Littman, E. 1913a "Arabic Inscriptions," in *Syria. Publications of the Princeton University Archaeological Expedition to Syria* (Div. IV, Sect. D, Umm Idj-Djimal, Leyden) 1-3.

SOUTHERN SYRIA

UMM IDJ-DJIMÂL

1. GRAFFITO. This pre-Islamic graffito was found in the building called "Double Church" by our Expedition, on the south side of the pier at the west end of the northern arcade of the nave of the northern church. These churches have been described by Professor Butler in Div. II A, pp. 179 ff: on p. 182 the place of this graffito has been indicated, and in the photograph (Ill. 157) it is to be recognized. When the graffito was discovered only a part of it was visible, the other part was covered with plaster which I had to remove before I could copy the whole and make a squeeze of it. Professor Butler says: "That this inscription belongs to the Christian period cannot be gainsaid, for it was covered with plaster at some time when the interior of the church was undergoing repairs and decoration, there is no evidence that the building was ever used by the Moslems. The plaster which covered the inscription is of the same quality as that which covered the highly finished details, which is to say the best quality employed by the Christian builders of Syria". It is impossible to say whether the graffito was covered when later repairs were made in the church, or whether it disappeared under the original plaster of the building. In any case, there is no doubt that this is a pre-Islamic, Christian-Arabic writing. The stone on which it is written is basalt; the letters, which were rather carelessly incised, were filled with red paint. The stone measures 62 × 31 cm.; its lower end is somewhat damaged so that the lower half of the letters of the last line has been lost.

E. Littmann, *Die vorislamisch-arabische Inschrift aus Umm iǧ-Ǧimâl*, in *Z.Sem.* Bd. 7, 1929, pp. 197 ff — *R.C.E.A.* I, pp. 4 f. — This inscription has been mentioned by Hawary in *J.R.A.S.* 1930, p. 333.
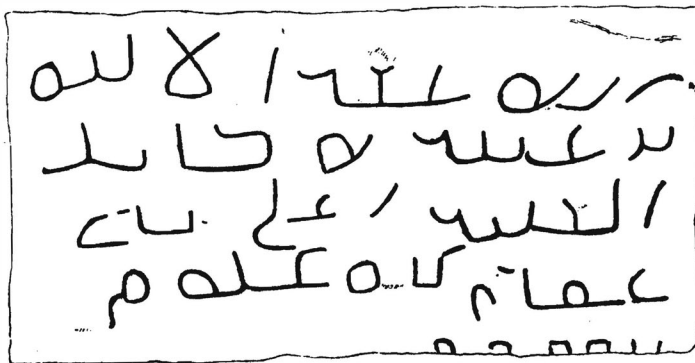
Inscr. 1.   Scale 1 : 6²/₃

الله غفرا لالیه	1	*God, [grant] pardon to ʾUlaih,*
بن عبيدة كاتب	2	*the son of ʿUbaidah, the secretary*
العبيد اعلى بنى	3	*of al-ʿUbaid, the chief of the Banū*
عمرى تنبه علا(ي)ه من	4	*ʿAmr! May have notice of it he who*
[يقروه]	5	*reads it!*

علیه: it may be a mistake in writing, or it may, as Professor Pedersen suggested, represent a pronunciation ʿalēh.

L. 5. For the reading نعروه cp. my former publication, p. 202.

Besides this graffito I copied 31 Nabataean, 5 Latin, 277 Greek and 13 Safaïtic inscriptions at Umm idj-Djimâl. The town existed, therefore, at the time of the Nabataean kingdom, a fact that is also shown by the ruins of Nabataean buildings. In the Roman Provincia Arabia, in which the town was situated from 106 A.D., Latin was the language of the army, Greek the language of administration. During the time of the Byzantine empire the Latin language disappeared, and Syriac seems to have become the language of Christian literature. But Arabic has been the common language of the people in Nabataean, Roman and Byzantine times. This Arabic language was a dialect in which the article al- was used as is seen from our graffito. But the dialect with the article ha- was also known: this is to be inferred from the presence of the Safaïtic inscriptions. Our graffito was probably written in the 6. century A.D., since the "Double Church" is to be dated from that century, and since the other two pre-Islamic Christian-Arabic inscriptions belong to it also: Zebed dated 512 A.D., Ḥarrân 568 A.D.

Christian-Arabic inscriptions dating from the time of Moslem sway are rather rare. As an example, and as a parallel to the graffito of Umm idj-Djimâl, an inscription from a Coptic monastery near Cairo may be quoted here; it reads *O Lord, forgive the sins of thy servants, and give rest to their souls, those for whose sake (is) this (church): and reward in the kingdom him who has taken these pains;* see A. W. Butler, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, I, p. 146.