



SYRIAC INFLUENCE ON THE STYLE OF THE KUR'ĀN*

By The Rev. Alphonse Mingana, D.D.

www.muhammadanism.org

January 6, 2004

Syriac font: Serto Batnan

THE time has surely come to subject the text of the Kur'an to the same criticism as that to which we subject the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Jewish Bible, and the Greek of the Christian Scriptures. Apart from some stray comparative remarks by a few eminent scholars, the only comprehensively critical work on the subject is still that of Nöldeke, printed in 1860. It is to be regretted that in the new edition of Nöldeke's classical work undertaken by Schwally and Bergsträsser — which contains most useful references to an astounding number of Arabic printed books and MSS. — the editors have not seen fit to multiply the critical and comparative remarks on the sacred text itself. Much useful information can also be gathered from another classical study of Nöldeke: the *Neue Beiträge*.

A very recent study on the historical narratives of the Kur'an has lately been written by J. Horovitz¹. The section dealing with proper names (pp. 85-155) is full of erudition, but I think that in some places he has built too much on the Muslim tradition and on the so-called pre-Islamic or early Arabian poetry. Setting aside as irrelevant the South Arabian and other inscriptions — I believe that we have not a single Arabic page on which we can lay our hands with safety and say that it is pre-Islamic, and I hold with Margoliouth² that all the edifice of pre-Islamic poetry is shaky and unstable, and that the Kur'an is the first genuine Arabic book that we possess. It is in place here to repeat what I wrote on this subject in 1920:³

"Before the seventh century we are not in a position to know how the Arabic poetry was constituted. The numerous poetical

* Mingana, Alphonse, *Syriac Influence on the Style of the Kur'ān*, Bulletin of The John Rylands Library, Manchester: University Press, Longmans, Green, & Co., London, England, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1927, p. 77-98.

¹ *Koranische Untersuchungen*, 1926.

² *The Origins of Arabic Poetry in J.R.A.S.*, 1925. 415 - 449.

³ *Odes and Psalms of Solomon*, ii. 125.

compositions known as "early Arabian poetry," and represented chiefly by the well-known *Mufaddaliyat*, *Mu'allakat*, *Hamamah* and *Jamharah* are enveloped in a thick mist of prehistoric and spuriousness, and in the present state of our knowledge we may assert that till fuller light dawns they can hardly stand in the domain of a positive study."

As we believe the Kur'an to be the first Arabic book¹, its author had to contend with immense difficulties. He had to adapt new words and new expressions to fresh ideas, in a language that was not yet fixed by any grammar or lexicography. The risk of not being understood did probably deter him from coining many new words. The best policy was to use for his new idea of Islam the words which were understood by his hearers and found in a language akin to his that had become an ecclesiastical and religious language centuries before his birth and the adherents of which were surrounding him in all directions in highly organised communities, bishoprics and monasteries. This is the reason why the style of the Kur'an is so unlike that of any other classical Arabic book.

In this respect the author of the Kur'an has certainly much merit and originality, and his linguistic difficulties were much more formidable than those experienced for instance by Paul and by the first Christian evangelists who had to express their new ideas in the language of Homer. The language of Homer had a fine literature behind it, the language of the Kur'an had not. As the first Christian writers have left in their lucubrations stylistic peculiarities which clearly point to their country of origin, which was not the old Athens but the Syrian Hellenistic Palestine, so the author of the Kur'an has exhibited stylistic idiosyncrasies which stamp his work as being somewhat different from the classical Arabic known to us from the eighth century downwards; his style suffers from the disabilities that always characterise a first attempt in a new literary language which is under the influence of an older and more fixed literature. This older and more fixed literature is, in our judgment, undoubtedly Syriac more than any other.

Among modern scholars who have treated of the question of the foreign words found in the Kur'an mention should here be made of

¹ The Kur'an itself testifies to this with emphasis in xlvi. 8 [46: 12]; lxxviii 37; lii.41; lxii.2; xxxiv. 43 [34: 44]; xxxv.38 [35: 31]; xxxvii. 156 [37: 157].

Fraenkel, *De Vocabulis in ant. Arab. carm. et in Corano peregrinis*, 1880, and Dvorak, *Ueber die Fremdwörter im Koran*, in the publications of the Vienna Academy, Bd. 109 1885. If I do not refer more often to these two scholars it is simply because I am loath to multiply footnotes without great necessity; but it is hardly necessary to state that I do not always consider all their conclusions as irrefragable; this applies more specially to the second work. Some good information may also be gathered here and there from A. Siddiki's *Studien über die Persischen Fremdwörter im Klass. Arabisch*, 1919.

So far as the Muslim authors are concerned the number of those who treated of stray Kur'anic words of foreign origin is indeed considerable, and there is no need to mention them here by name. Among those who attempted to collect such words in a more or less systematic way we will refer to the short poetical pieces of Taj ud-Din b. Subki and abul-Fadl b. Hajar. Both of them, however, have been easily eclipsed by Jalil ad-Din Suyuti — the best Kur'anic critic of Islam — who devoted to the subject a special chapter of his well-known *Itkan*¹, and wrote on it a short and precise treatise entitled *Mutawakkili*². We must remark, however, that the very restricted knowledge which all the Muslim authors had of the other Semitic languages besides Arabic often renders their conclusions very unreliable and misleading, and the critic should use great caution in handling their books, which at best are only good as historical preambles to the subject under consideration.

I am convinced that a thorough study of the text of the Kur'an independently of Muslim commentators would yield a great harvest of fresh information. The only qualification needed is that the critic should be armed with a good knowledge of Syriac, Hebrew, and Ethiopic. In my opinion, however, Syriac is much more useful than Hebrew and Ethiopic as the former language seems to have a much more pronounced influence on the style of the Kur'an. The only Hebrew textual influence I was able to discover bore on the Biblical Hebraisms already found in the Syriac Peshitta. We are also apt to exaggerate in our Kur'anic studies the legendary Biblical element that emanates from Jewish folk-lore beliefs, and to overlook the fact

¹ Pages 314-327 of the Calcutta edition of 1856.

² Edited in 1924 by W. Y. Bell in the Nile Mission Press.

that these legends were already found in scores of apocryphal books circulating among the members of the Syrian Churches of South Syria and Arabia. In this connection we may state with some confidence that taking the number 100 as a unit of the foreign influences on the style and terminology of the Kur'an Ethiopic would represent about 5 per cent of the total, Hebrew about 10 per cent the Greco-Roman languages about 10 per cent., Persian about 5 per cent, and Syriac (including Aramaic and Palestinian Syriac) about 70 per cent.

