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THE GREEK-NABATAEAN BILINGUAL INSCRIPTION AT RUWWĀFA, SAUDI ARABIA

At 7:35 in the morning on Saturday, 25 June 1910, Alois Musil reached the remains of a small ancient temple at the remote site of Ruwwāfa (or Rawwāfa) in north-west Saudi Arabia. The spot lies some 75 kilometres south-south-west of Tebūk. Among the remains Musil discovered a Greek and a Nabataean inscription. Then : « Among the building material I perceived a stone more than two meters long, which I regarded as an architrave. Surmising that there might be some inscriptions upon it, with the help of Tūmān I scraped away some of the smaller stones with which it was covered and endeavoured to insert my hand beneath it. From under the stone a snake ran out ; after thrusting my stick underneath to make sure that no more snakes were concealed there, I rummaged beneath its lower portion and by my sense of touch traced the cuttings of separate letters. When our comrades had come back from the well, we turned the stone over. On it was carved a long Nabataean and Greek inscription of which I prepared two molds ... According to the bilingual inscription, the sanctuary was built by the Thamudenoī tribe at the beginning of the second half of the second century of our era.»¹ Musil's molds, or squeezes, disappeared ; and the text remained unknown.

In January 1951 Philby visited Ruwwāfa and rediscovered among other inscriptions the great bilingual seen by Musil ; « The date of its [i.e. the temple's] construction is fixed approximately by the fine bilingual (Greco-Nabataean) inscription, which presumably formed part of the frieze of the temple frontage, and which was discovered by Alois Musil in 1910. I had no difficulty in finding it among the tumbled ruins, and naturally I copied it with great care, as well as taking rubbings of it, as the copy made by Musil seems to have disappeared ... The text mentions the names of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Verus as the patrons in whose honour the temple was built and dedicated »² Philby's copies survive ; his rubbings apparently do not. He returned to the site a year later and saw the bilingual inscription still there, although another text had vanished and a third had been mutilated « in an attempt to reduce it to portable dimensions. »³ Between Philby's two visits an antiquarian dealer from al-Qaṭif had gone to the site.⁴

¹ Alois MUSIL, *The Northern Hejaz*, New York, 1926, p. 185.

² H. St. John PHILBY, *The Land of Midian*, London, 1957, p. 146.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.* Philby calls the dealer Khālid al-Farāj ; J. T. MILIK, however, gives his name

In the autumn of 1966 Ruth Stiehl went to Ruwwāfa, where she took a series of excellent photographs of the bilingual inscription. These were well published in 1969 together with an attempt by Altheim and Stiehl at an edition of the text¹. That attempt was a disaster, as both the photographs and subsequent research have proven.

In 1968 Peter Parr, G. L. Harding, and J. E. Dayton explored Ruwwāfa and again photographed the bilingual inscription. Harding copied part of the Nabataean text. The material from this visit, together with Philby's copies, was turned over to J. T. Milik, who at last gave the scholarly world the first acceptable edition of this important inscription². His success can best be measured by a simple comparison with the earlier text of Altheim-Stiehl in conjunction with a close examination of Stiehl's photographs, which are ironically far superior to Parr's. There would be no point in recording the divergences between the Altheim-Stiehl and Milik texts, since the former cannot be taken seriously.

In publishing the Ruwwāfa bilingual Milik, following an observation of Philby in a private letter, called attention to Richard Burton's report that in 1878 the Bedouin showed him, at a distance of two hours south of Ruwwāfa by camel, « a fragment of a Nabataean inscription finely cut in white sandstone. »³ Burton went on to note, « it had been barbarously broken, and two other pieces were en route. The stone is said to be ten feet long, all covered with writings. » This, on Milik's view, refers to fragments of the Ruwwāfa text. If so, it is important that Burton mentions an exhibition of the Nabataean fragment in Cairo and the careful photographing of it. The fragment or the photograph, perhaps both, may still exist.

The text of the temple inscription runs in very long lines across the epistyle and in short lines on the left and right pilasters. Milik's text is as follows (with the silent correction of a few minor typographical errors).

