

south-east of Palestine as far north as Damascus,<sup>1</sup> was of Arab origin, and exercised no little influence on the Ḥaurān and N. Arabia, even after it was absorbed in the Roman *Provincia Arabia*. Its deities Allāt, Manūthu, and Hubalu, were revered even in Mecca,<sup>2</sup> and its period of power and prosperity was near enough to the period when we first come in contact with the pre-Islamic literature for the memory of it still to linger, much embellished with legendary details, in the poetic lore of the desert Arabs. We have a fair idea of the Nabataean language<sup>3</sup> from numerous inscriptions collected in N. Arabia,<sup>4</sup> but the Nemara inscription from the Ḥaurān, dated A.D. 328,<sup>5</sup> is in classical Arabic, though written in Nabataean characters, and shows that by that date the old Nabataean language had been sup-

planted by Arabic. When the philologers use the term *نبطي*, however, it does not necessarily refer to these *Ναβαραῖοι* of Petra and the Ḥaurān, for the Arabs used the word for many communities in Syria and Irāq, and as Nöldeke has shown,<sup>6</sup> the Muslim philologers really mean Aramaic when they speak of *النبطية*.

We have already discussed how Syriac words may have come into Arabic, and need say no more on the subject of the Christian Aramaic. If the Jews of Arabia were Jews by race, and not merely proselytes, we might expect that Jewish Aramaic would have been more commonly known among them than Hebrew,<sup>7</sup> and this is confirmed by the fact that, as we have already noticed, the Jewish words in the Qur'ān are more generally Aramaic in form than Hebrew. It is not necessary

<sup>1</sup> *ERE*, ix, 121, and Quatremère in *JA*, xv (1835, p. 5 ff.).

<sup>2</sup> *אלות* and *מנותרו* are the *اللات* and *مناة* of Sūra. lvi, 19, 20, and *הבלו* is the *هبل* who, as we learn from al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, iv, 46, was the chief god of the Ka'ba.

<sup>3</sup> Nabataean was a dialect of West Aramaic, though full of Arabic words and idioms.

<sup>4</sup> Collections will be found in *CIS*, vol. ii; de Vogüé, *Inscriptions sémitiques*; and Euting, *Nabatäische Inschriften aus Arabien*, Berlin, 1885.

<sup>5</sup> Lidzbarski, *Ephemeris*, ii, 34.

<sup>6</sup> *ZDMG*, xxv, 122 ff. al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, iii, 240, says that the country of Babel was occupied by the Nabataeans. Sometimes, however, *نبطي* is used just like *سرياني* to mean something in a language unintelligible to the Muslim savants, cf. the reference in Margoliouth's *Schweich Lectures*, p. 55 n., to *Islah al-Mantiq*, p. 168.

<sup>7</sup> "The Jews in North Arabia and Syria read the Bible in Synagogues in the Hebrew original, but for domestic study they probably used Aramaic translations as did the Christians. Many Biblical words which occur in the Qur'an have evidently gone through an Aramaic channel."—Hirschfeld, *New Researches*, 32.