In the following pages we propose to discuss very briefly a *first* list of words bearing on some aspects of this Syriac influence on the linguistic peculiarities of the Kur'an. The list ought to be carefully examined, because if its points are established they will modify to a large extent our Kur'anic conclusions which are mainly derived from Muslim writers the best of whom flourished some two hundred years after the events.

The Syriac influence on the phraseology of the Kur'an may be considered under six distinct headings: (a) proper names, (b) religious terms, (c) common words, (d) orthography, (e) construction of sentences, (f) foreign historical references.

For the sake of conciseness and in order to save our limited space we shall not add any critical remarks to the words which to us seemed to be self-evident and clear even to the non-expert eye¹. We propose to deal with the logical conclusions to be drawn from the present pages at the end of the second list of words which we will publish in the near future.

So far as the etymology of the common words is concerned it is of course always difficult to decide with tolerable certainty whether a given Arabic word used in the Kur'an is derived directly from the Syriac, Hebrew, or Ethiopic languages or not derived from any of them at all. There are thousands of concrete lexicographical words that are identical in all the Semitic languages, and no responsible scholar will ever contend that any of them is derived from this or that Semitic language. This applies especially to *primitive* vocables such as "head" , "hand," etc, etc. Such words belong to the common Semitic stock found in all the Semitic languages. For the words

¹ We can, however, assure the benevolent reader that no Kur'anic word has been asserted as derived from Syriac, Hebrew, Ethiopic, Greek, Latin or Persian except after deep thought and consideration.

that are not primitive and common to all the Semitic languages but found in some of them only, to the exclusion of others, I have found the following considerations worthy of attention:

(a) With all words, whether concrete or abstract, we must consider 1st the grammatical and lexicographical genius of this or that Semitic language and see how the Kur'anic words fit in with it; and 2nd the nearest form presented by the Kur'anic words as compared with the corresponding words found in this or that Semitic language.

(b) With exclusively concrete words we must consider the history, and the geography and topography of the land, of this or that Semitic people, and examine the extent to which the Kur'anic words fall in harmony with them.

(c) With exclusively abstract words we must consider which of the Semitic nations first acquired literary civilisation, and which of them by force of circumstances or by its proximity to the Hijaz was more likely to exercise a direct influence on its language in this or that special branch of literature.

For a general view of the mutual relations that bind all the Semitic languages together the following works need no special recommendation from me: Wright's *Comprehensive Gram. of the Sem. Lang.*, Brockelmann's *Grundriss*, Zimmern's *Verg. Gram. d. Sem. Sprachen*, and the well-known works of Nöldeke on the subject.

I

Proper Names

The proper names of Biblical personages found in the Kur'an are used in their Syriac form. Such names include those of Solomon, Pharaoh, Isaac, Ishmael, Israel, Jacob, Noah, Zachariah, and Mary. The other Biblical names used in the Jewish sacred Books have the same spelling in Syriac and in Hebrew. The following names need some explanation.

SOLOMON and PHARAOH. The Hebrew names are **שְׁלֹמֹה** and **פַּרְעֹה** with a final *hé* and for Solomon with two vowels *ō*; so the Arabic **سليمن** and **فرعون** (with a final *nūn*) of the Kur'an could only have emanated from the Syriac forms of the two names **ܫܠܡܘܗ** and **ܦܪܥܘܗ** (The Ethiopic form of the last name has the vowel *i* under the *pé*.) The penultimate *aliph* of the modern pronunciation

Sulaimān is a later addition of the scribes. We must here remark that the penultimate *wāw* of the Syriac name is also missing in many ancient books, and the name appears as **ܣܠܡܢ**, in MSS. written before the time of Muhammad. See the Brit. Mus. Syr. MS. Add., 14, 602 ff., 82^a and 84^b.¹ The MS itself is of the end of the sixth or at the latest of the beginning of the seventh Christian century.

ISAAC. Here also the Arabic **إسحق** is without doubt derived from the Syriac **ܐܝܫܩܝܐ** and not from the Hebrew **יִשְׁחָק** or **יִשְׁחָק** (with a *yodh*).²

ISHMAEL and ISRAEL The same remark applies to Ishmael and Israel. Their Kur'anic equivalents **إسماعيل** and **إسرائيل** (with or without *hamzah*) are exactly the Syriac **ܐܝܫܡܐܝܠ** and **ܐܝܫܪܐܝܠ** or **ܐܝܫܪܐܝܠ** and not the Hebrew **יִשְׁמַעְיֵאל** and **יִשְׂרָאֵל**. For references to some Arabic inscriptions bearing on the name "Ishmael," see Horovitz, *Koranische*, p.92, and Hartmann's *Arabische Frage*, pp. 182, 252 sqq.

JACOB. To a certain extent the form of the name of Jacob is also more Syriac than Hebrew: **يعقوب** = **ܝܥܩܘܒ**, but in Hebrew **יַעֲקֹב** with a short *patah* for the 'é and without a long vowel. The name occurs five times only in the Hebrew Massoretic text with the long vowel and a quiescent 'é as in Arabic and Syriac, and it is very probable that they represent a more modern pronunciation of the name.

NOAH. The Hebrew **נֹחַ** is somewhat remote and the Arabic **نوح** is exactly the Syriac and the Ethiopic **ܢܘܚ**.

ZACHARIAH. Here also the Arabic **زكريا** is the Syriac **ܙܚܪܝܐ** with an *alaph* and not its Hebrew form with a *hé*, or the Ethiopic *Zakarias* (taken from the Greek).

MARY. Note the difference in the first vowel of the word; Arabic and Syriac *Mar* but the Massoretic text *Mir*. It should be observed, however, that according to the Massorah to the Targum of Onkelos 84b³ on Exod. xv 20, *Maryam* was also the Targumic pronunciation. In Ethiopic both syllables are long; *Māryām*.

There is not a single Biblical name with an exclusively Hebrew

¹ Pp. 709 and 714 in Wright's catalogue. On the gods *Shalman* and *Solomon* see Clay, *The Empire of Amorites*, pp. 91, 156, and Meyer, *Die Israeliten*, p. 295.

² See Fraenkel, *Z.A.*, xv., 394.

