness. Because they don't present the same phonological characteristics as the recipient language, they are obvious (*firdaws* "Heaven" or *zanḡabīl* "ginger," in Arabic, for instance). In the case of borrowings within the Semitic language family, other criteria must be used to identify loanwords. The difficulty lies in distinguishing roots that belong to the common borrowings within this group.<sup>41</sup> By definition, a term is considered Semitic if it occurs with the same phonetic and semantic values in the majority of the Semitic languages.<sup>42</sup> The problem is that some loanwords 1) spread in a large geographical area; 2) often bear only one primary meaning; 3) present the same phonology in all Semitic languages. Then, there is a risk: words common to several Semitic languages may be mistaken for loanwords; conversely, certain loanwords may not be identified as such. Only linguistic criteria point to cases of borrowing and only irregular forms and meanings reveal loanwords. The history of words, of concepts, or of borrowed objects only serve to complement the linguistic identification of loanwords, although having recourse to history sometimes proves decisive.

18 Jeffery and his predecessors mistook many terms for loanwords. Today, no additional study is needed to prove that they are native Arab words. In fact, some are the fruit of the evolution of the Arabic language itself. This is the case of the word *kāhin* "seer," a figure of the pre-Islamic world. For Jeffery,<sup>43</sup> the Arab word *kāhin* is close to the biblical term *kōhēn* "priest," though he agrees with Nöldeke that this loanword comes from Aramaic and precedes the birth of Islam. Jeffery concludes that the word first had the meaning of "priest" and later acquired that of "seer." However, the scholar notes that A. Fisher<sup>44</sup> states the opposite: "seer" is the first meaning and *kāhin* is not a loanword. According to Israel Eph'al,<sup>45</sup> there was a debate about that word and Toufic Fahd, who wrote the article entitled "*kāhin*" explains that it is a common Semitic term. The *kāhin* and the *kōhēn* may have had a common ancestor, as the *khn* in Ugaritic and in Assyro-Babylonian indicates. Fahd points out the connection between this public figure's duties, which, at one point, diverged in Arabic and in Hebrew.<sup>46</sup> If the Qur'ān had borrowed the word *kāhin* from Hebrew or from Syriac, it would have meant "priest," but the meaning of "seer" for this word seems to exist prior to the *kōhēn* in Judaism. The BDB confirms the common origin of the two words<sup>47</sup>: "the *kāhin* and the *kōhēn* must have been originally identical (both alike being guardians of an oracle, at a sanctuary); but their functions diverged: the *kāhin* gradually lost his connection with the sanctuary, and sank to be a mere diviner; the *kōhēn* acquired fuller sacrificial functions." Medieval Arab linguists did not include *kāhin* in their loanword lists, neither did Fraenkel, nor Zimmern. The word therefore seems to be the product of the evolution of the Arabic language itself.

- 19 Other terms seem to be common to several Semitic languages: ḥabl “rope,” maʿīn “spring,” ḥinzīr “pork,” zayt “oil,” ʿīn “fig,” ʿankabūt “spider.”<sup>48</sup> In the Qur'an, the word ḥabl means both “rope” and “link” in the figurative sense, in the same way that the biblical Hebrew term ḥēbel designates both “a rope” (Josh 2:15) and “a territory, a region” (Josh 19:9 and Deut 3:4). The origin of the Hebrew ḥēbel and of the Aramaic and Syriac ḥbl# could well be the Akkadian naḥbalu meaning “rope, trap.” For Jeffery, the Arabic ḥabl may come from Aramaic or from Syriac<sup>49</sup>; the scholar is certain that the Arab verb ḥabl is a loanword because it is a denominative. Jeffery relies on Zimmern,<sup>50</sup> who nonetheless doubts the Aramaic origin of the loanword. It seems that the Akkadian verb ḥabālu first meant “to oppress, to deceive (someone).”<sup>51</sup> The word then evolved to mean “to tie, to trap,” then “to capture, to take,” and finally “to damage, to destroy.” The word ḥabl appears in pre-Islamic poetry,<sup>52</sup> which points to its ancient existence in the Arabic language, a hypothesis further supported by the fact that the Arabic broken plural ḥibāl “ropes” is mentioned twice in the Qur'an. However, the Ugaritic<sup>53</sup> masculine noun ḥbl “rope, string” has the same form as the Arab term, which could mean that it is a common Semitic word. Nothing proves that it was borrowed from Aramaic, as Jeffery suggests.
- 20 If identifying lexical borrowings is problematic, proving that a term is a loanword isn't simple either. In the past, a quote or the Biblical meaning of a word was enough to show it was a loanword. Thus Jeffery<sup>54</sup> considers the 5<sup>th</sup> Arabic form taḡallā to be a loan meaning borrowed from the Syriac #ṭḡl# “to reveal oneself (God).” The word appears twice in the Qur'an with the meaning “to manifest itself”<sup>55</sup> (7-143) and “to shine” (92-2). Following Mingana's theory, Jeffery translates it as “to appear in glory.” The word taḡallā is based on ḠLW/Y, a common root in Arabic and in biblical Hebrew. When this root is used in the *qal* Hebrew verb form, it means “to discover, to reveal”; in the *piel* Hebrew verb form, it means “to discover, to reveal, to expose.” In the Torah, this root also appears with the meaning “to reveal oneself (God).”<sup>56</sup>
- 21 Later experts, who usually support Jeffery's selection of foreign words, do not quote many loanwords listed in his work. This alone is enough to make us doubt their status as loanwords. It is the case of the feminine noun rawḍa “pasture” (30-15) and the plural rawḍāt “prairies” (42-22), from the root RWD. In this case, Jeffery<sup>57</sup> refers to Karl Vollers, *ZMDG*, vol. 50, 1896, p. 641, who was the only one to hypothesize that these words may be borrowed from Persian. The root words #RD<sup>58</sup> – from which arḍ “earth” originates – and WRD<sup>59</sup> – from which warrāḍa “pasture” originates – display semantic and morphologic similarities that suggest that a metathesis may have happened within RWD, a root word with the same meaning. Letter variations within a root word are common in Arabic. Besides, Cohen refers to both #RD and WRD root words. Moreover, the fact that they share the semantic field of “the earth” seems to indicate that they are in fact the same root. The WRD root word is attested only in Arabic. Unfortunately, Cohen's study stops before the letter R. Henri Lammens<sup>60</sup> talks about rawḍa in the vicinity of Medina by referring to the geographer Yâqût.<sup>61</sup> “In order to deserve such a name, it must meet the following three conditions: the presence of water, that of greenery, and the development of a certain plot of land.” Nothing suggests that rawḍa is a loanword. Al-Suyūṭī doesn't mention it. The term could be an independent formation in the Arabic language. Arabic is known for its numerous terms describing the desert and its natural environment.
- 22 Some loanwords listed in Jeffery's work were identified as such on the basis of phonological similarity, not because they followed the rules of comparatism. It is the case of diḥāq, mentioned in a passage describing the delights of Heaven, among which are ka#s diḥāq, “overflowing cups” (78-34). Fraenkel<sup>62</sup> compares it with the Hebrew daḥaqa “to pack, to push, to oppress” and with the Judeo-Aramaic dḥq “to press, to push, to constrict.” In his opinion, the shift from /h/ to /h/ is due to the Mesopotamian origin of the term. Thus ka#s diḥāq may be “a cup of pressed (juice)” in reference to the grapes pressed to fill the cup with wine. Zimmern does not attest the Akkadian, however. Cohen talks about two root words: DHQ<sup>63</sup> as in the Arabic diḥāq “to fill up to the brim,” which seems to come directly from the Qur'an; and DḤQ<sup>64</sup> as in dāḥaq “to press, to push” in Hebrew, dāḥaq in Palestinian Judeo-Aramaic