A. ¹ Ὑπὲρ αἰωνίου διαμονῆς κρατήσεως τῶν θειοτάτων κοσμοκρατόρων Σεβαστῶν μεγίστων Ἀρμενιακῶν Μάρκου Ἀδρηλίου Ἀντωνείνου καὶ Λουκίου Ἀδρηλίου Οὐδέρου πατέρων πατρίδος τὸ τῶν Ἰαμουδηνῶν ἔθνος — ca. 60]ΣΤΑ καθείδρυσεν· μετὰ προτροπῆς] ³ καὶ ἐκ περὶ[θούς? — ca. 25 — Κ]οίντου [Ἀριστίου Ἀδουεντοῦ πρεσβενοῦ Σεβαστῶν ἀντιστρατήγου...].

B. ⁴ 'L ŠLM' DY MTM[KY]N L[K]L [ʿ]L[M' — ca. 30 — MRQS] 'WRLYS 'NṬWNYS WLWQYS 'WRLYS WRS DY 'RMNY' vac. DNH NWS' DY 'BDT ŠRKT TMWDW QDMY ŠRKTH LMHW' [Š]WH MN YDHM WMŠMŠH[M L 'L] M^{5b} vac. WHFYT 'NṬSTYS 'DWNTS HGMWN' [-ca. 10 -] WRMŠHM.

as Khalil al-Farāj in *Preliminary Survey in N.W. Arabia, 1968*, in *Bulletin No. 10 of the Institute of Archaeology*, London, 1972, p. 55.

¹ Franz ALTHEIM and Ruth STIEHL, *Die Araber in der alten Welt* vol. V part. 2, Berlin, 1969, p. 24-25 and plates 2, 3, 4, 5.

² J. T. MILIK, *Inscriptions grecques et nabatéennes de Rawwafah*, in *Preliminary Survey in N.W. Arabia, 1968*, in *Bulletin No. 10 of the Institute of Archaeology*, London, 1972, p. 54-57.

³ Quoted by Milik, *ibid.*, p. 54.

C. ^{5a} Ἐπὶ νείκῃ καὶ αἰωνίῳ διαμονῇ αὐτοκρατόρων Καισάρων [Μ]άρκου [Αὐ]ρη-
 λίου Ἀντωνεῖνου ⁶ καὶ Λουκίου Αἰρηλίου Οὐδήρου Σεβ(αστῶν) Ἀρμενιακῶν
 Μηθικῶν Παρθικῶν μεγ[ί]στων καὶ τοῦ παντὸς οἴ[κου] αὐτῶν τὸ τῶν Θαμου-
 δηνῶν ἔθνος vac.

⁷ τὸν νεῶ<ν> συνετέλεσεν

⁸ καὶ τὸ ἱερόν καθειέρωσεν

⁹ [ἐπὶ Λ(ουκίου) Κλ]αυδίου Μοδέστου

¹⁰ [πρεσβευτ(οῦ) Σεβ]β ἀντιστρατ(ήγου).

The Nabataean text, as read by Milik, may be translated: « For the well-being of the rulers of the whole world [... Marcus] Aurelius Antoninus and Lucius Aurelius Verus who are *Armeniaci*, this is the temple which the confederation of the Thamudeni built, (i.e.) the leaders of their confederation, in order that it might be [established] by their hand and worship conducted [for them forever]. Through the encouragement of Antistius Adventus the governor [who ...] and made peace among them ».

The close parallelism between text A in Greek and text B in Nabataean is obvious. Milik's brief commentary is confined to important observations on the Nabataean, especially the equivalents of certain Greek words. NWS' transliterates πός. HFYT (cf. Arabic حفا *et sim.*) renders the Greek προτροπή exactly. ŠRKṬ (cf. Arabic شركة) is the equivalent of ἔθνος. The -κράτωρ element of κοσμοκράτωρ is matched precisely by MTM[KY]N, while κοσμο is literally rendered « for the whole world L[K]L [']L[M'] ». At the end of the Nabataean text WRMṢHM provides valuable evidence for the missing end of the Greek: Adventus made peace among the tribes (cf. Arabic رمص).