³ Edit. Berliner, 1875.

pronunciation in the whole of the Kur'an. So far as the names *Ishmael*, *Israel* and *Isaac* are concerned we may remark that their deviation from the Hebrew pronunciation is all the more remarkable because in them the author (or the editor of the Kur'an) is running counter to the genius of the Arabic and Hebrew languages to follow that of Syriac. It is well known that the letter of the 3rd pers. sing. of the aorist is both in Hebrew and Arabic a *yōdh* which in Hebrew precedes the above proper name; and it would have been much more natural that their Arabic form should have been for instance *Yasma'il*, and *Yashak* with a *yā'* than *'Ismā'il* and *'Ishāk* with an *aliph*, — forms which have been used by the Syrians in order to retain as much as possible the original pronunciation of the Hebrews, inasmuch as the letter of the 3rd per. sing. of the aorist is in their language a *nūm* and not a *yodh* as in Arabic and Hebrew.

Another very remarkable fact emerging from all the above words is their pronunciation. I am at present engaged in the study of the early history of Christianity in Arabia as a sequel to my *Early Spread of Christianity in Central Asia*, and *Early Spread of Christianity in India*, published in 1925 and 1926 respectively. From that study it will be seen that the majority of the Christians round about Hijaz and South Syria belonged to the Jacobite community and not to that of the Nestorians. This was the state of affairs even in the middle of the ninth Christian century in which a well-informed Muslim apologist, 'Ali b. Rabban at-Tabari, was able to write: "What (Christians) are found among the Arabs except a sprinkling of Jacobites and Melchites." ¹

Now the pronunciation used in the Arabic proper names mentioned above is that of the Nestorians and not that of the Jacobites. The latter say *ishmō'il*, *isrō'il* and *Ishōk* etc., and not *Ishmā'il*, *Isrā'il*, and *Ishāk*, as they appear in the Kur'an.

The Graeco-Roman world is seemingly represented by two names only: that of the prophet Jonas who figures as *yūnus*, and that of the prophet Elijah whose name is written *Ilyās*, and once as *Ilyāsin* (*sic*) for the sake of the rhyme (xxxvii. 130). It is highly probable, however, that these two names were borne by Christian Syrians and that they were taken direct from them; indeed many men of the Jacobite

¹ *Kitab ad-Din wad-Daulah*, p. 157 of my translation.

Nestorian, Melchite, and Maronite Syrians had from the third Christian century names either completely Greek or with a pronounced Greek termination only. The number of such men literally amounts to thousands. As an illustration of the final *sīn* we may remark here that many Syrians were called *Yohannis* for *Yohanna*, John, *Mattaëus* for *Mattai*, Matthew, *Thomas* for *Thoma*, Thomas etc.

That the view we have here exposed is the only right one is borne out by the fact that in Palestinian Syriac the form of the two names is *Ilyās*¹ and *Yūnus*,² as in the Kur'an. In Ethiopic both names appear also as *Ilyās* and *Yūnus*, but from the Syriac vocable (dhu-n) *nūn*, "(he of the) fish," by which the Kur'an names Jonah (xxi, 87), it is more probable to suppose that he got his name also from the Syrians.

By applying the Syriac method of proper names we will be able to throw light on some strange forms of names used in the Kur'an. To express "John" the Kur'an of our days has the strange form *Yahya*. I believe, with Margoliouth,³ that the name is almost certainly the Syriac *Yohannan*. In the early and undotted Kur'ans the word stood as **ܝܚܢܝ** which could be read *Yohanna*, *Yohannan*, or *Yahya*, and the Muslim *kurrā'* who knew no other language besides Arabic adopted the erroneous form *Yahya*. I am absolutely unable to agree with Lidzbarski⁴ that this curious name is an old Arabic one.

So far as the word *'Īsa* (the name given to Jesus in the Kur'an) is concerned, it was apparently in use before Muhammad, and it does not seem probable that it was coined by him. A monastery in South Syria, near the territory of the Christian Ghassanid Arabs, bore in A.D. 571 the name *'Isanīyah*, that is to say, "of the followers of Jesus," i.e. of the Christians. See fol. 84^b of the Brit. Mus. Syr. MS. Add., 14, 602, which is of the end of the sixth, or at the latest of the beginning of the seventh century.⁵ The Mandaean pronunciation *'Iso*⁶ is of no avail as the guttural *'é* has in Mandaic the simple pronunciation of a *hamzah*. The Mandaean pronunciation is rather reminiscent of *'Iso*,

¹ *Palestinian Syriac Lectionary*, p. 289, (edit. Mrs. Lewis and Mrs. Gibson).

² *Ibid*, p.24.

³ *Moslem World*, 1925, p.343.

⁴ *Johannesbuch* ii., 73: cf. also Nöldeke in *Z.A.*, xxx, 158 sq.

⁵ P. 714 in Wright's Catalogue.

⁶ Nöldeke's *Mand. Gram.*, xxix and 55; Lidzbarski. *Mand. Liturgien*, 191.

as the name of Jesus was written in the Marcionite Gospel used by the Syrians.¹

II.

Religious Terms.

Almost all the religious terms found in the Kur'an are derived from Syriac In this category we will include such terms as:

| | | | |
|--|------|------------|--|
| كاهن | from | ܟܫܝܢܐ | <i>priest</i> (lii., 29; lxix., 42). |
| مسيح | from | ܡܫܝܚܐ | <i>the Christ</i> (iii., 40 and passim). [2: 45] |
| قسيس | from | ܩܫܝܫܐ | <i>Christian priest</i> ² (v., 85). [5: 82] |
| دين (in the sense of) <i>last judgment</i> | from | ܕܝܢܐ | (i., 3, etc) [1: 4] |
| سفرة | from | ܫܦܪܐ | <i>scribes</i> (lxxx, 115) [80: 15] |
| مثل | from | ܡܚܠܐ | <i>parable</i> ³ (in an evangelical sense; frequently used). |
| فرقان | from | ܦܪܩܢܐ | <i>salvation</i> ³ (ii., 50 and passim) [2: 53] |
| طاغوت | from | ܦܫܥܘܬܐ | <i>error, infidelity</i> (ii. 257 passim). [2: 256] |
| رباني | from | ܪܒܢܐ | <i>perceptor,</i> ³ <i>doctor</i> (iii., 73; v.48 and 68). [3: 79; 5: 44, and 63] |
| قربان | from | ܩܪܒܢܐ | <i>sacrifice</i> (iii. 179 and passim). [3: 183] |
| قيامة | from | ܩܝܡܬܐ | <i>resurrection</i> (frequently used). |
| ملكوت | from | ܡܠܟܘܬܐ | <i>Kingdom of Heaven</i> (vi. 75 and passim). |
| جنة | from | ܟܢܝܐ | <i>the Garden</i> i.e. <i>Heaven</i> (frequently used). |
| ملاك | from | ܡܠܟܐ | <i>angel</i> , frequently used in the sing. and plural. |
| رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ | from | ܪܘܚܐ ܩܕܝܫܐ | <i>the Spirit of Holiness</i> (Holy Spirit) xvi, 104). [16: 104] |
| نفس | from | ܢܦܫܐ | <i>the spiritual soul</i> (frequently used). |