and in Syriac, and *daḥaqa* “to press, to push” in Arabic. In fact, Cohen does not suggest any connection between the DHQ and DHQ root words.

- 23 I also noted errors in Jeffery’s description of certain borrowings. For example, neither Jeffery nor Zimmern knew about the connection between the /q/ of the Arab word *qaṭīrān* “tar” and the <sup>ᶜ</sup>ayn /ʕ/ of the Aramaic word <sup>ᶜ</sup>iṭrān. According to A. Jeffery,<sup>65</sup> “some confusion of /ʕ/ and /q/ must have occurred when the word was borrowed” and he notes that the poets preserved the primitive vowelings of the Aramaic word. In reality, *qaṭīrān* with a /q/ may be a word from the earliest Aramaic,<sup>66</sup> while the same word with a /ʕ/ may be a variation of Aramaic when it was used as an imperial language.
- 24 Some of Jeffery’s demonstrations are incomplete, as it is the case for *sullam* “ladder.” The scholar devotes only a few lines to it and fails to connect this word to Jacob’s ladder, which must have a common origin with the Qur’ānic verse in which the word appears. Jeffery doesn’t mention Zuhayr’s *Muᶜ*allaqa or the Akkadian sources either.<sup>67</sup> Nowhere does he highlight the phonological variations of the word: *sullām* in Hebrew, *sullam* in Arabic, and *swlm#* in Aramaic, on the one hand; and *simmiltu*<sup>68</sup> in Akkadian, *sebeltā* in Syriac, and *sīmeltā* in Neo-Syriac on the other hand. Jeffery<sup>69</sup> believes that the Arabic word was either borrowed from the Aramaic *sulama#* or was an older borrowing from Akkadian. Phonologically, the latter hypothesis seems unlikely. The Arabic word *sullam* may be a common Semitic word; the existence of the Ugaritic word *slm* “stairs (?)”<sup>70</sup> could prove this proposition.

## Revisions

- 25 Part of the data presented in Jeffery’s work needs to be revised, in the light of the advances made in the research on Ugaritic, in particular. This language presents significant similarities with Arabic and is therefore crucial in the lexicological study of Arabic. Though written traces in both languages are dozens of centuries apart, those in Ugaritic testify to the primitive forms of Arabic. Del Olmo Lete’s dictionary of Ugaritic<sup>71</sup> invites us to re-examine Jeffery’s list; indeed, knowledge about the texts found in Ras-Shamra (quoted 14 times) was rather limited at the time and Jeffery simply mentions individual Ugaritic words without commenting on them.
- 26 Jeffery and his predecessors mistook quadriliteral roots with /n/ 2<sup>nd</sup> consonant for loanwords from Aramaic. The theory of the additional /n/ in Arabic was quite popular for a while and it seems that these words aren’t loanwords. Jeffery suggest that the Arabic word <sup>ᶜ</sup>ankabūt “spider” is originally Aramaic because of the /n/ and the final /ūt/. First, it is hard to believe that Arabic borrowed an assimilated form in Aramaic – <sup>ᶜ</sup>akkūbītā, <sup>ᶜ</sup>akkābītā – and created a form that included an /n/. According to the SED,<sup>72</sup> this word is not Aramaic; indeed, no such form is found in other Aramaic languages. Everything seems to indicate that <sup>ᶜ</sup>ankabūt is a primitive form of the word compared to the Aramaic word in which the *nk > kk assimilation* occurred. Regarding the final /ūt/: because the Hebrew word <sup>ᶜ</sup>akkābīš includes a final /š/, the final /t/ in the Arabic word is to be expected, following the rules of regular correspondences. The final /t/ in Arabic therefore seems to come from Aramaic but as Joshua Blau<sup>73</sup> explains, nouns with a final /t/ – and those with a final *uw* > *ūt* – were quite common in Ancient Arabic (before Islam). The final /ūt/ in <sup>ᶜ</sup>ankabūt could therefore be a remnant of this ancient form. Jeffery notes that the word <sup>ᶜ</sup>ankabūt appeared in North-Arabian inscriptions and the spider was certainly known in Arabia. Al-Suyūṭī does not record this word in his loanword list neither does Fraenkel. There is almost no doubt that <sup>ᶜ</sup>ankabūt is not a loanword.<sup>74</sup>
- 27 This is also the case of the Arab word *ḥinzīr* “pork.” The /n/ appears in Ethiopian and in Sabaeen but for Jeffery, *ḥinzīr* most probably came from the Aramaic *ḥazīra#*, in which the /n/ glide developed later on.<sup>75</sup> He notes the presence of the form *ḥnzr* in the Ras Shamra texts. This likeness between the Arabic and the Ugaritic could show that *ḥinzīr* was not borrowed from Aramaic, as Jeffery suggests. The Ugaritic word *ḥnzr* could be an archaic form found in Arabic as well. Mankowski<sup>76</sup> supports this thesis: the Hebrew word *ḥazīr* must have been borrowed from the Akkadian *ḥuzīru* via the Aramaic *ḥzyr#*. The change from *ḥnzr* to *ḥzr* may be due to an ancient assimilation between /n/ and /z/. This idea could be questioned by the fact that the SED<sup>77</sup> defines the Ugaritic word *ḥnzr* as a kind of profession or administrative function.