The Greek of the temple inscription requires some comment on its own. The correct translation of προτροπή as « exhortation » or « encouragement » and not « authorization » had been demonstrated by Louis Robert ¹. Though confirmation was hardly needed, the Nabataean equivalent provides it forcefully. On the language for the eternal duration of the emperors' rule, cf. H. U. INSTINSKY, « Kaiser und Ewigkeit », *Hermes* 77, 1942, p. 325. ² κοσμοκράτωρ is a rare epithet for emperors in this period and seems not to have been attested hitherto for the emperors Marcus and Lucius. It may possibly have something to do with the conclusion of Lucius' eastern campaigns (note νείκῃ in segment C). At least the imperial titulature in C makes it certain that this inscription is to be dated to the years A.D. 166-169 (when Lucius Verus died).

¹ L. ROBERT, in *Anatol. Studies Buckler*, Manchester, 1939, p. 237-238 = *Opera Minora Selecta I*, p. 621-622.

² For further remarks on διαμονή see L. ROBERT, in *Hellenica X*, Paris, 1955, p. 103 and S. WEINSTOCK, *Treueid und Kaiserkultus*, in *Ath. Mitt.* 77, 1962, p. 306-327, particularly p. 313-315.

In A, line 2 ἐκ πει[θοῦς] is suspect. There is no exact equivalent in the Nabataean, but ἐκ προ[νοίας] would be a preferable reading. For a recent example, cf. M. SARTRE, *Syria* 50, 1973, p. 228-9 [Bostra, third century A.D.]: ἐκ προνοίας Αἰμιλλίου Αἰμιλλιανοῦ. In line 7 Milik's <v> is unnecessary.

The new bilingual inscription has significant implications for Roman History. Above all, it puts beyond any doubt that northwest Saudi Arabia, precisely that part of the peninsula which had been a part of the Nabataean kingdom until A.D. 106, was after that date a part of the Roman province of Arabia. Two governors of the Arabian province are mentioned here: Q. Antistius Adventus and L. Claudius Modestus. It is apparent that the building of the temple began in the governorship of the former and was completed (with its official dedication) in the governorship of the latter. This final proof concerning the territory of *Arabia provincia* is welcome, although the truth had been surmised earlier¹. The impact upon our understanding of the historian Tacitus will be indicated at a later point.

Provincial and Consular Fasti

It is not only necessary to revise the fasti of the province of Arabia in the light of the new evidence but also the consular fasti of Rome. Both Adventus and Modestus were already known as governors of the province. Adventus, whose full nomenclature is Q. Antistius Adventus Postumius Aquilinus, is attested as governor of Arabia in A.D. 166 and as consul designate while governor². This date coheres perfectly with the Ruwāfa evidence. Modestus, however, is another matter. He has been assumed to be a consul suffect in A.D. 152 and therefore governor of Arabia before that time³. The Ruwāfa text shows that this is impossible, for he succeeded Adventus (in 166 or later) and was governor before Lucius Verus' death in 169. Therefore, sometime between 166/7 and 169. His consulate will have been after that.

Modestus' consulate had been lodged in 152 on the assumption that he was the colleague of L. Dasumius Tuscus, known from the Ostian Fasti to have been consul in that year. The joining of Modestus and Tuscus was based solely on *CIL IX, 1574 [Mod]esto et [Tu]sco cos.* Clearly the consul — — —scus does not have to be Tuscus. He might be a Priscus, for example. Modestus cannot have been consul before 167 at the earliest, so that if it is indeed his name in *CIL IX, 1574* some other colleague must be found than L. Dasumius Tuscus, consul in 152. A good candidate is the consul of uncertain date, Novius Priscus, proconsul of Asia, in the early years of Commodus' reign and therefore consul in the later sixties, the ideal time for Modes-

¹ Cf. G. W. Bowersock, *A Report on Arabia Provincia*, in *J.R.S.* 61, 1971, p. 231.