¹ Mitchell's *St. Ephraim's Prose Refutation of Mani, Marcion, and Bardaisan*, vols. i-ii., 1912-21 (as in index), and see my study on same in *J.R.A.S.*, 1922, p. 530.

² It is in place here to remark that the Syriac word *Kashshish* was used as a proper name by many Ghassanid Arabs of South Syria. See "Mar Kashshih, the Arab," in *Brit. Mus. Syr. MS. Add. 14, 458*, p.48, in *Wright's Catalogue*. The MS. was copied before the death of Muhammad.

³ Many worthless conjectures have been put forward concerning this word by Muslim commentators who knew no other Semitic language besides Arabic.

| | | | |
|---------|------|------|--|
| وَقَرَّ | from | عز | <i>to glorify God</i> (xlvi., 9). |
| آية | from | لا | <i>sign, verse</i> (frequently used). |
| الله | from | الله | (ancient Nestorian pronunciation <i>Allaha</i>) <i>God</i> . The pre-Islamic word for deity seems to be represented by the form إله <i>Ilāh</i> . |
| صلى | from | رح | <i>he prayed</i> , and its صلاة derivative from رحهلا, <i>prayer</i> . |
| صام | from | رم | <i>he fasted</i> , and its derivative صوم from رهمل, <i>fast</i> . |
| خطي | from | سها | <i>he sinned</i> , and its derivative خطية from سهلا, <i>sin</i> . |
| كفر | from | عفا | <i>he denied the faith</i> . |
| ذبح | from | رحسا | <i>sacrifice</i> (xxxvii., 107). |
| تجلى | from | لرحك | <i>to reveal oneself</i> (said of God), vii., 139. [7: 143] |
| سبح | from | عصب | <i>he glorified God</i> , and all its derivatives. |
| قدس | from | مبه | <i>he glorified God</i> (ii., 28). [2: 30] |
| خوب | from | مهلا | <i>crime</i> (iv., 2). |
| طوبى | from | ههلا | <i>blessed be! beatitude</i> (xiii., 28). [13: 29] |

This dependence of the Kur'an upon Syriac religious terms is also visible in the theological expressions, such as *light upon light* (= light from light), of xxiv., 35 (where نور from نورهلا), and in all semi-Biblical quotations or inspirations, such as the story of the camel and the eye of the needle (vii., 39) [7: 40], where رحمل like رحمل in Matt. xix, 24, and the idea of God causing to die and to live (liii., 45) [53: 44], where أمات and أحيأ, like رحل and رحل in 1 Sam. ii., 6, where the Hebrew is in the second form.

The same applies to Biblical events and facts, such as طوفان (vii., 130; xxix., 13) [7: 133; 29: 14], *flood*, from رهفلا and صلب from رحح, *to crucify*, as applied to Christ (iv., 156) [4: 157]. As such we will also count مَنْ ¹منا (ii., 54; viii 160; xx., 82) [2: 57; 7: 160; 20: 80], *quail*, from رهه (ibid.), أسباط *tribes*, from رحلا. Another category of verbal Syriacisms is to be found in the literally translated Syriac words; as such we will

¹ It could not have been taken from Hebrew because of its mention with *Salwa*. See Fraenkel, *De Vocabulis*, p.24. With this scholar I am in perfect agreement concerning some other words in this section.

count the frequently used رسول, *Apostle*, from محسلا, and, كلمة, *Word* (of God) from محلا (iv., 1691 et passim). [4: 171]

I believe that in the above list the words, the Syriac origin of which could be denied, are very few. The list could be increased by scores of other words, but the above vocables are sufficient for the purpose of this first list. The only Kur'anic religious terms that betray Hebraic influence are the two technical terms of *taurāt* — Torah, and *Tabūt*, "ark"¹ (ii., 49; xx., 39) [2: 248; 20: 39]. The same may to some extent be said of the late Aramaic ܩܗܢܝܡ, *Jahannam*, "hell," which lacks a *mīm* in classical Syriac. The word *Mathāni*, in xv., 87 and xxxix., 24 [39: 23], is obscure, and its connection with the technical word *mishnah* is quite possible but not certain. On the other hand, *habr*, "doctor", is both Syriac and Hebrew, with a slight change in the meaning.

The Jewish influence on the religious vocabulary of the Kur'an is indeed negligible.

In spite of the close and intimate relations that existed between Hijaz and Abyssinia, relations that were strengthened (if we are to believe the Muslim historians on this subject) by the fact that the early Muslims took refuge with Najāshi, the King of Abyssinia, the only Ethiopic religious influence on the style of the Kur'an is in the word *hawāriyūn*, "Apostles" It is also possible that the word *suhuf* "leaves, sheets," may have been inspired by the corresponding Ethiopic word.

Here also we must remark, as we did in the case of the Kur'anic proper names, that the pronunciation of the above Syriac religious terms is that in use among the Nestorians and not the Jacobites. The latter say *furkōn* and not *furkān*, *Kurbōn* and not *Kurbān*, *Kashīsh* and not *Kashshīsh* (with a *shaddah*), etc.