However, in biblical Hebrew, in Akkadian, and in Aramaic, there is no strong dagesh inside the /z/. A Judeo-Aramaic form<sup>78</sup> derived from ḥazzīra# nevertheless exists: ḥazzērā# “swine-herd,” with a strong dagesh, which may be a proof of an ancient transition from ḥnzr to ḥzzr with the following assimilation: nz > zz. Moshe Bar-Asher<sup>79</sup> attests the Hebrew ḥazzīr with a strong dagesh, which marks the doubling of the /z/ and may be the remnant of the nz > zz assimilation. Thus ḥinzīr in Arabic is most probably not a loanword, like most names of animals.<sup>80</sup>

28 In Jeffery's time, research on North Arabia, Nabataea, and South Arabia was in its early stages. The scholar's work includes 77 mentions of South-Arabian epigraphy – which serve to attest the ancient existence of certain words in Arabia – but these mentions are quite succinct. Lately, monotheistic or Judaizing inscriptions dating back from the 5<sup>th</sup> century C.E. have been discovered. Christian Robin<sup>81</sup> inventories the terms common to the Qur'an and to these inscriptions, which open up new perspectives for research on the Qur'an. These terms prove that words coming from Hebrew or Aramaic were already known in South Arabia, two centuries before the advent of Islam. They incite us to completely revise the data included in Jeffery's book.

## The origin of the borrowings

29 The origin of borrowings in the Qur'an concerns an extensive period – from the Assyrian Empire to the Byzantium – and spreads over a vast linguistic area including all languages spoken in Arabia's neighboring lands: Akkadian, Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Ethiopian, Nabataean, South Arabic (all of them Semitic languages); and the non-Semitic languages of the Greek, Roman, and Persian Empires. In the following part, I will examine the borrowings from Akkadian and Aramaic, and from Hebrew and Syriac.

### Borrowings from Akkadian and Aramaic

30 Borrowings from Akkadian and Aramaic predate Islam. They are names of objects that seem to have been integrated into the recipient language as the objects themselves were integrated into the recipient culture. They don't have any connection to the message of Islam. Arabic borrowings from Akkadian are few but their existence seems logical: the sources show that the first Arabs were contemporary of the Assyrian Empire.<sup>82</sup> A major time gap separates the attested 2<sup>nd</sup> century Akkadian and 7<sup>th</sup> century Arabic of the Qur'an, yet the two languages are quite close because the Arabic language is able to preserve the most archaic linguistic forms. Borrowings from Akkadian were often thought to be indirect borrowings via Aramaic. It seems that in some cases, words were directly borrowed from Akkadian (faḥḥār “pottery,” furāt “fresh (water),” sūq “street,” asāwir “bracelets,” for instance). Jeffery primarily relies on Zimmern and mentions Akkadian 84 times.

31 For Jeffery, loanwords most frequently and most certainly come from Aramaic. He admits that he doesn't take any chance when he gives Aramaic as the donor language for the word nuḥās “copper,” for example:

“Apparently the word has no origin in Semitic, and so one may judge that it is a borrowing from the pre-Semitic stratum of the language. The Arabic word may thus have come directly from this source, but in view of the difficulties the philologists had with the word, we should judge that it was rather a borrowing from the Aramaic” (p. 278).

32 Jeffery mostly relies on Fraenkel but it should be noted that the latter only knows Aramaic and never quotes Akkadian in his book. The Aramaic origin of borrowings may thus have been overestimated. On the other hand, Zimmern traces all borrowings back to Akkadian, which seems to have been overrated as well. As Stephen Kaufman notes it, these works date back from another era but they remain references in the field:

“It was produced at the height of the pan-Babylonian period of ancient Near Eastern scholarship when Akkadian was assumed to be the origin of almost everything. Furthermore, since as indicated by its title, the work had other

than linguistic motivations, it is almost completely lacking in documentation. Nevertheless, as the only work of its kind, it has remained standard, and a great many of Zimmern's over-zealously suggested 'Fremdwörter' have achieved an almost canonical status among Assyriologists, as well as among students of West Semitic, notably Biblical Hebrew."<sup>83</sup>

33 Paul Mankowski also thinks that Zimmern connects too many biblical borrowings to Akkadian:

"A more complete and accurate knowledge of the early histories of the Semitic languages makes it possible for later scholars to judge many of Zimmern's attributions impossible on the basis of phonology alone."<sup>84</sup>

34 How then can we identify borrowings? When words are completely identical within a family of languages, they may remain unnoticed forever, unless an element outside of linguistics comes to reveal it – such is the case of the Arabic word *ḡalā#* "exile" coming from the Hebrew *gōlā*: we were able to identify it thanks to the Jewish context of the verse in which *ḡalā#* was used. Alternatively, a borrowing may be identified thanks to a slight phonetic variation in one of the Semitic languages. This is the case of the Arabic *kursiyy* "throne," which seems to come from the Aramaic *kwrsy#*<sup>85</sup>, because of the consonant /r/, attested in biblical Aramaic in the book of Daniel (5:9), (7:9), (7:9), in Syriac *kwrsy#*, *krsy#*, which originates in the Akkadian *kussū*<sup>86</sup> (GU.ZA in Sumerian), in the Ugaritic *ks#*. The doubling of the /s/ in the Akkadian *kussū* and in the Hebrew *kissē#*<sup>87</sup> suggests that an ancient assimilation occurred, and that a dissimilation *ss > rs* occurred in the Aramaic *kwrsy#*.

### Borrowings from Hebrew and Syriac

35 The borrowings from Hebrew and Syriac concern words that belong mostly to the technical religious vocabulary. Jeffery is trapped in the debate on the Jewish or Christian origins of the Qur'an, often trying to settle for one or the other: "it is of course difficult to decide whether the origin is Jewish or Christian."<sup>88</sup>

36 Most of the time, the scholar favors the Christian source and opts for a Christian or Syriac origin without real supporting evidence. The case of *abb* "pasture" is a good example: "the probabilities seem in favor of its coming rather from Syr." (p. 43).

37 Jeffery often explains that an Arabic word comes from Syriac because it is most frequent in Syriac. Such is the case of *aḡr* "reward, remuneration": "it would have been from Aram. that the word passed into Arabic, probably at a very early period, and as the word is of much wider use in Syriac than in Jewish Aramaic, we are probably right in considering it as a borrowing from Syriac" (p. 49). In the same vein, since Armenian and Ethiopian come from Syriac, Arabic is quite likely to come from it as well, according to him. Let us take *sabīl* "way, road": "As a matter of fact Heb. [šbīl] and Aram. [šbīl#] mean both *road* and *way of life*, precisely as the Syr. [šbīl], but it is the Syriac word which had the widest use and was borrowed into Arm. [šaviḥ], and so is the more likely origin."<sup>89</sup>

38 Another example is the word *ṣadaqa* "alms." For Hirschfeld, the word seems to come from the Hebrew *ṣedāqā* "charity, alms," a central concept in Judaism. Here again, Jeffery favors the Christian origin, even though it counters phonetic rules: "The Syr. *zdq#* with /z/ for /ṣ/ would seem fatal to a derivation from a Christian source, but in the Christian-Palestinian dialect we find *ṣdq#* translating *ελεημοσυνη* in common use in several forms, which makes it at least possible that the source of the Arabic word is to be found there" (p. 194). Even when the Hebrew origin seems obvious, the scholar finds it difficult to state it and, once more, favors the Aramaic origin, as in the case of the word *sabt* "Shabbat": "There can be no doubt that the word came into Arabic from Aram. and probably from the Jewish *sbt#* rather than from the Syr." (p. 161).