² Dessau, *ILS* 3094, 8977; *A.E.* 1914, 281; *IGR* 3, 1368. Cf. *PIR*², A 754.

³ For the most recent account of Modestus, see W. Eck, in *Z.P.E.* 8, 1971, p. 88 and *P.-W. Suppl. Bd. XIV*, Claudius n^o. 241a, 242 proposing two persons with the same name.

tus¹. Accordingly in the Arabian fasti the name of L. Claudius Modestus should now follow that of Q. Antistius Adventus, and in the consular fasti Modestus must be excised from the year 152 and placed among the undated consuls of the later 160's (possibly as colleague of Novius Priscus).]

Thamūd and the Nabataeans

The bilingual inscription reveals in both the Greek and Nabataean texts that the temple was built by the ἔθνος (ŠRKṬ) of the Thamudeni, that is Thamūd. The Thamudic tribes were distinct from the Nabataeans and had their own language and script. Their presence within the territory of the Nabataean kingdom has long been attested by thousands of Thamudic graffiti.² Uranius mentions them as neighbors of the Nabataeans³, and the elder Pliny indicates a concentration of the Thamūd in the south of the Nabataean realm, precisely in north-west Saudi Arabia⁴; the Qur'ān repeatedly alludes to them and to their prophet Šāliḥ as inhabitants of the same area⁵. The Nabataean tombs at Medā' in Šāliḥ (which means « cities of Šāliḥ ») were thought to have been the dwellings of the Thamūd⁶. There is thus ample evidence of Thamudic occupation of the area in which Ruwḡāfa lies, from the age of the elder Pliny to the age of Muḡammad. The *Notitia Dignitatum* records *equites Saraceni Thamudeni*⁷.

It is notable that at Ruwḡāfa the Nabataean civilization had had so profound an impact upon the Thamūd that the Semitic language in their official dedicatory inscription is not their own but that of their former overlords. Further, the construction of the temple is distinctively Nabataean in style⁸. The final word of the Nabataean text reveals a characteristic feature of Arab tribal life, feuds and wars, and — more important — shows the rule of the provincial governor as peacemaker and the honouring of the emperors as a means of bringing dissident tribes together.

¹ A.É. 1911, 135. Cf. A. DEGRASSI, *I fasti consolari dell' impero romano*, Rome, 1952, p. 47.

² See, for example, A. van den BRANDEN, *Les inscriptions thamoudéennes*, Louvain, 1950; and *id.*, *Les Textes Thamoudéens de Philby*, 2 vols., Louvain, 1956. Cf. *id.*, *Histoire de Thamoud*, Beirut, 1960 [2nd ed. 1966].

³ URANIUS, frag. 12 in JACOBY, *FGH*, C, 675: Θαμουδά· Ναβαταίων γειτων τῶν Ἀραβίων. δ οὐκ ἔγνωθ' Θαμουδιηνός.

⁴ PLINY, *NH* VI, 157: Tamudaei.

⁵ E.g., Qur'ān, Sura 8, 71-77; 11, 64-71; 15, 80; 29, 37; 89, 8.

⁶ Cf. Qur'ān, Sura 15, 80-84.

⁷ *Not. Dig.* (Seeck), p. 59.

⁸ P. J. PARR, G. L. HARDING, and J. E. DAYTON, *Preliminary Survey in N.W. Arabia*, 1968, in *Bulletin Nos. 8 and 9 of the Institute of Archaeology*, London, 1970, p. 219: «The mode of construction of the Ruwḡafah monument, and especially the diagonal stone dressing, are best paralleled in Nabataea.»

