

and from the same primitive Semitic root we get Akk. *pilakku*; Heb. פִּלְקָה; Ar. فَلَكَةٌ, all meaning the whirl of a spindle, and by another line of derivation Ar. فَلَكٌ; Eth. ፈለክ for the celestial hemisphere. So the philologers as a rule endeavour to derive فَلَكٌ from this root, imagining it is so named from its rounded shape.¹

The philologers, however, were somewhat troubled by the fact that it could be masc., fem., and plu., without change of form (*LA*, xii, 367), and there can be little doubt that the word is a borrowing. Vollers, *ZDMG*, I, 620; li, 300, claims that it is the Gk. ἐφόλκιον, which usually means a small boat towed after a ship,² but from the *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, § 16,³ we gather that as used around the Red Sea it must have meant a vessel of considerable size. The borrowing was probably direct from the Greek, though there is a possibility that it came through an Aram. medium.⁴

فِيل (Fīl).

cv, l.

Elephant.

The only occurrence of the word is in an early Sūra mentioning the Abyssinian campaign under Abraha against Mecca. Abraha's army was known as جيش الفيل, because for the first time in Arab experience, African elephants had been used in an attack. Muḥammad was doubtless using a well-known term when he referred to Abraha's army as أصحاب الفيل.

The word seems to be of Iranian origin.⁵ In Phlv. we find ⁶ 𐭠𐭣𐭥𐭥, 𐭠𐭣𐭥𐭥;

¹ Rāghib, *Mufradāt*, 393, however, reverses this position, and thinks the celestial sphere was called فَلَكٌ because it was like a boat.

² Vide Athenaeus, 208 F.

³ In C. Muller, *Geographi Graeci Minores*, i, 271.

⁴ Fraenkel, *Fremdw.*, 212. Halévy, *ZA*, ii, 401, denies the derivation from ἐφόλκιον, claiming that in that case the Arabic word would have been فَلَق.

⁵ Hommel, *Säugethiere*, 24.

⁶ *PPGI*, 187; West, *Glossary*, 112; *Shikand*, Glossary, 264; Nyberg, *Glossar*, 186, whence in Mod. Pers. it is فیل.