39 Jeffery's reference to Syriac is mainly based on Mingana's *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'an* (1927), quoted 77 times. Mingana is famous for collecting numerous Arabic and Syriac manuscripts – constituting the "Mingana Collection" – kept at the University of Birmingham. Few scholars have paid attention to Mingana's work, except Christoph Luxenberg,<sup>90</sup> who

arrived at the well-known and extreme conclusion that the Qur'ān is based on a Syriac lectionary.

40 It has to be said that the origin of the technical religious vocabulary of the Qur'ān is truly difficult to determine. How can the linguist base him/herself on texts, which all translate or comment the Torah in languages that are very close to one another? How can he/she rely on the mere concepts that are often shared by various monotheistic religions and that originate from Judaism, the first monotheistic faith?

41 Before the advent of Islam, no Arabic translation of the Bible existed. One could read the Torah, the Targum, the Peshitta, or the Septuagint in Greek. The Torah scrolls then still lacked the Masoretic signs defining the vocalization and the accentuation of the text. This makes any comparison between Arabic and Hebraic terms rather complicated. The Peshitta was translated directly from Hebrew. Its Jewish elements cast doubt on its Christian authorship; it may have found its origin in a Jewish community in the process of converting to Christianity.<sup>91</sup> This makes identifying Jewish and Christian words even more complex.

42 Besides the issue of the abundant versions of the Torah and of its commentaries, the question of the languages must be raised. In the ancient Near East, the use of languages depended not only on ethnic habits but also on political, economical, cultural, or religious factors.<sup>92</sup> There were as many dialects of Aramaic as there were groups and religious affiliations. The biblical text illustrates this well. If the Torah is written in biblical Hebrew and the Mishna in mishnaic Hebrew, all other Jewish texts present the diverse variations of Aramaic. The Targums are in Aramaic. The Jerusalem Talmud is in Palestinian Judeo-Aramaic while the Babylonian Talmud is in Babylonian Judeo-Aramaic. These linguistic variations can be explained by the time factor – the first biblical accounts and the first *midrashim* are fifteen centuries apart – and by geography – the Aramaic spoken in Palestine was not the one spoken in Babylon. The Peshitta in Syriac presents yet again another variety of Aramaic. The linguistic variations between these dialects are minimal yet sufficient to set the latter apart as individual languages.

43 Finally, the concepts themselves raise problems. As Maurice Gaudefroy-Demombynes states it: “When examined from the point of view of the Qur'ān, the Jewish ideas and the Christian one are too close to easily distinguish them at a glance or by comparing them only partially and imprecisely.”<sup>93</sup> Horowitz adds that not only the same concepts but also the same words are used: “It is often not an easy task to decide as to whether an adopted foreign word owes its origin to the linguistic usage of the Jews or that of the Christians, for both of them employ the same expressions for a great number of concepts and ideas.”<sup>94</sup>

44 When phonology fails to provide any proof, one must turn to semantics. When a given monotheistic faith adopts a word, the latter takes on new nuances and specific meanings. The Arabic verb *tāba*, for instance, with the root *TWB*, only means “to return to God, to repent.” It may come from the Aramaic *twb*, which means both “to return” and “to return to God.” Other words are common to all monotheistic religions, such as the word “Messiah”: *masīḥ* in Arabic, *māšīaḥ* in Hebrew, *mšyḥ* in Aramaic and in Syriac. Even if, in the Qur'ān, this word is used about Mary's son, thus suggesting a Christian source, it may well have been known through the Hebrew *māšīaḥ*.

45 The origin of other words seems certain, as for the word “Shabbat,” *sabt* in Arabic and *šabaṭ* in Hebrew, which can only come from Judaism. This argument could be sufficient to prove a Jewish origin, as Nöldeke<sup>95</sup> states about the Ethiopian *miṣwat* “alms”<sup>96</sup> (not in the Qur'ān): “Dies Wort würde allein genügen, jüdischen religiösen Einfluss bei den alten Abessiniern zu konstatieren.”<sup>97</sup>

46 Finding the origin of borrowings remains quite complex, however. The latter may be affiliated to a specific religion but many terms were actually known prior to the revelation. This is the case of the noun *ḥātam* “seal,” appearing only once in the Qur'ān, in the expression “seal of the prophets” (33-40). The Prophet Muhammad is regarded as the “seal” of the prophets, meaning the last one. His book is so clear that it cannot be misunderstood and therefore no other apostle will be needed after him. For Fraenkel, *fā#al* is not a regular verb form in Arabic and the verb *ḥatama* “to seal” is a denominative.<sup>98</sup> The noun *ḥātam* seems to have been borrowed from Aramaic. For Hirschfeld,<sup>99</sup> the word may well have a Jewish origin since it is found in a