Rubrum Mare in Tacitus, *Ann.* II, 61

The certain inclusion of north-west Saudi Arabia in the province of Arabia, as demonstrated by the Ruwwāfa bilingual, is relevant to an old and much discussed problem in the *Annales* of Tacitus. In *Ann.* II, 61, 2, on Germanicus' visit to Egypt in A.D. 19, the historian wrote: *exin ventum Elephantinen ac Syenen, claustra olim Romani imperii, quod nunc rubrum ad mare patescit*¹. Justus Lipsius believed that this was a reference to Trajan's extending the Roman Empire to the Persian Gulf in the last years of his reign. In recent times Sir Ronald Syme has eloquently advocated this interpretation, concluding: « There will be no reason to suppose that the author had begun writing before 115. It follows that almost all the books of the *Annales* are Hadrianic »². If this is so, assumptions may be made about the impact on Tacitus of events at the time of Hadrian's accession and in the early years of his reign.

It is true that the expression « red sea » in antiquity could refer generally to the Indian Ocean, and specifically to its offshoots, the modern Red Sea (and its two offshoots to Suez and 'Aqaba) and the Persian Gulf³. Hence, to take the most obvious example, a *περίπλους* of the Red Sea means the circumnavigation of the Arabian peninsula. But Lipsius' assumption that Tacitus was referring to Trajan's Mesopotamian conquests has always had two points against it: 1) The conquests were promptly abandoned by Hadrian when he came to power in 117, and it is therefore necessary to assume that Tacitus never troubled to remove a glaring anachronism while writing and revising his *Annales* under Hadrian; 2) In the immediately preceding chapter of the *Annales* (II, 60, 4) Tacitus wrote that the revenues of the Pharaohs were *haud minus magna quam nunc vi Parthorum aut potentia Romana iubeantur*. Yet from the moment at which Trajan reached the Persian Gulf there was no independent *vis Parthorum* since the capture of Ctesiphon had made the Parthian king a client of Rome. Coins advertised *Parthia capta* and *rex Parthis datus*⁴. Plainly the two successive chapters, 60 and 61, are incompatible with each other if 61 is taken to

¹ The bibliography on this passage is vast. Surveys of recent discussions appear in Koestermann's commentary *ad loc.* and in *P-W Suppl.* Bd. XI, 1968, p. 467 (Borzák).

² R. SYME, *Tacitus* vol. II, Oxford, 1958, p. 770 [at the end of Appendix 71 beginning on p. 768]. The subject is treated again in *id.*, *Ten Studies in Tacitus*, Oxford, 1970, p. 144-145.

³ Observe, for example, LIVY 45, 9, 3: *Arabas hinc Indianaque, qua terrarum ultimos fines rubrum mare amplectitur*. CASS. DIO 68, 28, 3 and EUROP. 8, 3 both refer to the Persian Gulf as the Red Sea in the context of Trajan's conquests. DESSAU, *ILS* 5834 refers to the Gulf of 'Aqaba as *mare rubrum*. Even though the Augustan province of Egypt bordered on the Red Sea at the Gulf of Suez, it is clear from TACITUS' placing the *claustra* in the interior that he considered the Red Sea outside the empire before his own day. TACITUS uses the words *rubro mari* vaguely for the Indian Ocean at *Agr.* 12. 6. At *Ann.* XIV, 25 *maris rubri* is so inexplicable in the context of Corbulo's campaigns that Lipsius proposed to emend to *maris sui* (i.e. the Caspian). For further discussion, cf. J. BEAUJEU, *Le mare rubrum de Tacite et le problème de la chronologie des Arabes*, in *R.É.L.* 38, 1960, p. 200-235.

⁴ *BMC*, Imp. III, p. 115, no. 588 (*Parthia capta*); *BMC*, Imp. III, p. 223, no. 1046 (*rex Parthis datus*).

be an anachronistic reference to the state of the empire for the two final years of Trajan's reign.

It has been argued that the literary force of the expression *rubrum mare* is more potent than anachronism or chronological incompatibility. Livy and Virgil show that the words can evoke an extremity of the inhabited world, e.g. *ab Gadibus ad mare rubrum* or *victor ab Aurorae populis et litore rubro*¹. Thus Tacitus was saying that the eastern empire extended to the end of the world. Such a literary overtone is very probably just what Tacitus had in mind, but it is irrelevant to the precise geographical reference on which the literary evocation depends. It does not have to refer to the Persian Gulf.