III

Common Words

There are words in the Kur'an which are somewhat uncommon in Arabic but quite common in Syriac. As such we will count:

¹ The word *Sūrah* is of unknown origin, and its right etymology is in our judgment still obscure.

| | | | |
|--|------|---------|---|
| قُرْآن | from | ܩܪܢܐ | (Kur'ān), a technical Syriac word to mean <i>scriptural lesson, or reading</i> . ¹ |
| حُسْبَان | from | ܣܗܥܒܐ | <i>numbering</i> (vi., 96; xviii., 38; lv., 4). [6: 96; 18: 40; 55: 5] |
| مُهَيِّمِينَ | from | ܡܗܝܡܝܢܐ | <i>faithful</i> (v., 52; lix., 25). [5: 48; 59: 23] |
| ثُور | from | ܬܘܪܐ | <i>fish</i> (xxi., 87). |
| طُور | from | ܬܘܪܐ | <i>mountain</i> (xx., 82 and passim). [20: 80] |
| تَبَّرَ | from | ܬܒܪܐ | <i>he defeated, destroyed</i> (xxv., 41 and passim). [25: 39] |
| شَانِي | from | ܫܢܐܐ | <i>hater</i> (cviii., 3; cf. also v., 3, 11). [108: 3; cf. also, 5: 2, 8] |
| بَرِيَّة (in the sense of) creation | from | ܒܪܝܬܐ | (xcviii, 5-6). [98: 6-7] |
| أَقْنَى | from | ܐܩܢܐ | <i>to cause to possess</i> (liii., 49). [53: 48] |
| حَنَان | from | ܚܢܢܐ | <i>grace</i> (xix., 14). [19: 13] |
| أَم (in the sense of) metropolis | from | ܐܡܢܐ | (vi., 92, etc.). |

abb, from *ibba* or *abba*, "fruit" (lxxx., 31).

misk, from *mushk*, "musk" (lxxxiii., 26). [The word is possibly of Persian origin, but it passed into Syriac.]

makālīd, from *kelīd*, "key" (xxxix, 63; xlii., 10) [39: 63; 42: 12] . [The word is of Persian origin, but it passed into the Kur'an through Syriac. The proof is in the letter Kāf]

istabrak, from *istabarg*, "silk brocade" (lxxvi., 21). [The word appears to be of doubtful origin, but it passed into the Kur'an through Syriac.]²

Many of the above words are wholly Syriac and no amount of lexicographical and grammatical subtlety will, in our judgment, succeed in Arabicising *nūn*, *Tūr*, or *muhaimin*, etc. I believe also with

¹ There is not much doubt in my mind that the word *Kur'an* is imitated from the Syriac *Kiryān*. All the Biblical lessons to be read in the Churches are called by the Syrians *Kiryāns*. The Prophet called simply his book by the word that was used to name the pericopes of the Revelation in the Christian Churches of his day. We should also remember that in the oldest MSS. of the Kur'ān the word is simply written قُرْآن which may be, and has already been, read *Kur'ān* or *Kurān* without *hamzah*. I suspect that this reading of the word without *hamzah* is reminiscent of an earlier pronunciation *Kuryān* or *Kiryān* (with a *yā'*) and that the *hamzah* pronunciation is a late reading adopted to make the word more Arabic and in harmony with the root of the verb *kara'a*.

² So Fraenkel, *De vocabulis*, 25, who refers to Lagarde's *Gesammelte Abhandlungen*, 13. So also Siddiki, *Studien*, 8.

Fraenkel (*ibid.*, p. 250) that the word *أساطير* in vi., 25, etc., is the Syriac *ܐܫܬܘܪܐ*, "writing, archives, any written thing." The meaning of "legends, stories," given to the word by the Muslim commentators, is arbitrary, a device to give a sense to a sentence that they could not understand, and is not warranted either by the etymological meaning of the root, or by its comparison with the other Semitic languages.¹

Another Syriac word in the Kur'an is *رحمان*, *compassionate*, from *ܪܚܡܢܐ*, and the recently discovered *Book of the Himyarites*² shows that the word was used in Yaman before the time of the Prophet.

The Palestinian form of Syriac is represented in the Kur'an by the word = *ܐܘܫܐ*, *a just man* and its derivatives. In Classical Syriac the first letter is a *Zain*, but in Hebrew a *Sādhé*.

The Graeco-Roman world is indirectly represented by the three following words which refer to the State technicalities of currency, weight, and measure; *دينار* (iii, 36) [3: 75], *denarius*, *درهم* (xi, 20), *drachm*, and *قنطار*, *Kintār*, (iii., 68, etc.) [3: 75]. These are of no importance, and it is highly probable that *dinar* and *Kintar* have passed into the Kur'an through the intermediary of the Syriac *ܕܢܪܐ* and *ܟܢܬܐܪܐ*. This has actually taken place with *قنطاس* *χάρτης* (vi., 7 and 91), which has almost certainly passed into the Kur'an through the Syriac *ܟܢܬܐܪܐ*. The same may possibly be said of *قنطاس* (xvi, 37; xxvi., 182) [17: 35; 26: 182], *balance, measure*. The spelling *ξέστης*, however, is nearer to the Arabic form with a final *sīn* than the corresponding Syriac *ܟܢܬܐܪܐ*; on the other hand what about the first *Kāf* which is decidedly Syriac? The word, however, represents a technical term of weight as used in the Near and Middle East, and the editor of the Kur'an wrote it as it was pronounced in his day probably by the Palestinian Syrians. Can the same be said of *sundus*, from *σάνδυξ*, *red coloured cloth*? (xviii., 30) [18: 31], etc.

We believe it to be quite possible that the word *'iblis*, "the evil one," is derived from *diabolus*, through a confusion of the initial *dāl* with an *aliph* by an early *kāri*, or the first editor of the Kur'an. This is not absolutely impossible with some ancient forms of the above two letters. The connection of the word with the verb *balasa* is artificial, and, if accepted, would throw us into a non-Arabic and an altogether

¹ Cf. Nöldeke-Schwally, *Ges. d. Qor.*, i., 16, and especially the references given by Horovitz, *Kor, Unters.*, p.70, to the South Arabian inscriptions.

² P.10 of the text (edit. A. Moberg).

non-Semitic form of substantives which would baffle a critic. Still more remarkable is the frequently used word جِنّ *Jinns*, which is closely associated with the Latin *genii*; and equally remarkable are the words قلم *pen*, which is reminiscent of κάλαμος, *calamus*, and the word سِجِّينَ (xxi., 104), which is undoubtedly taken from σιγίλλιον, *sigillum*, through the Syriac ܣܝܓܝܠܐ. The words used to express precious stones such as *marjan* (lv., 22), and *yakut* (lv., 58), are cosmopolitan, and may have been taken either from Syriac or from Greek, but more probably from Syriac.