- passage of the Bible in which a man is compared to a “seal” *ḥōtām* (Hag 2:23). This biblical image probably served as an inspiration for the Qur'ānic one, but the borrowed word with the sense of “to seal” existed much earlier since it appears in *Imru# al-Qays*' verses and in a South-Arabian inscription. According to Maximilian Ellenbogen,<sup>100</sup> the Hebrew *ḥōtām* was borrowed from the Egyptian *ḥtm*. This is attested neither in Akkadian nor in Ugaritic. The initial /h/ in the Arabic word suggests that the latter has the same source as the Hebrew.<sup>101</sup> Had the word been borrowed from Hebrew or Aramaic, it would probably have started with a /h/.
- 47 For most borrowings, discrepancies are what reveal their origin. To give an example: semantics reveal the allochthonous aspect of the word *asbāt* “tribes” in the plural, *sibṭ* “a tribe” in the singular. In the Qur'ān, the word appears only in the Medina passages and only in reference to the Twelve Tribes. Jeffery<sup>102</sup> thinks that the Arabic word was borrowed but he cannot resolve the question of the origin – Jewish or Christian. According to Geiger, the word is a direct borrowing from Hebrew; for Fraenkel and Mingana, it was borrowed from Syriac. The BDB<sup>103</sup> states that the Hebrew *šēḇeṭ* was borrowed from Egyptian. In its original sense, the word means “rod, scepter,” as the Akkadian *šabaṭu* “to strike, to kill” and *šibṭu* “stick (to discipline), scepter,” and the Sabaean *sbt̄s* “stick, blow” show it. The word may have later on received the meaning of “scepter” – as symbol of power – and designated a group subjected to the person holding the scepter.<sup>104</sup> This would account for the dual meaning of the biblical Hebrew *šēḇeṭ* “scepter” and “tribe” – the same applies to the word in Judeo-Aramaic.<sup>105</sup> In the dictionaries,<sup>106</sup> the Arabic *sibṭ* never carries the sense of “scepter, rod”; it only bears the specific meaning of “tribe (with regards to Israelites).” These semantic considerations and the fact that the word appears in the Qur'ān only to describe the tribes of Israelites support the thesis that this Arabic word directly comes from Hebrew, especially if no trace of it is found in North-Arabic, South-Arabic, or Nabatean inscriptions, nor in poetry. According to Al-Suyūṭī,<sup>107</sup> the word was borrowed from Hebrew.
- 48 Similarly, the word *asfār* in the plural (hapax in the Qur'ān), *sifr* in the singular – meaning “book” – is used in the verse (62-5) to compare the Jewish people<sup>108</sup> to a “donkey burdened with books.” Al-Suyūṭī<sup>109</sup> thinks that the word was borrowed from Syriac or Nabataean. According to Jeffery,<sup>110</sup> the Arabs used *asfār* to designate the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures and the word came from *siṭrā#* “book” in Aramaic or Syriac, like every Arab word connected to writing. In the Biblical text, the Hebrew word *sēḇer* commonly means “a letter, a document, a piece of writing, a scroll.” It may have been borrowed from the Akkadian *šipru* “letter, message,”<sup>111</sup> *spr* in Ugaritic. SFR was most probably a Semitic root word coming from Akkadian, which the Arabs knew about. In the Talmud – in Judeo-Aramaic – *sēḇer* is the word that specifically designates the book of the law, as Jastrow puts it “esp. a Biblical book.”<sup>112</sup> The word *sēḇer* and the expression *sēḇer tōrā* referring to “the Pentateuch” and “the Torah Scrolls” are attested. The question remains: Why does the Qur'ān use SFR rather than KTB, the root word for *kitāb* “book,” the term that commonly designates the holy writings of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam? The word *asfār*, which appears in a Jewish context, seems to have been chosen to reproduce the Jewish *sēḇer*. The word could therefore have been borrowed from Mishnaic Hebrew when the Prophet had direct contacts with Jews. The Jews of Medina certainly called their books “*sēḇer*” in the singular and “*sḇārīm*” in the plural. The fact that the word *asfār* appears in sura 62-5 – a Medinan sura – further supports my point.
- 49 However, not every loanword can be easily analyzed. Some words have been seen as borrowings from Syriac despite their Jewish characteristics, such as the word “rabbi”: *rabbāniyy* in Arabic, *rabbān* in Hebrew, *ραββουνοι* (*rabbuneī*) in Greek, *rībbōn* in Aramaic in the Targum, *rbwny* in Syriac. In Christian communities, the word seems to be commonly used to show respect to a priest or a monk.<sup>113</sup> Once again, further investigations conducted in Syriac philology may solve the mystery.

## Conclusion

- 50 Lexical borrowing in the Qur'ān used to be at the core of the studies undertaken by Muslim linguists – who defended the Qur'ān's Arabic character – and by orientalist who looked for the

origin of Islam. As Jeffery's work became the unique reference on the topic, fewer studies were published in that field during the past century. This work undoubtedly serves as an essential starting point for one who wishes to analyze lexical borrowings in the Qur'an yet, as I showed, it is quite problematic in the way it identifies loanwords and analyzes their origin.

51 Jeffery's list must be completed and thoroughly revised. The scholar and his predecessors thought certain terms were loanwords when they are in fact Arabic words that evolved with time; other words are common Semitic terms. Some lists of borrowings still need to be examined and some loanwords probably remain to be discovered.

52 The available material for the study of lexical borrowings is outdated and the researcher using it should be aware of that fact: Fraenkel's references to Aramaic and Zimmern's references to Akkadian are excessive; and a biblical reference in the Qur'an is not necessarily the source of a borrowing.

53 Jeffery's data needs to be updated along the criteria of modern linguistics and following the rules of comparatism. Recent linguistic discoveries in the study of Ugaritic and of North-Arabian and South-Arabian epigraphy, in particular, are crucial since they contribute to attesting the age of specific terms in the Arabic language. As the few examples presented in this article show, these discoveries greatly advance research in the field. The question of the Jewish or Christian origin of the Qur'an, still at the center of a debate among scholars and students today, also needs to be reviewed. If the Hebrew or Syriac origin of certain words has been identified, the origin of other terms still needs to be found. Today, however, research is in progress.

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## Notes

1 Neuwirth A., Sinai N., Marx M., *The Qur'an in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'anic Milieu*, Leiden, Brill, 2011.