In 1958, in arguing a case for the Persian Gulf, one could say, « It is not necessary to point out that the Roman province Arabia took in hardly any of the Nabataean littoral on the Red Sea »². The Ruwwāfa inscription is conclusive proof that the Nabataean littoral on the Red Sea did in fact belong to the Roman province of Arabia annexed in A.D. 106. It is not merely that the province extended, as has long been known, to 'Aqaba (cf. the inscriptions which record the *via nova Traiana* as running *ad mare rubrum*)³: the province itself incorporated the territory, formerly Nabataean, at least as far south as Medā 'in Šāliḥ. The annexation of the new province provides an incontestable basis for Tacitus' statement and its literary resonance. In addition, a reference to the annexation has the signal merit of remaining true after 106 for two centuries or a little less. It is not anachronistic within the *Annales*. And it is perfectly compatible with the reference to the Parthians in the preceding chapter, since they remain a counterforce to Rome until 116.

The Ruwwāfa text tips the scales decisively against Lipsius' understanding of the *rubrum mare* allusion in Book II of the *Annales*. When it is assumed that Tacitus meant the modern Red Sea, his usage becomes fully consistent with that of a scholar of the generation before him, the elder Pliny. In the Natural History, Book VI, describing the Near East, Pliny scrupulously distinguishes the modern Red Sea as *rubrum mare* and the Persian Gulf as *sinus Persicus* (or *mare Persicum*). Examples are frequent: ⁴

VI, 108	Persicus sinus	VI, 103	rubri maris
109	Persicus sinus	154	in rubro litore
114	Persicum mare	165	rubrum mare
130	mari Persico	166	rubro mari

¹ LIVY 36, 17, 15; VIRGIL, *Aen.* VIII, 686.

² R. SYME, *Tacitus* vol II, Oxford, 1958, p. 768. Likewise BEAUJEU in the article cited above, p. 225, n. 1.

³ DESSAU, *ILS* 5834: *viam novam a finibus Syriae usque ad mare rubrum aperuit et stravit*. With *aperuit* one may compare TACITUS' verb *patescit*.

⁴ This is not meant as an exhaustive list.

138 Persici sinus	170 rubri maris
144 sinu Persico	189 rubro mari, rubrum litus
149 Persico mari	196 mari rubro
	220 rubro mari

VI, 143 is particularly telling : *ipsa vero paeninsula Arabia inter duo maria Rubrum Persicumque procurrens . . .* Pliny shows that he is fully conscious of what he is doing (and he implies it is common practice) when he writes in VI, 115 : *Persae rubrum mare semper accolluere, propter quod is sinus Persicus vocatur.*

With a *terminus post* of 106 in *Ann.* II, 61 and a *terminus ante* of 116 in II, 60, it becomes likely that Tacitus wrote at least the earlier books of the *Annales* in the reign of Trajan.

The Inscription at el-Nemāra

The present inquiry will conclude with the question of when northwest Saudi Arabia ceased to be a part of the Roman provincial system. The chief exhibit is the remarkable and difficult inscription which Dussaud and Macler discovered at the turn of the century in el-Nemāra, east of the Haurān in southern Syria ¹. It is a funerary text commemorating one Mar'alqais (or in Classical Arabic Imru'lqais), called « king of all the Arabs », whose conquests in south Arabia are mentioned alongside his relations with the Persians and the Romans. The text is dated according to the era of Bostra to A.D. 328. It is written in Nabataean script but in the Arabic language.