As an instance of the curious relation which often exists between the Semitic languages, we may remark that it is possible that *saut* (lxxxix., 12) [89: 13] — if it can be taken in the sense of "outpour, flood" — has some connection with the Ethiopic *sōta*.¹ The Commentators, however, give to the word the sense of "lashes, strokes of a whip" from the Syriac (Nestorian) *Shauta*. Perhaps the word may also be compared with the Syriac *Shubta* (Nestorian pronunciation: Shūta), "molten metal."

Another instance of the curious results that arise from a linguistic comparison of the Semitic languages with one another is to be found in the root *fataha* (xxvi., 118; xxxii., 28) which seems to require in the context the sense of "to judge between, judgment"; a meaning that the word possesses in Ethiopic.²

As in the case of religious terms the list of Arabic common words represented in, or derived from, Syriac, could be increased literally by scores of others.

No other language is represented in the Kur'an. Here as in the two previous categories the pronunciation of all the above Syriac words is Nestorian and not Jacobite.

IV

ORTHOGRAPHY

There are numerous words in the Kur'an which by their orthography betray Syriac influence. The following grammatical features will be sufficient for our purpose.

¹ Barth, *Etymologische Studien*, 14; Horovitz, *Koranische*, 13.

² Cf. Horovitz, *Koranische*, 18; Nöldeke-Schwally, *Geschichte*, i., 219.

(a) *حياة* *life* from *سجد*, prayer, from *رحمة* etc.

(b) The elimination of the *aliph* of prolongation, answering to the Syriac vowel *Zakāpha*, ex. gr. *بنات* *daughters*, for *بنات*, under the influence of the Syriac *ܚܢܬܐ*. All such plural words are written with out *aliph* in the ancient MSS. of the Kur'an.

(c) The retention of the *yā* in the defective verbs when joined to pronouns, ex. gr. *اجتبه* (xvi, 122) [16:121], *he chose him*, for *اجتبه* (Syriac, *ܚܘܫܘܫܐ*). The *yā*' as a substitute for the *aliph* is written in all the ancient MSS. of the Kur'an in the cases under consideration, and is undoubtedly under Syriac influence.

(d) We all know that in the oldest MSS. of the Kur'an thick dots take the place of the short (and occasionally of the long) vowels. I believe that these dots are almost certainly derived from the Syriac Massoretic *puhhāmés* or *nūkzē* which fill the same purpose in difficult or ambiguous words.

V

CONSTRUCTION OF SENTENCES

(a)

There is a sentence in which the use of *كُل* denotes a well-known Syriac expression by means of the corresponding *ܟܠ*, an expression absolutely foreign to the Arabic language.

Surah, xi, 121 [11: 120] says: *وَكُلًّا نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ الرُّسُلِ مَا نُنَبِّئُ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ* which translated literally means: *All we relate to thee from the Stories of the Apostles is to confirm thy heart thereby*. This *kull* betrays the Syriac *kull* used in phrases with the above Kur'anic meaning and construction, ex. gr. ¹ *ܟܠܗܢܐ ܘܢܝܢܐ ܘܢܝܢܐ ܘܢܝܢܐ ܘܢܝܢܐ*. To explain away the difficulty the Commentators resort to absolutely useless compromises:

Tabari (*Tafsir*, xii., 87) says that the basriyūn think that *kull* is in the accusative because it is a *masdar* to *nakussu*, (a queer *masdar*!), but he prefers the opinion that the word is an *idāfah*, which is obviously inaccurate. The same thing may be said of Zamakhshari's opinion (*Kashshāf*, p.637) that the word *nab'* is understood after *kull*. The same is asserted by Nisābūrī (*Gharā'ib*, xii., 90) and by Baidāwī (*Anwār*, i., 582), edit. Bulak, 1296, A.H.). That the resort to *idāfah* is a worthless compromise is borne out by

¹ Breviarium Chaldaicum, i., 383.

the fact (a) that there is no second term of *idāfah*, (b) that the *aliph* and *tanwīn* of *kull* render the existence of any *idāfah* almost out of the question.

(b)

There is a sentence in which the demonstrative pronouns are used immediately after the personal pronouns, in the same way as they are used in Syriac but not in Arabic

Surah ii., 79 [2: 85] has: **ثُمَّ أَنْتُمْ هَؤُلَاءِ تَقْتُلُونَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ**. *Then are you the very persons who kill yourselves.* The use of *hawilā* is here very peculiar and denotes the Syriac *hālain*. The use of demonstrative pronouns without the relative pronouns, when followed by a verb the action of which they tend to corroborate, is Syriac and not Arabic

Zamakhshari (*Kashshāf* p. 87) has no good reason to offer for the anomaly. Baidāwi (*Anwār*, i., 95) evades the difficulty by giving an example of a demonstrative pronoun (*anta dhāka*), which is obviously irrelevant. Tabari (*Tafsir*, i., 314) quotes Abu Ja'far, to the effect that a vocative *yā* or such word as *kaum* are understood after *antum*, and refers to some other devices which are really useless. Nisābūri (*Gharā'ib* i., p. 328) believes that *antum* is a "mubtada'," and "hawilā" its 'khabar,' by inserting between the two some such words as *ba'da dhālika*, and quotes also the Kūfiyūn to the effect that the demonstrative pronoun has replaced here the relative in a way that they cannot understand.

(c)

There is a sentence in which the word **شَيْءٌ**, *something*, is under the influence of the Syriac **ܡܚܒܝܢ**, *something*, used in a meaning not sanctioned by the genius of the Arabic language.

Surah ix., 11 says: **وَإِنْ فَاتَكُمْ شَيْءٌ مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ إِلَى الْكُفَّارِ**. *And if any of your wives escape from you to the unbelievers.* I believe that the word *shai'* applied to a human being is not Arabic at all, and betrays the Syriac *middaim* which is applied to reasonable beings (**ܡܚܒܝܢ**).

This *shai'* is an unsurmountable difficulty to the commentators who resort in it to worthless compromises. To avoid the difficulty ibn Mas'ud (in Zamakhshari's *Kashshāf* p. 1475) changed *shai*

into *ahad*, Baidāwi (*Anwār*, ii., 516) believes that it refers to the dowry of the wives (*shai'un min muhūrihinna*), which is obviously against the context. Tabari (xxviii., 49) evades the difficulty and speaks only of the dowry. Nīsābūri (*Gharā'ib*, xxviii, 45) says that *shai'* means here *ahad*, but like Baidāwi makes also mention of the fact that it may refer to the dowry of the wives, and he finally registers the opinion of some linguists that *shai'* is here used for "emphasis" or "derision". This uncommon interpretation is also found in Zamakhshari and Baidāwi (*in loc.*).

