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A New Nabataean Inscription from Umm el-Jimāl

From the Nabataean town which once existed at Umm el-Jimāl, nothing remains except scattered sherds and a few inscriptions. Most of the stones bearing texts are built into the roofs and the walls of the structures that were erected in the Byzantine and Umayyad periods. From *RES*, 2058 = *PAES*, IV A 33, the fragment of a building inscription found at nearby Umm el-Quṭṭēn and dated to the reign of Rabb'el II. (71–106 A.D.), we may infer that the earlier settlement at Umm el-Jimāl was founded in roughly the same period. The latest datable Nabataean inscription is *RES*, 1097 = *PAES*, IV A 41; this inscription derives from the end of the 3rd century A.D. Its two parts were found re-used in buildings 300 m apart from one another,<sup>1</sup> and demonstrate how completely the earlier town was destroyed before (or when) the later one was built. Regarding this, it should have been possible to avoid the misnomer "Nabataean town" for the ruins visible today<sup>2</sup> even without the evidence from the soundings undertaken by B. De Vries.<sup>3</sup>

A further Nabataean funeral stela which escaped the notice of the Princeton expedition was discovered by Prof. Dr. H.-P. Rüger and myself during a casual visit of the site on July 21th, 1983. It is used as a corbel in the south wall of the fifth room on the western side of the courtyard of the so-called "barracks", the Byzantine fortress dating from 412 A.D. (Fig. 1; the drawing is based on a colour-slide by the author). It reads:

tjmw br̄  
m'jtw

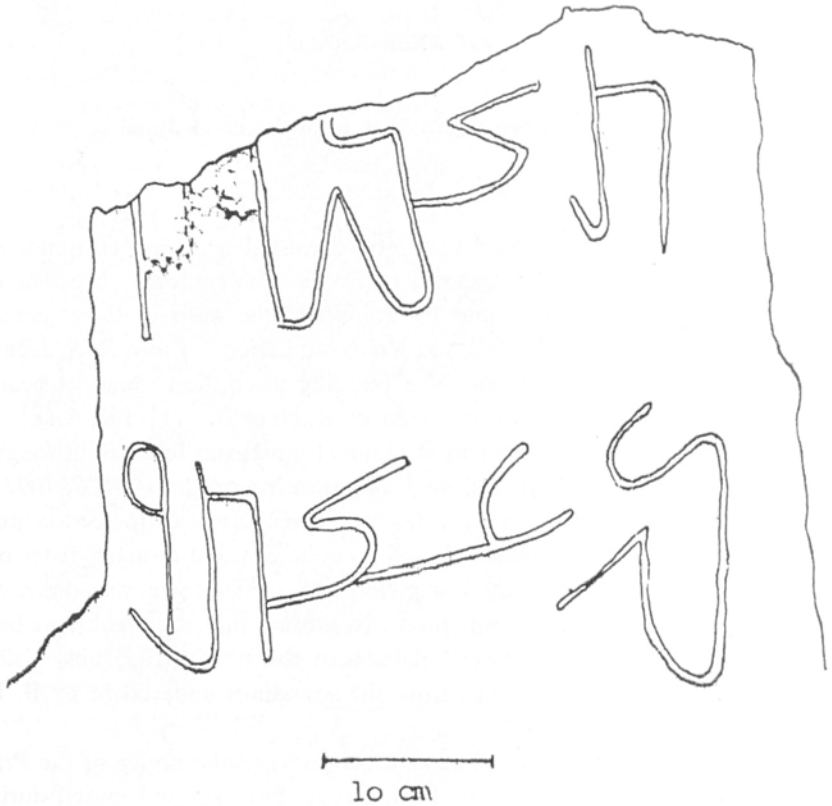
Taim, son of  
Mughith

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Littmann, *Semitic Inscriptions*, Section A: Nabataean Inscriptions (*PAES*, IV; Leiden 1914), 37f.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, the remarks of e.g. A. Negev, "The Nabataeans and the Provincia Arabia", *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt*, II, 8 (Berlin 1977), 520–686. 663–667, on Umm el-Jimāl are baseless.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. B. De Vries, "The Umm el-Jimāl Project, 1972–1977", *BASOR*, 244 (1981), 53–72; *ADAJ*, 26 (1982), 97–116.

Taim is one of the most common ancient Arabian names.<sup>4</sup> Mughith, however, as far as Nabataean is concerned, occurs only in the Ḥaurān: *RES*, 85 = *PAES*, IV A 31, together with the Greek transcription Μο/ε/θου (gen.).<sup>5</sup>



<sup>4</sup> *tjmw* is attested in every region which furnished Nabataean inscriptions, cf. J. Cantineau, *Le Nabatéen*, II (Paris 1932), 155f, and abounds in Safaitic, cf. G. L. Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian Names and Inscriptions* (NMES 8; Toronto 1971), 136 (most of the inscriptions labelled "Thamudic" by Harding s.v. *tm* are in fact South-Safaitic).

<sup>5</sup> *mġt* is attested in Safaitic as well, but only in Northern Safaitic (Harding, *op. cit.*, 558).