The conquests in the south of the peninsula (Najrān is explicitly named and described as the city of Shammar) and the presence of the gravestone of Imru'lqais at el-Nemāra far to the north afford a measure of credibility to the grandiose claim that the defunct was king of all the Arabs. His realm was obviously extensive ; and it is virtually certain from his father's name 'Amr together with the location of the inscription that this Imru'lqais is no less a person than Imru'lqais son of 'Amr, second king of the Lakhmid dynasty which was based at al-Hīra ². By his day it seems, if the inscription is rightly interpreted below, that the tribes from el-Nemāra to Najrān were ruled by Arabs independently of Rome and Persia (though conceivably in some kind of client relationship). At any rate by the death of Imru'lqais the territory in northwest Saudi Arabia, once administered as a part of the province of Arabia, was no longer a part of the Roman Empire. The change cannot be dated exactly, but it is more than likely to have been due to Diocletian's reorganization which divided the

¹ R. DUSSAUD and F. MACLER in *Rev. Arch.* 2, 1902, p. 409-421 and in *Rapport sur une mission scientifique dans les régions désertiques de la Syrie moyenne*, in *Nouvelles Archives des Missions scientifiques et littéraires* 10, 1903, p. 314.

² F. E. PEISER, *Die arabische Inschrift von en-Nemāra*, in *O.L.Z.* 6, 1903, p.277-281 ; Ch. CLERMONT-GANNEAU, *Le roi de tous les Arabes*, in *Recueil d'archéologie orientale* VI, 1904, p. 305-310.

Arabian province into separate northern and southern parts (with centers at Bostra and Petra respectively) ¹.

The rise of the Lakhmids is therefore important for this investigation. When Gustav Rothstein published his *Die Dynastie der Lakhmiden in al-Hira* in 1899, there was little to be said about the earliest stages of Lakhmid rule, especially in the third and early fourth centuries. « In Wirklichkeit wissen wir über die erste Periode des hīrensischen Staates so gut wie nichts » ². Rothstein expressed himself very sceptically on the reports of Arab historians, notably Ṭabarī and through him the genealogist al-Kalbī. But fortunately things have changed. Ṭabarī reports that when Ardashīr gained control of Iraq it caused the Tanūkh, who had been settled in the area of al-Qaṭīf, to move northwest to al-Hira and to join with tribes as far up as Syria ³. This testimony, once suspect, has received striking confirmation from two inscriptions.

One text from Umm al-jemāl in the southern Ḥaurān is a Greek-Nabataean bilingual which mentions a teacher of Jadhīma (Nab. GDYMT, Grk. Γαδιμαθος) called king of the Tanūkh (Nab. MLK TNWH, Grk. βασιλεύς Θανουνηών) ⁴. This Jadhīma is a real person with a legendary reputation in Islam for his struggles with the Palmyrenes at the time of Zenobia ⁵. The inscription accordingly belongs to a date in the mid-third century or a little later. It constitutes vivid proof of the northward migration of the Tanūkh in that century. The second inscription, only recently made known, records an embassy from a Shammar to the northeast of the Arabian peninsula ⁶. This area is said to include MJLKTY FRS W'RD TNH, « provinces (?) of Persia and the land of Tanūkh ». The text confirms the old location of the Tanūkh in the vicinity of al-Qaṭīf and seems to afford a glimpse into the diplomatic activity caused by the new Sassanian presence. The date of the text must fall before the mid-third century: the Shammar will be Shammar Yuhar'ish II ⁷.

The movement of the Tanūkh and the joining with other tribes in the Syrian desert provides the indispensable background for the emergence of al-Hira as a center of the Lakhmids. The supremacy of the Lakhmids seems to have followed the suppression of Zenobia, in which from the Arab perspective Jadhīma and his nephew, who became the father of Imru'lqais, were important figures. It has often been assumed that Imru'lqais and his house were clients either of Persia or of Rome. Wer-

¹ R. E. BRÜNNOW and A. VON DOMASZEWSKI, *Die Provincia Arabia*, vol III, Strassburg, 1909, p. 217-273; G. W. BOWERSOCK, *op. cit.*, p. 242.

² G. ROTHSTEIN, *Die Dynastie der Lakhmiden in al-Hira*, Berlin, 1899, p. 40.

³ ṬABARĪ, *Annales* I, 821. On the location of the Tanūkh, Ibn al-Athīr I, 243: Yāqūt II, 376. Cf. H. VON WISSMAN, *Zur Kenntnis von Ostarabien besonders al-Qaṭīf im Altertum*, in *Le Muséon* 80, 1967, p. 489-508, particularly p. 506.

