

we find that most of the early Arabic terms in connection with this trade are of Syriac origin.¹

There were slight differences in pronunciation between the Jacobites and the Nestorians, and Mingana notes that the vowelling of the proper names in the Qur'ān seems to follow the Nestorian pronunciation rather than the other,² though in many cases, as we shall see, the Qur'ānic forms approximate most closely to those found in the Christian-Palestinian dialect.

It is possible that certain of the Syriac words we find in the Qur'ān were introduced by Muḥammad himself. That he had personal contact with Christians of the Syrian Church is definitely stated in the Traditions. We read that he went in early life on trading journeys to Syria with the caravans of the Quraish,³ and there is an account of how on one occasion he listened to a sermon by Quss, Bishop of Najrān,⁴ at the festival of 'Ukāz near Mecca.⁵ Earlier Christian writers suggested that his mentor was a monk named Sergius,⁶ and the legends of Nestor and Baḥīra⁷ at least show that there was an early recognition of the fact that Muḥammad was at one time in more or less close contact with Christians associated with the Syrian Church.⁸

¹ Rothstein, *Lakhmidien*, p. 26.

² *Syriac Influence*, 83. as-Suyūṭī once (*Hq*, 325) quotes a word as being from the Haurānīc dialect, by which he apparently means some dialect of Syriac.

³ at-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, i, 1123; Ibn Sa'd, i, i, 75 ff.; Ibn Hishām, 115 ff.; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, iv, 132, 152; Sprenger, *Mohammed und der Koran*, p. 6, sees in Sūra, xxxvii, 137, a recollection of his having passed the Dead Sea on one of these journeys.

⁴ That he was Bishop of Najrān we learn from *LA*, viii, 58. From al-Baiḥaqī's *Mahāsīn*, 351 ff., we would gather that he was rather an Arab soothsayer and fortune-teller.

⁵ Jāhiz, *Bayān*, i, 119. *Khizāna*, i, 268. On Quss see Sprenger, *Leben*, i, 102 ff. and Andrae, *Ursprung*, 202 ff.

⁶ Al-Kindi, *Risāla*, p. 76, and the Byzantine writers. e.g. ἡν δὲ τῆς ψευδαββᾶς ὀνόματι Σέργιος, says George Phrantzes (ed. Niebuhr, p. 295). It is doubtful whether Sergius and Bahira are different personages.

⁷ at-Ṭabarī, *Annales*, i, 1124; Ibn Sa'd, i, i, 76; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, iv, 153. On these legends see Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, 22 ff.; Gottheil, *ZA*, xiii, 189 ff.; Sprenger, *Leben*, i, 178 ff.; ii, 381 ff.; Cactani, *Annali*, i, 136, 169; Noldeke, *ZDMG*, xii, 699 ff.

⁸ Nestor is obviously connected with Nestorianism (cf. ܢܝܨܬܐ) and Baḥira or Baḥīra is the Syr. ܒܚܝܪܐ = ὁ ἐκλεκτός (Noldeke, *ZDMG*, xii, 704 n.), commonly used of monks (Nau, *Expansion nestorienne*, p. 215), though Hirschfeld, p. 23, argues that it is a Jewish word. Loth, *ZDMG*, xxxv, 620 ff., suggests that some of Muhammad's material may have come from one Ṣuḥaib, a Greek from the region of Mosul. The question as to whether Muḥammad could have had a Scripture teacher has been discussed by the present writer in an essay in the volume, *From the Pyramids to Paul* (New York, 1935), pp. 95-118.