

الْأَعْرَافُ (*Al-A'rāf*).

vii, 44, 46.

Al-A'rāf.

It is usually taken to mean the wall which separates Paradise from Hell. The philologists were at a loss to explain the word, the two favourite theories being (i) that it is the plu. of **عَرَف** used of the mane of a horse or the comb of a cock, and thus a metaphor for the highest part of anything (Zam, in loco : *LA*, xi, 146), or (ii) that it is from **أَصْحَابُ الْأَعْرَافِ** *to know*, and so called because of the knowledge had of those in the Garden and those in the Fire.

Tor Andrae, *Ursprung*, 78, and Lidzbarski, *ZS*, ii, 182, claim that the word is Arabic, though translating an idea derived from one of the older religions.¹ There is difficulty with this, however, and perhaps a better solution is that proposed long ago by Ludolf,² viz. that it is the Eth. **አዕረፈ**. Horovitz, *Paradies*, 8, objects to this on the ground that Muḥammad does not use **أَعْرَاف** for the souls of the departed, but for the place where they, or at least some of them, dwell, which would be **ጾዕረ-ፍ**. It is by no means unlikely, however, that Muḥammad understood the verb **አዕረፈ**,³ used of the blessed departed, as a place-name, for **አዕረፈ** and **ዕረፍት** seem much more commonly used in this sense than **ጾዕረ-ፍ**. It is even possible that **أَعْرَاف** is a corruption of **ጾዕረ-ፍ**. The introduction of the word would seem to be due to Muḥammad himself, for the occurrence of the word in Umayya, xlix, 14, is rightly suspected by Horovitz of being under Qur'ānic influence.

¹ Lidzbarski would take it as an attempt to translate the Mandaean **ܡܬܬܐܪܐܬܐ** = the watch towers, but this is rather remote.

² *Ad Historiam Æthiopicam Commentarius*, p. 207. He writes: "أَعْرَاف: Muhammedis Limbus, medius inter Paradisum et Infernum locus, receptaculum mediis generis hominum, qui tantundem boni ac mali in hoc mundo fecerunt. Id autem aliunde justius derivari nequit, quam a rad-Æthiopica **አዕረፈ** = *requievit*, quo verbo Æthiopes de pie defunctis utuntur."

³ Praetorius, *Beit. Ass*, i, 23, however, takes **አዕረፈ** as a denom. from **عَرَفَ**.