(d)

There are in the Kur'an many sentences in which the Arabic word used does not fit in with the meaning required by the context, but when compared with its Syriac equivalent its right meaning becomes clear; ex. gr.,

Surah xlvii, 12, [48: 12] says *وَوَظَنْتُمْ ظَنَّ السَّوْءِ وَكُنْتُمْ قَوْمًا بُورًا* (*But you believed that the Apostle and the believers would not come back to their families, and this appeared pleasing in your hearts*), and you believed wrongly and you were ill advised people.

The word *būr* has been translated as meaning "worthless, rogue" or "an undone people" which does not suit the context. Is it not the transliteration of the Syriac *būr* which means "ignorant, ill advised"? The same meaning seems also to be more suitable in xxv. 19.

In Surah xxxviii, 2 [38: 3], occurs the sentence *فَنَادُوا وَوَلَاتَ حِينَ مَنَاصٍ*. *And they cried but no time was it of escape*. Let us admit frankly that this *lāt* is a barbarous anomaly in the Arabic language, and scores of pages have been written about it by Muslim commentators and grammarians without advancing our knowledge one iota. I believe that it is almost certainly the Syriac *ܠܐ*, *there is not, there was not*, a contraction of *ܠܐ ܠܐ*. This is also the opinion of Suyuti (*Mutawakkili*, p.54) and of some other Muslim writers.¹ In many ancient MSS. of the Kur'an the word is spelt *لئ* or *ليت*, and the *aliph* of prolongation has been added or substituted for the *yā'* by later *kurrā*.

¹ On the expression *haita la-ka*, "come hither," in xii., 23, see Suyūti', *Mutawakkili*, 54, and *Itkān*, 325. He believes the phrase to be Syriac, which is perfectly true so far as *la-ka* is concerned.

as they have done for thousands of other words with a medial *yā'*. See above the mark (c) in section "orthography" (p. 91).

VI

Foreign Historical References

(a)

In Surah xviii., 82 [83] sqq., there is an account of the well-known legend of Alexander the Great. The Macedonian conqueror first went westwards and found the sun setting in a black muddy spring, and then he journeyed eastwards and discovered that below the two mountains between which he was standing lived people who could scarcely understand speech. They implored Alexander to set a rampart between them and a wicked people called *Yājūj* and *Mājūj*. Yielding to their entreaties Alexander erected a wall of pig iron across the opening between the two mountains, fused it into a solid mass of metal, and strengthened it by pouring molten brass over the whole.

The Romance of Alexander is found in many languages; in Greek (that of Pseudo-Callisthenes about A.D. 200); in Latin (that of Julius Valerius about A.D. 340 and of Leo the Archpresbyter, eleventh century); in Armenian (unknown date, but probably from the Greek); in Syriac (written about the beginning of the seventh, but known at the beginning of the sixth century); in Ethiopic (unknown date, but centuries after the Arab invasion); in Coptic (about the ninth century). Later versions include the Persian, the Turkish and, *mirabile dictu*, the Malay and the Siamese.

The best study of the Romance is to our knowledge that of Nöldeke,¹ who wrote after the publication of the Syriac text of the story by Budge.² From the works of Jacob of Serug we know, however, that the story was well known in Syriac circles prior to A.D. 520. Of all the above peoples to whom the Romance was known in one form or another the only ones that could have influenced the Kur'an were the Syrians and the Ethiopians; but since we have no evidence that the Ethiopians knew anything of the story in the Prophet's life-

¹ *Beiträge zur Gesch. des Alexanderromans* in the Vienna Academy's publications of 1890.

² *The History of Alexander the Great*, 1889.

time,¹ we have only the Syrians left from whom the Prophet, or the editor of the Kur'an, could have derived their information. This may be corroborated by the following considerations:

1°. All the early versions write the word "Gog" only as *Gog* while the Kur'an writes it as *Agog*² or more generally *yā-gōg* (with an *aliph* or with a *yā'* and an *aliph* at the beginning). In a poem by Jacob of Serug written towards the beginning of the sixth Christian century on the Romance of Alexander and Gog and Magog, the word constantly occurs with an initial *alaph* as *A-gog*.³ This Syriac spelling has probably influenced the Arabic form of the word as used in the Kur'an. There is even a verse in the Syriac text (*ibid.*, p. 378) in which the author seems to derive *A-gog* from *Agoga* = ἄγωγός, "stream, aqueduct".

2°. In the Greek of Pseudo-Callisthenes Alexander is a pagan king. In the Kur'an Alexander becomes a pious man and a messenger of Allah. This idea could have emanated only from Syrians, with whom, I do not know for what reason, the Macedonian *jahān-gushā* had become a messenger and a prophet of God. All the poem of Jacob of Serug mentioned above is based on such an assumption.⁴

(b)

In Surah xxii., 17, occurs the word مَجُوس , *Magians*. I believe that this word is from Syriac ܡܓܘܣܐ⁵ and that the Prophet or the editor of the Kur'an had heard of Magians only from Syrians and not from Greeks, Persians, or any other people, because curiously enough the word is meant in the Kur'anic text to be in the plural form from an hypothetical singular the nature of which we cannot guess with certitude. Now in Syriac, contrary to Greek and Persian, the form

¹ The Ethiopic story published by Budge in 1896 under the title of *The Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great* is clearly a post-Islamic production and is undoubtedly under the influence of the Kur'an and of late Muslim writers.

² See examples in Nöldeke's *Geschichte des Qorans*, p.270.

³ Edit of Budge in *Zeitsch. f. Assyriologie*, vi., pp.376, 382, 389, 391, 393, 398, 400-401 and 403.

⁴ About Alexander's wall see the *Chronicle of Dionysius of Tellmahré* p. 24 sq. (of the text, edit. Chabot).

⁵ Cf. Nöldeke, *Persische Studien*, ii., 37.

of the word does not change in its consonants when passing from singular into plural, and the Prophet or the editor of the Kur'an used the term in the plural of Syriac and not that of Arabic, as they heard it pronounced in their time. This difficulty was so keenly felt by post-Kur'anic Muslim authors that from the plural form of the word as used in the Kur'an they created (as if it was a gentilic and ethnic vocable) a singular form, مجوسي .

