

point which is sometimes emphasized by a reference to the claim that the Qur'ān contains all previous knowledge, and information about everything, which would not be true if it did not contain all languages.¹ Obviously all of all languages was not contained, but what was sweetest, most pleasant, and most suitable.²

The most sensible statement on this whole question, however, is that suggested by as-Suyūṭī, *Itq*, 316, and expounded by ath-Tha'ālibī³ in his *Kitāb al-Jawāhir*, i, 17: "In my opinion the truth of the matter is this. The Qur'ān is in plain Arabic containing no word which is not Arabic or which cannot be understood without the help of some other language. For these (so-called foreign) words belonged to the (language of the) ancient Arabs, in whose tongue the Qur'ān was revealed, after they had had contact with other languages through commercial affairs and travel in Syria and Abyssinia, whereby the Arabs took over foreign words, altering some of them by dropping letters or lightening what was heavy in the foreign form. Then they used these words in their poetry and conversation so that they became like pure Arabic and were used in literature and thus occur in the Qur'ān. So if any Arab is ignorant about these words it is like his ignorance of the genuine elements of some other dialect, just as Ibn 'Abbās did not know the meaning of *Fāṭir*, etc. Thus the truth is that these words were foreign, but the Arabs made use of them and Arabicized them, so from this point of view they are Arabic.⁴ As for at-Ṭabarī's opinion that in these cases the two languages agree word for word, it is far-fetched, for one of them is the original and the other a derivative as a rule, though we do not absolutely rule out coincidence in a few exceptional cases."

If challenged as to how, on this view, the Qur'ān could be called قرآن عربي⁵ "a plain Arabic Qur'ān", its defenders reply with as-Suyūṭī,⁵ that the presence of a few foreign words therein no more makes it

¹ as-Suyūṭī, *Itq*, 316—an opinion which is quoted also by al-Khafājī, 3 and 4. See also *Itq*, 322.

² As as-Suyūṭī says: واختير له من كل لغة اعذبها واخفها واكثرها استعمالا للعرب.

³ This is not the famous philologist whose *Fiqh al-Lughah* we shall have occasion to quote frequently in the course of our work, but a N. African exegete 'Abd ar-Rahmān ath-Tha'ālibī, whose *Tafsīr* was published in four volumes at Algiers in 1905.

⁴ So al-Jawālīqī, *Mu'arrab*, 5, says: ان هذه الحروف بغير لسان العرب في الاصل ثم لفظت به العرب بالسنتها فربته نصار عربيا بتعريبها اياه فهي عربية في هذه الحال اعجبة الاصل. ⁵ *Itq*, 315.