- 2 Torrey C. C., *The Jewish Foundation of Islam*, New York, Hilda Stich Stroock lectures, 1933.
- 3 Gaudefroy-Demombynes M., “[Compte-rendu de :] Charles Cutler Torrey: The Jewish Foundation of Islam,” *Revue de l'histoire des religions*, Paris, Leroux, 1933, p. 90-96.
- 4 Literally “barrier”: it corresponds to the western region of the Arabian Peninsula and includes the cities of Mecca and Medina.
- 5 Hamzaoui R., “Idéologie et langue ou l'emprunt linguistique d'après les exégètes du Coran et les théologiens : interprétation socio-linguistique,” *Quaderni di semitica*, vol. 5, Florence, Pelio Fronzaroli, Istituto di linguistica e di lingue orientali, University of Florence, 1978, p. 157-171.
- 6 (12-2), (20-113), (39-28), (41-3), (42-7), (43-3), “[in the] Arabic language” *lisānan ʿarabiyyan* (46-12), (16-103), “in plain Arabic speech” *bi-lisānan ʿarabiyyan mubīn* (26-195).
- 7 *Al-Suyūfī, Al-Mutawakkili*, translated by Willam Y. Bell, Cairo, Nile Mission Press, 1924. This book was entirely devoted to the “foreign words” of the Qur'an. It is named after Egyptian Caliph Al-Mutawakkil III (d. 1536), who ordered it.
- 8 Kopf L., “Religious Influences on Medieval Arabic Philology,” *Studies in Arabic and Hebrew Lexicography*, ed. Moshe H. Goshen-Gottstein with the assistance of S. Assif., Jerusalem, The Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1976, p. 30.
- 9 Jeffery A., *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'an*, Baroda, Oriental Institute, 1938, p. viii.
- 10 Horovitz J., “Jewish Proper Names and Derivatives in the Koran,” *The Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 2, Cincinnati, 1925, p. 145-228.
- 11 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. vii.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. ix
- 13 Pennacchio C., “*Étude du vocabulaire commun entre le Coran et les Écrits juifs avant l'islam.*” Diss. INALCO, 2011. Print. See “Définitions des emprunts” p. 73-76: “Borrowing is a process by which a word or a linguistic unit is taken from a donor language to be used in a recipient language. The borrowing of a single word is called “lexical” borrowing. A loanword never transfers without undergoing some change. The loanword phonologically adapts to the recipient language. At the semantic level, the borrowed signified is often applied to fewer contexts in the recipient language than in the donor language, for the borrower may not be aware of some uses of the word and may select only the ones he knows. Borrowing is both a linguistic and a historical phenomenon. It is a linguistic process in which language is borrowed. It is a historical process because it results from the contact between two communities. The borrowing process is quite often a product of bilingualism – the individuals' ability to speak two different languages. “Borrowing,” though, is a misnomer: when a language appropriates a word, it hasn't the slightest intention of returning it. On the contrary, a language takes a word to imitate it, use it, and integrate it. However well integrated a foreign word is, it retains exotic traits that make it recognizable.”
- 14 *Ibid.* “Typologie des emprunts” p. 77-78: “The various types of borrowings can be categorized according to the criteria selected for the categorization. Borrowings can be categorized according to 1) the different levels of borrowing: the foreign words (*Fremdwörter* in German), which remain foreign in the recipient language; the loanwords per se (*Lehnwörter*), which are integrated into the recipient language, adapting to its grammatical rules; loan translations or calques (*Lehnübersetzung*), produced by the translation of the original word; loan meanings (*Lehnbedeutung*), in which the meaning of foreign words are borrowed; culture words (*Kulturwörter*). In informal language, they are called “travelling words”; 2) the loanword transmission pattern: we talk of “direct borrowing” when the donor language is immediately identifiable; we call “indirect borrowings” words that are passed on through an intermediary language; “orthographic borrowings” are words that leave a trace of the donor language by retaining their spelling in the recipient language; “loan translations” or calques are words of a donor language that were translated into a recipient language; “reborrowing”: a word travels back to the donor language; 3) whether they are Semitic languages or not: “external borrowings”: the donor language is not a Semitic language; “internal borrowing”: the donor language is a Semitic language.
- 15 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 39.
- 16 *Ibid.*, p. 99. Neither Jeffery nor Régis Blachère translates “Jibt.” The word appears in the expression *al-ġibt wa al-ṭāġūt* (4-51), which seems to be borrowed from Ethiopian.
- 17 *Ibid.*, p. 58, meaning “brocade, silk clothing,” seems to come from Persian.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 128. In the Qur'an, *darasa* – with the root DRS – means “to study the Scriptures.” It seems to be borrowed from Judaism (indeed, *dāraš* means “to reach the deep meaning of the Scripture by exact and careful research”), according to A. Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, translated by F. M. Young, Madras, M.D.C.S.P.C.K. Press, 1898, p. 36.
- 19 The first meaning of the root *BRK* – *baraka* in Arabic and *bārak* in Hebrew – is for the camel “to kneel, to squat.” This meaning is common to all Semitic languages. In the Qur'an, the word only means “to bless.” According to Jeffery, *op. cit.*, p. 75, this root acquired the meaning “to bless” in the North Semitic languages; it was then transmitted to the South Semitic languages, appearing in South Arabian epigraphy

as *brk* “to bless.” The fact that *brk* is found with the meaning “to bless, to kneel” in Ugaritic (Olmo Lete, G. (del), Sanmartin J., *A Dictionary of the Ugaritic Language*, 2002, vol. 1, p. 237 – abbreviated DUL), however, suggests that the connection of this meaning with this word is quite ancient in the Semitic world.

20 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 39, Nöldeke T., *Sketches from Eastern History*, translated by J. S. Black, London, Adam and Charles Black, 1892, p. 38.

21 Translations R. Blachère.

22 Translation R. Blachère, meaning pagan Arabs.

23 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 32.

24 *Al-Muhaddab*, “belly, inside” in Nabataean, “inside” in Aramaic, p. 111; *Al-Itqân*, p. 110.

25 *Al-Mutawakkilî*, “come!” in Syriac, p. 54, “come!” in Aramaic, p. 61; *Al-Muhaddab*, “come!” in Coptic, “it is your duty” in Syriac, p. 114; *Al-Itqân*, p. 118.

26 *Al-Muhaddab*, p. 112; *Al-Itqân*, p. 113.

27 *Al-Mutawakkilî*, “vinegar” in Ethiopian, p. 40; *Al-Muhaddab*, p. 112; *Al-Itqân*, p. 113.

28 Communicated by David Kiltz: “Arthur Jeffery worked on many more words that were not published. His notes are now in New York.”

29 Brown F., Driver S. R., and Briggs C. A., *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1951 (abbreviated BDB), p. 31, *aḥarīt* “after, end,” “end of days,” Isa. (41,22).

30 *fūm* raises a semantic problem: we don't know whether it means “garlic” or “wheat.” It is translated as “garlic” because the Qur'ānic verse in which it is used (2-61) may come from the biblical text in Num. (11,5). For Al-Suyūfī, however, *fūm* means “wheat” (*al-ḥinṭa*). It is connected to the root *FWM fawama* “to make bread.” Al-Suyūfī considers it a Hebrew word but we cannot find any trace of it either in Hebrew or in Aramaic dictionaries.

31 *minsāʾa* “scepter” (34-13), coming from *miš'eneth* in Hebrew; *yatasanna* “to change” (2-261), coming from *šānā* in Hebrew “to change”; *nataqanā* “to throw overhead” (7-170), coming from *ntq* in Hebrew; *ḥusbān* “machine” (18-40), coming from *ḥšbwn* in Hebrew or *ḥwšbn* in Aramaic. The following words come from Ethiopian: *asbāb* “guardhouse” (40-38), *rahwun* “to open” (about the Sea of Reeds) (44-23), *ta'ālaw* “to rebel” (44-18), *salaqa* “to mistreat” (33-19).

32 According to Margoliouth, the Arab word *ʿilliyyūn* should be read with /g/ instead of /ʿ/, connecting this Arab word with the Syriac *gelāyūnā* (with /g/) in the sense of “tablet” as in Isa. (8:1); for Margoliouth, then, *ʿilliyyūn* does not come from Hebrew. He also connects the word *siḡḡīn* “clay tablet” to Syriac, and the word *mārūt* (as in *Hārūt* and *Mārūt*) to Ethiopian rather than Persian.

33 Carter M., “Foreign Vocabulary,” in Andrew Rippin (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishing, 2006, p. 120-139.

34 Zammit M., *A Comparative Lexical Study of Qur'anic Arabic* (Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section one : The Near and Middle East, 61), Leiden, Brill, 2002, « Loanwords in the Qur'an », p. 51-61.