Etymologically the Syriac word itself is derived from the Persian *mugh* (in Zend Moghu), "a fire-worshipper."

(c)

The Christians are called in the Kur'an نصارى which I take to be from the Syriac ܢܨܪܝܐ. Indeed there is no other language besides Syriac in which the word "Christians" is expressed by the word "nasāra" or anything near it. Further, in many ancient documents the Syriac word *nasrāya* is applied exclusively to Christians without any reference at all to the "Nazarenes". The Martyr, Simon bar Sabbā'e, the great Patriarch of the East, is in A.D. 341 called the "head of the *Nasrāyé*"¹ i.e. of the Christians. All Christians are called *nasrāyé* in the life of the same saint written about the end of the fourth century.² The same name is also applied to them in more than one hagiographical piece emanating from writers whose country was situated within the boundaries of the Sasanian Empire. St. Pethion was asked in A.D. 447: "Which benefits have accrued to thee from thy connection with the *Nasrāyé*"³ i.e. Christians. A Zoroastrian Persian General living before the Arab invasion sends a word to his Byzantine Christian opponent to observe a certain feast "because of the Jews and *Nasrāyé* (i.e. Christians) that are found in my army."⁴ There is no need to give more examples, but we will allude to the fact that in the Romance of Julian the Apostate alone *Nasrāya* is used several times to express a Christian.⁵

There is no doubt whatever that in the Persian Empire, and to some extent also in the Roman Empire, the Christians were called

¹ ³⁸ *Pat. Syr.*, ii., 792, 818 and 867.

² *Ibid.*, ii., 799. Cf. J. Horovitz, *ibid.*, p. 145.

³ *Acta Martyrum et Sanctorum* (edit. Bedjan), ii., 576.

⁴ Land's *Anecdota Syriaca*, iii., 258.

⁵ See the index of Hoffmann's edition, *Julianos der Abtruennige*, p. xiv.

by non-Christians *nasrāyé* (the *nasāra* of the Kur'an), and that the Prophet took the word from the Syrians.

(d)

In xi., 46 [11: 44] mention is made of the fact that the ark of Noah stood on a mountain called *جودي*. Few scholars will be inclined to deny the fact that this queer word is the Syriac *ܡܢܘܗ*, the mountain on which according to the Peshitta Version (Gen. viii, 4) and the Targum (contrary to all the other versions of the Bible which call the mountain Ararat) the ark of Noah stood above water. The Prophet or the editor of the Kur'an had heard, therefore, the story of Noah and his flood only from Syrians. The reading of a *wāw* for a *ra'* (the difference between the two letters is very slight in Arabic script) may be ascribed to an early *kāri* or to the editor of the Kur'an himself. The pronunciation of the initial *Kāf* as *Gāf* is used even in our days by almost all the Arabs of the desert, with whom every *Kāf* is invariably a *gāf*. No other explanation of the word *Jūdi* seems to me worth mentioning.

(e)

Frequent use is made in the Kur'an of the word *حنيف* which I take to be derived from the Syriac *ܡܢܘܗ* *pagan*. This is also the opinion of some Muslim writers themselves.¹ In its singular form the word is used as follows: in ii., 129 [2: 135]; iii., 89 [3: 95]; vi., 79 and 162 [6: 79 and 161]; xvi., 121 and 124 [16: 120 and 123], all in connection with Abraham being a *hanīf* and not a *mushrik*; in iii., 60 [3: 67] in connection with Abraham being neither a Jew nor a Christian, nor a *mushrik*, but a *hanīf*. In iv., 124 [4: 125] Abraham is a *hanīf*. In x., 105 and xxx., 29 [30: 30] the Prophet himself is ordered to be a *hanīf*. In its plural form the word is used in xxii., 32 [22: 31], where the faithful are ordered to be *hanīfs* but not *mushriks*, and in xcvi., 4 [98: 5], where they are ordered to be *hanīfs* and pray and give alms.

The Syriac derivation of the word offers to my mind no difficulty at all. The real difficulty lies in the fact that the word is used in a good sense in the Kur'an wherein it is almost synonymous with

¹ Mas'ūdi's *Tanbih*, in *Bibl. Georg. Arab.* (edit. De Goeje), viii., 6, 90, 122, 136, cf *Encyclopædia of Islam*, ii., 259-261.

"Muslim." To this difficulty I can offer no decisive solution, but I will tentatively propose the following considerations:

1°. On the one hand the Prophet must have heard many Christians say of him that since he was neither a Jew nor a Christian he was by necessity a *hanfa*; on the other hand he must have also heard from them that Abraham was likewise a *hanfa*: a perfectly true assertion. By its association with the great Patriarch Abraham, revered and respected by both Christians and Jews, the word *hanfa* came to acquire with Muhammad a good and praiseworthy meaning. This is the reason why the Prophet is at some pains to emphasise the fact that Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a *hanfa*, and wishes also his own religion to be *hanfūtha*.

2°. To express "idolatry," and "idolater" the Kur'an uses some forms of the root *sharaka*, which mean "to associate". Now this "association" is always meant an association or a partnership of other beings with Allah, the true God, and never with any pagan deity, and this in spite of the fact that to express "idols" the Kur'an knows of *authān* (xxii., 31 [22: 30]; xxix, 16 and 24 [29: 17 and 25]), *asnām* (passim) and *tamāthil* (xxi, 53 [21: 52]; xxxiv., 12 [34: 13]). This bad meaning of the root *sharaka* is naturally held to be as unworthy of Muhammad as it is of Abraham, and this is the reason why so much stress is laid on the fact that Abraham was not a *mushrik*.

No solution of the difficulty offered by Muslim commentators or historians is worth mentioning. All their stories concerning a class of *hanīfs* and the good works of the so-called *tahannuf* appear to me to be unhistorical and purposely invented to explain the difficulty created by the Kur'anic verses under consideration.

(f)

In xxx., 10 [30: 2] the word *Rūm* is used to express the Byzantines, the Greeks of Constantinople, the "New Rome" (Ῥώμη νέα). Whatever our views may be as to the linguistic peculiarities of the word we are not at liberty to deny that it is derived from the Syriac *Rūmāya*. Indeed the Syrians went so far in their application of the word to Byzantines that they often called simple "soldiers" *Rūmāyé*¹ as if the only soldiers they knew were Byzantine soldiers.

¹ See the remark of Wright in *Chronicle of Joshua the Stylite*, p. 30.

