

New Libyco-Berber inscriptions at Taouz (Southern Morocco)

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As many other archaeological discoveries in the south of Morocco, the engravings and the funerary monuments of Taouz were discovered by French officers, occupying the region, just before the Second World War. But it is only in February 1954 that the engravings and some of the monuments were both studied and published by Meunié & Allain (1956).

The sites, some sixty kilometres south west of Erfoud, consist of three locations, near the village and the barracks of Taouz. Site 1 stands at the southern edge of the Jebel Ouafilal and essentially shows pecked out chariots. Site 2 is a small hill, isolated from the main ridge and near to the wadi Ziz and showing chariots and sandals. Site 3, perhaps the most interesting, consists of engravings (chariots, cows, mounted bovid, a hypothetic giraffe) and huge monuments ("tumuli") with attached chapels.

On Site 1, one of the numerous chariots is very close to an inscription first published as photography (A. Ruhlmann, 1939) then as drawing by Meunié & Allain. Not far from this inscription, two other groups of letters were discovered and published as drawings in the cited article. These letters, rather large and pecked out, still exist.

The new inscriptions

Rodrigue discovered them in October 2001. All of them are located on Site 1, three of them on the southern edge of the Jebel, on the mid-height of the hill (Fig. 1 : 4 - 6), the other group (Fig. 1 : 1 - 3) on a single flat sandstone surface on the top of the hill. Inscriptions 4 - 6 are isolated, but each of them next to pecked out chariots. They have been executed on horizontal sandstone surfaces and blocks, all of them show a patina. While inscriptions 3 - 6 consist of distinct single lines composed of 4 - 5 signs, no.1 and 2 present a little chaotic arrangement of signs. In total these six new inscriptions are quite different from three other pales of Taouz : in technique as well as in size and form of the signs.

- They are scratched very shallow and thin (with metal instrument?)
- The signs are very tiny (1 - 3 cm)
- Some signs consisting of points seem to be included

There exist three examples of a "square with central dot", which is a variant of the sign "circle with central dot". While the square form is quite usual among the Moroccan inscriptions of IAM (Galand, 1996), the three examples of Taouz are the first documented among the rock inscriptions of Morocco.

In comparison with the other Libyco-Berber rock inscriptions of Morocco, the six new inscriptions show great similarities with those of Oued Meskaou, Ait Ouazik, Tibaskoutine and Tazzarine. The first impression is that they represent a rather younger level of development than the three ones already known.

Galand L., 1966 - *Inscriptions antiques du Maroc*, Paris.

Meunié J. et Allain Ch., 1956 - Quelques gravures et monuments funéraires de l'extrême S-E marocain. *Hesperis* XLIII, 1^{er} et 2^{ème} trim., pp. 51-85.

Ruhlmann A., 1939 - Les recherches de Préhistoire dans l'extrême Sud-marocain. *Publication du Service des Antiquités du Maroc* 5, pp. 5-99.