35 Pennacchio C., *op. cit.*, p. 122.

36 In Ibn Khaldūn and in Ibn 'Aṭīyya's Tafsīr, communicated by Michael Lecker.

37 Blachère R. and Gaudefroy-Demombynes M., *Grammaire de l'arabe classique : morphologie et syntaxe*, 3<sup>ème</sup> édition, Paris, Maisonneuve et Larose, 1975, p. 27: “In the Qur'an, a few substantives borrowed from Aramaic present a peculiar spelling. [...] Here is an attempt at transcribing the spelling of *ḥayôt*, *ṣalôt*, *zakôt*. Outside of the Qur'an, these words' spelling was standardized but the vestige is interesting.”

38 Dozy also mentioned *ḡāliya* – in *al-ḡāliya bi-bābil* “captivity in Babylon” (Sacy S. (de), *Chretsomathie Arabe*, vol. 1, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1826, p. 90 (in Arabic), line 10) in a Jewish context.

39 Kazimirski listed *ḡalwa*, *ḡilwa*, and *ḡulwa* but not in the sense of “exile.”

40 Cohen D., “Qu'est-ce qu'une langue sémitique ?,” *Comptes rendus du G.L.E.C.S.*, t. XVIII-XXIII (1973-1979), Paris, Geuthner, p. 431.

41 Lipinski E., *Semitic Languages: Outline of a Comparative Grammar*, Second Edition, Leuven, Peeters, 2001, p. 565.

42 Cohen D., “Le vocabulaire de base sémitique et le classement des dialectes du sud,” *Études de linguistique sémitique et arabe*, Paris, Mouton, 1970, p. 12.

43 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 247.

44 *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Leiden, Brill, 1<sup>st</sup> edition, 1913-1942, vol. 2, p. 665, article “*kāhin*.” Fisher: “It corresponds to the Hebrew *kōhēn*, Aramaic *kāhen*, *kāhnā* (priest); it is not an arabicised form of this, however, but belongs to the original stock of the old Arabic language [...] for the Jewish *kōhēn*, *kāhen* is entirely different in character from the Arab *kāhin*.”

- 45 *Encyclopedia of Islam*, Leiden, Brill, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, since 1954, vol. 4, p. 438.
- 46 Fahd T., *La divination arabe*, Paris, Sindbad, 1987, p. 92-97.
- 47 BDB, *op. cit.*, p. 462.
- 48 Pennacchio C., *op. cit.*, p. 124-136.
- 49 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 107. For the Syriac is the source of Armenian, Jeffery explains.
- 50 Zimmern H., *Akkadische Fremdwörter als Beweis für babylonischen Kultureinfluss*, Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1915, p. 15, “wohl” (possible).
- 51 Mankowski P., “Akkadian Loanwords in Biblical Hebrew,” *Harvard Semitic Studies*, vol. 47, Winona Lake, Eisenbrauns, 2000, p. 55-56.
- 52 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 107.
- 53 DUL, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 352.
- 54 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 91 ; Mingana A., “Syriac Influence on the Style of the Qur'ân,” *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, Manchester University Press, London, Longmans, Green, vol. 11, n°1, 1927, p. 86.
- 55 Translation R. Blachère
- 56 BDB, *op. cit.*, p. 163.
- 57 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 145.
- 58 Cohen D., *Dictionnaire des racines sémitiques*, Paris, Mouton, 1999 (abbreviated DRS), p. 10. #RD #ard “earth as opposed to sky, country,” Akkadian eršet Ugaritic arš Canaanite Hebrew ereš Akkadian iršit “earth, hell, tomb” Imperial Aramaic #rš# “sarcophagus.”
- 59 DRS, *op. cit.*, p. 632, fasc. 7. WRD warrada 1- “to scour lands in search of pasture,” 2- “to be determined to fast.”
- 60 Lammens H., *Le berceau de l'islam, l'Arabie occidentale à la veille de l'Hégire*, Rome, Pontificii Instituti Biblici, 1914, p. 88.
- 61 Yâqût, M., *Mu'jam al-Buldan* [Geographic Dictionary], Leipzig, Wüstenfeld, 1866-1870, vol. 4, p. 316, 319, 324, 325.
- 62 Fraenkel S., *Die Aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen*, Leiden, Brill, 1886, p. 282, quoted in Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 130.
- 63 DRS, *op. cit.*, p. 229.
- 64 DRS, p. 248.
- 65 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 242 ; Zimmern H., *op. cit.*, p. 60.
- 66 Haelewyck J-C., *Grammaire comparée des langues sémitiques : Éléments de phonétique, de morphologie et de syntaxe*, Bruxelles, Safran, 2006, p. 53.
- 67 Two verses in Akkadian quoted in Mankowski P., *op. cit.*, p. 115-116.
- 68 Eph'al I., *The City Besieged: Siege and its Manifestations in the Ancient Near East*, Leiden, Brill, 2009, p. 69-74: The Akkadian word *simmiltu* could refer either to stairs or to an assault ladder, which was the easiest and quickest way to take over a city. This tool, used by Egyptians and Assyrians, can be seen in reliefs, inscriptions, and other classical sources. This method is also mentioned in the Bible: “like soldiers they scale the wall” (Joel, 2:7); “For you I can run against a troop, and by my God I can leap over a wall” (2-Sam 22:30). These verses clearly refer to assault techniques, according to Eph'al. The latter also compares the Assyrian myth of Nergal and Ereshkigal with Jacob's ladder. Eph'al concludes that *sullām*, this biblical hapax, is either a metathesis of *simmiltu*; or that in reality, Jacob's ladder was actual stairs from which one could walk up and down, as opposed to the ladders depicted in reliefs.
- 69 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 177.
- 70 DUL, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 762.
- 71 DUL, *op. cit.*
- 72 Militarev A. et Kogan L., *Semitic Etymological Dictionary*, Münster, Ugarit-Verlag, 2005 (abbreviated SED), vol. 2: Animal Names, p. 52: “no similar term is attested in other Arm. [Aramaic] language.”
- 73 Blau J., “Arabic Lexicographical Miscellanies,” *Journal of Semitic Studies*, vol. 17, n°2, 1972, p. 182.
- 74 For François Bron, who refers to the SED (volume 2), ankabūt is a term common to Semitic languages.
- 75 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 126; Fraenkel S., *op. cit.*, p. 110, a loanword from Aramaic.
- 76 Mankowski P., *op. cit.*, p. 56: “Ug. ḥnzr proves the form was ancient and makes the loan hypothesis [that of Fraenkel] unnecessary.”