⁴ E. LITTMANN, *Nabataean Inscriptions from the Southern Ḥaurān*, Publications Princeton University Arch. Exp. Syria IV. A, 1914, p. 37-40, no. 41.

⁵ See, most recently, W. CASKEL, *Die Inschrift von en-Namāra neu gesehen*, in *Mémoires de la St. Joseph* 45, 1969, p. 369-370 (on Jadhīma).

⁶ J. RYCKMANS, *Le texte Sharafaddin, Yemen*, p. 44 bas, droite, in *Le Muséon* 80, 1967, p. 508-512.

⁷ Cf. CASKEL, *op. cit.*, p. 367.

ner Caskel argued shortly before his death that Imru'lqais was genuinely independent¹. This depends on the interpretation of the Nemāra inscription.

In line 1 the king of all the Arabs is said to have put on the diadem (ذواسر التاج). The word for diadem is, to be sure, a Persian word (tāj), but there is no sign that the king received his diadem at Persian hands. More decisively, in line 4 in a passage referring to Imru'lqais' sons the text has been read as WWKLHN FRSW LRWM: manifestly, despite the problems of detail, this refers to Persians (FRS) and Romans (RWM), and not to horsemen (reading, as some early editors and some recent writers have done, فارسو) and to Romans². Clermont-Ganneau pointed out in 1904 with his customary acumen that the wāw after FRS has to be the connective, not an appearance of a peculiarly Nabataean inflection³. The nūn before fā' could as well be a lām, so that one can read « ووكلها لفرس ولروم » and he appointed them (his sons) as deputies to the Persians and to the Romans⁴. Caskel's version « ووكلهن (ل)فرس » involving the hypothesis of a missing letter, is unnecessary⁵. In brief, the family of Imru'lqais constituted his liaison with Persia and Rome. His was an independent buffer kingdom *inter duo imperia summa*⁶.

At Ruwwāfa the resident Thamūd, like those at Medā' in Sāliḥ and elsewhere in the region, may be assumed to have passed in the time of Diocletian to the rule of Arab kings, who controlled the desert land between Rome's empire and Persia.

The foregoing pages are presented to Mlle Préaux with the gratitude and high esteem of one who has learned much from her writings.

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¹ *Ibid.*, p. 377.

² The reading فارسو (with terminal Nabataean wāw) stood in DUSSAUD's early version of the text; it was enshrined in the *Répertoire d'épigraphie sémitique* no. 483 and later in J. CANTINEAU, *Le Nabatéen*, vol. II, Paris, 1932, p. 49. Dussaud accepted the reading « Persians » in his *La pénétration des Arabes en Syrie avant l'Islam*, Paris, 1955, p. 64. Alarminglly some recent scholars have not even recognized that there was an alternative to « horsemen »: observe A. GROHMANN, *Arabien*, Munich, 1963, p. 24 (Mar'al-Qais der « den Römern Hilfstruppen sandte ») and W. DIEM, *Die nabatäischen Inschriften und die Frage der Kasusflexion im Altarabischen*, in *Z.D.M.G.* 123, 1973, p. 236, n. 56 (« Reiter »).

³ Ch. CLERMONT-GANNEAU, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

⁴ At the end of line 1 there is another unconnected lām in 'LTG (التاج). The antecedent of the pronominal suffix must be the sons, not (as usually assumed) the tribes. CASKEL's reading of *wakala*, instead of *wakkala*, produces the improbability of entrusting the tribes (—*hanna*) to Persians and Romans: this is at variance with the whole point of the inscription. DUSSAUD translates the verb « départagea », which it does not mean. The feminine singular suffix is used to refer to the sons collectively (cf. كلها in line 1).

⁵ I presume that فرسي in CASKEL's text is simply a misprint.

⁶ The elder Pliny's phrase for the kingdom of Palmyra: *NH* V, 88.