

## FOREWORD

Little further advance can be made in our interpretation of the Qur'ān or of the life of Muḥammad, until an exhaustive study has been made of the vocabulary of the Qur'ān. It is interesting to note how recent work at Islamic origins, such as that done by the late Professor Horovitz and his pupils at Frankfurt, and in the books of Tor Andrae and Karl Ahrens, has tended to run to a discussion of vocabulary. The Qur'ān is the first Arabic book, for though there was earlier poetry, it was not written down till much later, and some doubts have been raised as to the genuineness of what did get written down. For the interpretation of this first Arabic book, we have been content until recently to turn to the classical commentaries, but the tendency of the commentators is to interpret the book in the light of the Arabic language of their own day, and with few exceptions their philological lucubrations are of more interest for the study of the development of Muslim thought about the Qur'ān, than they are for settling the meaning the words must have had for the Prophet and for those who listened to his utterances.

Some day, it is to be hoped, we shall have a Glossary to the Qur'ān comparable with the great *Wörterbücher* we have to the Old and New Testaments, in which all the resources of philology, epigraphy, and textual criticism will be utilized for a thorough investigation of the vocabulary of the Qur'ān. Meanwhile this present Essay attempts to make one small contribution to the subject by studying a number of the non-Arabic elements in the Qur'ānic vocabulary.

Emphasis has been placed in recent years on the too long forgotten fact that Arabia at the time of Muḥammad was not isolated from the rest of the world, as Muslim authors would have us believe. There was at that time, as indeed for long before, full and constant contact with the surrounding peoples of Syria, Persia, and Abyssinia, and through intercourse there was a natural interchange of vocabulary. Where the Arabs came in contact with higher religion and higher civilization, they borrowed religious and cultural terms. This fact was fully recognized by the earliest circle of Muslim exegetes, who show no hesitation in noting words as of Jewish, Christian, or Iranian