- 77 SED, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, p. 150: "In spite of a widespread opinion (cf. eg. Sasson 1972-81 415) this root is not reflected in alphabetic texts: ḥnzr and ḥzr do not denote an animal or an administrative function (Huehn. 84-5 and DUL 399-417)."
- 78 Jastrow M., *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, London, Luzac, 1926, p. 444.
- 79 Bar-Asher M., "The Tradition of Mishnaic Hebrew in the Communities of Italy" [according to Ms. Paris 328-329], *Edah veLashon*, 6, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1980 [in Hebrew].
- 80 Communicated by François Bron: *ḥinzīr* seems to be a common Semitic word rather than a loanword.
- 81 Robin C., "À propos de la prière: emprunts lexicaux à l'hébreu et à l'araméen relevés dans les inscriptions préislamiques de l'Arabie méridionale et dans le Coran," Gilles Dorival et Didier Pralon (ed.) *Prières méditerranéennes hier et aujourd'hui*, Textes et documents de la Méditerranée antique et médiévale, n°1, Aix-en-Provence, PUP, 2000, p. 45-69.
- 82 Eph'al I., 1982.
- 83 Kaufman S., *The Akkadian Influences on Aramaic*, Chicago, The University of Chicago, 1974, p. 2.
- 84 Mankowski P., *op. cit.*, p. 1-2.
- 85 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 249.
- 86 Zimmern H., *op. cit.*, p. 8.
- 87 Mankowski P., *op. cit.*, p. 70-71.
- 88 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 152.
- 89 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 162.
- 90 Luxenberg C., *Die Syro-Aramäische Lesart des Koran : Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache* [The Syro-Aramaic Reading of the Koran - A Contribution to the Decoding of the Koran], Berlin, Verlag Hans Schiler, 2000.
- 91 Joosten J., "La Peshitta de l'Ancien Testament dans la recherche récente," *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses*, vol. 76, n°4, Strasbourg, Association des publications de la Faculté de théologie protestante de Strasbourg, 1996, p. 392 ; see Weitzman M. P., "From Judaism to Christianity: The Syriac Version of the Hebrew Bible," in Judith Lieu, John North and Tessa Rajak (eds.), *The Jews among Pagans and Christians in the Roman Empire*, London / New York, Routledge, 1992, p. 147-173.
- 92 Briquel-Chatonnet F. (éd.), *Le bilinguisme dans le Proche-Orient ancien*, Actes de la Table-ronde du 18 novembre 1995 organisée par l'URA 1062, « Études Sémitiques », Paris, Jean Maisonneuve, 1996.
- 93 Gaudefroy-Demombynes M., *op. cit.*, p. 91.
- 94 Horovitz J., *op. cit.*, p. 186.
- 95 Nöldeke T., "Lehnwörter in und aus dem Äthiopischen," *Neue Beiträge zur Semitischen Sprachwissenschaft*, Strassburg, Trübner, 1910, p. 36.
- 96 "Divine prescription, charitable act" in Hebrew.
- 97 "This word alone could testify to a Jewish religious influence in Ancient Abyssinia" (I translate.)
- 98 Fraenkel S., *op. cit.*, p. 252.
- 99 Hirschfeld H., *Beiträge zur Erklärung des Korân*, Leipzig, O. Schulze, 1886, p. 71, quoted in Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 120.
- 100 Ellenbogen M., *Foreign Words in the Old Testament, their Origin and Etymology*, Londres, Luzac, 1962, p. 74.
- 101 Communicated by François Bron: The Arabic *ḥātām* most probably comes from Egyptian.
- 102 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 58.
- 103 BDB, *op. cit.*, p. 986.
- 104 Köhler L. and Baumgartner W., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Leiden, Brill, 2000 (abbreviated HALOT), p. 1388.
- 105 Jastrow M., *op. cit.*, p. 1512.
- 106 Belot J-B., *Vocabulaire arabe-français à l'usage des étudiants*, Beyrouth, Imprimerie catholique, 1899, p. 308 ; Kazimirski A. de B., *Le Coran, traduction et notes*, Paris, Charpentier, 1840, vol. 1, p. 1043.
- 107 *Al-Mutawakkilī*, p. 58 ; *Al-Muḥaḍḍab*, heb. "tribes" p. 110 ; *Al-Itqân*, p. 109.
- 108 Blachère R., *op. cit.*, note p. 595.
- 109 *Al-Mutawakkilī*, p. 54 ; *Al-Muḥaḍḍab*, p. 110.
- 110 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 170-171.
- 111 BDB, *op. cit.*, p. 706.
- 112 Jastrow M., *op. cit.*, p. 1017-1018.

113 Jeffery A., *op. cit.*, p. 136-137.

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### ***Pour citer cet article***

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### ***À propos de l'auteur***

#### **Catherine Pennacchio**

Catherine Pennacchio defended her doctoral thesis – “Étude du vocabulaire commun entre le Coran et les Écrits juifs avant l’islam: l’emprunt lexical” [Study of the vocabulary common to the Qur'ān and the Jewish writings before Islam: lexical borrowings] – in February 2011 at the INALCO in Paris. She takes part in the Glossarium Coranicum Project revising Arthur Jeffery's *The Foreign Vocabulary Of The Qur'an*. This project is coordinated by the CNRS (UMR 8167 – Orient et Méditerranée) and the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities.

She holds a Master II in the processes of automated translation and information management from the CRIM (Centre de Recherche en Ingénierie Multilingue) at the INALCO, where she built the database for the vocabulary of the Qur'ān, a database centered on the etymology of the words and which includes pre-Islamic poetry.

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### ***Droits d'auteur***

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### ***Résumé***

The last study offering an exhaustive presentation of loanwords in the Qur'ān is Arthur Jeffery's *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* (1938). This lexicon comprises the 275 foreign words (not including proper nouns) found in the Qur'ān. It compiles previous studies dealing with lexical borrowing – a topic at the heart of the Oriental research in an era when it focused on the origins of Islam. The quantity of sources mentioned in Jeffery's study was somewhat detrimental: throughout the past century, *The Foreign Vocabulary of the Qur'ān* was considered a conclusive work whereas the author's intention simply was to collect everything written on the subject. It was meant to be a starting point for further studies but no additional research was undertaken in the field. Though outdated, these studies cannot be ignored.

This article examines the problematic aspects of Jeffery's work. The list and the hypotheses on the origins of the loanwords need to be revised and updated along two lines: first, they need to include new linguistic knowledge, in particular in Ugaritic and in North Arabian and South Arabian epigraphy, which was in its early stages in 1938; second, they need to be placed in their political and socio-cultural contexts. This renewal in research is important since the loanwords in the Qur'ān constitute the historical traces of the ancient contacts between the Arab populations and their neighbors. These loanwords contribute to a better understanding of the Qur'ānic text and, generally, of the beginnings of the Arabic language.

### ***Index***

**Keywords :** Akkadian, Arabia, Arabic, Aramaic, Christianity, Hebrew, Islam, Judaism, lexical borrowing, Peshitta, Qur'ān, South Arabia, Syriac, Targum, Torah, Ugaritic