

Arabic is **أسد**, in Persian **شار**, in Nabataean **أريا**, and in Ethiopic **ባሶሪ**. An examination of the Lexicons, however, shows that there is nothing in Aramaic or Ethiopic even remotely resembling these words, though **شار** is somewhat like the Persian **شیر** = Pahlavi **𐭮𐭩𐭮𐭥**, *shēr* meaning *tiger* or *lion*.¹ Indeed, as a general rule, the philologists are at their best when dealing with Persian words, a fact which may perhaps be explained by the Persian origin of so many of these savants themselves.

All things considered, one is not surprised that they had so little success with the problems of the foreign words in the Qur'ān, or that they detected so few out of the relatively large number recognized by modern scholarship, for they had but the most meagre philological resources at their disposal. What is cause for surprise is that as-Suyūṭī is able to gather from the older authorities so many words whose Arabic origin to us is obvious, but which they regarded as foreign.

One group of these we may explain as Dvořák does,² as cases where the Arabic word is rare,³ or occurs in a context where the usual meaning perhaps does not lie immediately on the surface, but where the word can be easily explained from related words or from the sense of the passage, and so comes to be regarded as a foreign word with that meaning. As examples we may take two words that are said to be the one Nabataean and the other Coptic.

(i) In xix, 24, we have the word **تَحْت** which as-Suyūṭī tells us⁴ was considered by Abū'l-Qāsim in his *Lughāt al-Qur'ān*, and by al-Kirmānī in his *Al-'Ajā'ib*, to be a Nabataean word meaning **بطن**. The growth of this theory is fairly clear. The word occurs in a passage where Muḥammad is giving an account of the birth of Jesus, an account whose main features he had derived from some oral reproduction of the fables of the *Hist. Nativ. Mariae*. In the first place we note that the Qurṛā' were not certain of the reading, for Baiḍ, *in loco*, tells us that some read **فَنَادَاهَا مِنْ تَحْتِهَا** while others read **فَنَادَاهَا**

¹ Cf. *PPQI*, 214; Horn, *Grundriss*, § 803.

² *Fremdw*, 29.

³ In the list of words of this class it will be noted that most are *hapax legomena* in the Qur'ān.

⁴ *Itq*, 320; *Mutaw*, 63.