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## SOME NOTES ON "JEWISH ARABIC STUDIES"

IN his interesting article on the above mentioned subject in the October number of this REVIEW, Prof. I. Friedlaender has thrown much light on the history of Jewish sectarianism and stimulated further study in the same field. He suggests (p. 187) the reading *Almuḳammīs*. Steinschneider (*Die Arab. Literatur der Juden*, 37) reads *Almiḳmas* (מִקְמִי and מִלְמִמָּא). There cannot, however, be any doubt that the name was *Al-Muḳammas*, the *ס* in the one form being *mater lectionis*. מִלְמִמָּא is also the reading in the little fragment of his work: "Fifty queries in refutation of the Christians," which I published *JQR.*, XV, 682.

As to the name *Serene* (p. 211), Dr. Friedlaender's derivation from *suryāni* is more ingenious than probable and cannot supplant the derivation given by Graetz from *Serenus*. The name was known to Arabs considerably earlier. A Copt slave-girl of the name of *Sīrīn* was given by Mohammed to the poet *Hassān b. Thābit*. Lastly Mohammed b. *Sīrīn* (born A. H. 33) was one of the fathers of Mohammedan tradition (see *Ibn Khallīḳan*, translated by De Slane, II, 586), the first author of a work on interpretation of dreams (see *JQR.*, XV, 175).

It is hardly appropriate to call the Jewish tribes of the B. *Ḳainoḳa*, *Al Nadhir*, and *Kheibar* "sons of the desert, men of the sword, soldiers, warriors" (p. 210) and "ignorant nomads" (p. 212). What we know from the early Arab sources points to the contrary. They were rather peaceful palm growers, craftsmen, and traders who lived in settled habitations round *Medina* and further north. The quarrels of which Arab authors have so much to relate should not be taken too seriously. Anyway we never read of Jewish victories, but only of defeat and slaughter.

There may have been a few warriors among them, but their pure Jewish blood is a matter of doubt. As to their alleged ignorance, such evidence as we possess does not bear out this statement (see my *New Researches into the Composition and Exegesis of the Qoran*, 103 ff.). The art of writing was much practised among them. They did not, indeed, produce any scholars, but they had a good knowledge of the Bible which they publicly interpreted in a Midrās. They even seemed to have used an Aramaic version of the Pentateuch. This can be gathered from the Aramaic forms of many Jewish expressions which appear in the Qorān. They were well versed in the Haggadah of which ample evidence exists in the Qorān and Sunna. Even the new poem by Al Samau'al, the prototype of an Arabicized Jew, has several haggadic elements (see *JQR.*, April, 1905). Ibn Khaldūn on whom Dr. Friedlaender relies, even if we absolve him from religious bias, was no judge of Jewish learning, and on the proficiency of the Jews in Arabia eight centuries before his time he is no authority at all. Geiger, too, has misjudged this point completely. Dr. Friedlaender is not, therefore, justified in maintaining that the Arab Jews could not have promoted a new religious movement. Why not? Surely they did so, first indirectly, then directly. Without the positive knowledge they imparted to its founder, it is doubtful whether Islam would have seen the light.

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