

Rock Paintings with Libyan Inscriptions of Grande Kabylia, Algeria

Samia Ait Ali Yahia

Abstract—The rock paintings of Grande Kabylia contain a good number of Libyan inscriptions. Of the 54 sites discovered, 23 have inscriptions painted in red ochre. We find them in rock shelters, on blocks of sandstone in the northern part of Kabylia. Our job is to collect as many cave paintings as possible with Libyan inscriptions. Then we will make an analysis on the epigraphic level, the different forms of the characters and their frequencies. The other purpose of this research is to bring out the different characters used in these paintings and compare them with those of the Libyan steles of Grande Kabylia.

Keywords—Grande Kabylia, Libyan inscriptions, Libyan stele, rock paintings.

I. INTRODUCTION

GRANDE Kabylia region, like the Atlas and Sahara regions (Algeria), abounds in a considerable number of cave paintings and engravings. These images painted by our ancestors on rocky supports attest to very ancient material cultures. Most of these cave paintings and engravings were discovered by Poyto and Musso helped by Bordes and Laguen [1]. The searches were made from 1965 until 1967, the total of the sites thus discovered amounts to more than 52. New sites are discovered later on [2]-[4]. Most of these inscriptions have ornaments painted in red ochre.

II. PRESENTATION OF ROCK PAINTING SITES WITH LIBYAN INSCRIPTIONS

The number of rock painting sites with Libyan inscriptions listed is 23, most of them located in the northern part of Kabylia (Fig. 1). The study will be done simply on 15 sites; because the remaining paintings, with time and erosion, have become practically indecipherable. Among these sites we can quote: Ifri n'Dlal, Ifran 1, Ifran 2, Azru N'Tizwa, Azru Miyazen, Ahmil, Azrou Bouar, Azru Burzou n°1. Most of these sites are rock shelters made of sandstone block. Some of them have difficult access. They are adorned with cave paintings which mostly represent Libyan characters and some human silhouettes, animals and residual spots.

A. Site of Ifrin'Dlal

It is a rock shelter forming a fresco 10 m long and 5 m high, composed of Libyan inscriptions, a human silhouette and linear lines painted in red ochre (Fig. 2 (a)).

The total number of characters in this inscription is around

Samia Ait Ali Yahia is with the Department of Language and Amazigh Culture, University Mouloud Mammeri, Tizi-Ouzou, Algeria (e-mail: aitali_61@yahoo.fr).

381 (Fig. 2 (b)). Out of the 381 characters, 46 different signs could be distinguished (Fig. 2 (c)). Many characters are damaged by time, erosion and human hands, so they are difficult to decipher.

B. Site of Ifran n°1

The Ifran n°1 shelter is on the face of a large rock resting on a platform. The walls of the shelter are decorated with Libyan inscriptions, and three drawings (a human figure, a hand with four visible fingers and an enigmatic drawing) painted in red ochre (Fig. 3).

C. Site of Ifran n°2

It is a big rock that consists of a cave. This cave is 6 m long, 3.5 m high and 2.5 m deep. On the smooth wall, there are Libyan inscriptions painted in red ochre (Fig. 4).

The characters of these two sites (Ifran n°1 and Ifran n°2) are around 91. Among 91 characters, 24 different signs were highlighted (Fig. 5). Some characters are damaged and hardly indecipherable because of aging, erosion and also the hand of man.

D. Site of Azru N'Tizwa

It is a Numidian rocky sandstone, with a conical shape; the upper part has a rock shelter. On the wall of the shelter, there are Libyan characters and some residual spots (Fig. 6). The sum of characters in this inscription is around 19. Among the 19 characters, 11 different signs could be distinguished (Fig. 7).

E. Site of Azru Miyazen

It consists of a huge oval shaped rock overhung by a platform where there are two rock shelters of different depth and orientation. These two shelters contain Libyan inscriptions, human and animal silhouettes and enigmatic drawings (Fig. 8). All the characters in this inscription are around 17. Among the 17 characters we could distinguish 14 different signs (Fig. 9).

F. Site of Ahmil

It is a huge rock that stands at the entrance to Ahmil village. The south wall is curved forming a rock shelter. On the smooth part we distinguish Libyan characters (Fig. 10). The sum of the characters in this inscription is in the order of 32. Out of the 32 characters, 14 different signs could be distinguished (Fig. 11).

G. Site of Azru Bouar

The shelter is located inside a huge rock, the smooth wall contains cave paintings (Libyan inscriptions, enigmatic

patterns) (Fig. 12).

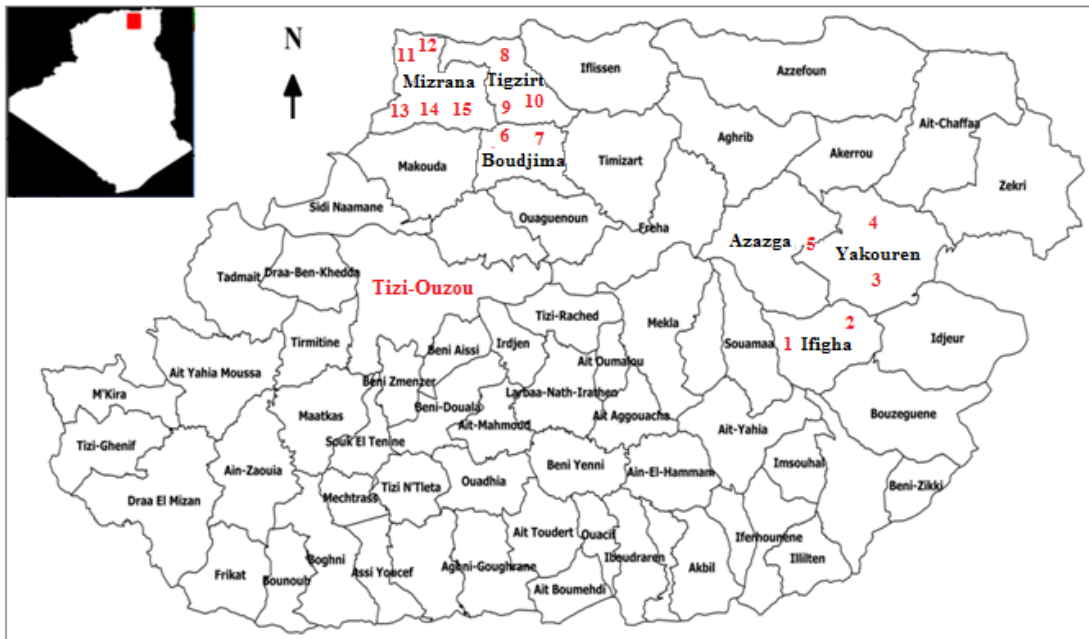


Fig. 1 Distribution map of the rock painting with Libyan inscriptions in Grande Kabylie



Fig. 2 (a) Site of Ifrin'Dlal



Fig. 3 Site of Ifrin n°1



Fig. 2 (b) Libyan characters



Fig. 4 Site of Ifrin n°2

•	••	:	•••	-	=	≡	≡≡		
		○	⊙	□	⊞	△	∪	∩	∩
∩	+	x	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞
∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞

Fig. 2 (c) 46 distinguished signs

•	:	-	=	≡					∞	⊙	○
x	+	∩	∩	x	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞	∞

Fig. 5 24 highlighted signs



Fig. 6 Site of Azru N'Tzizwa

I	III	IIII	U
z	o	~	Γ
∞	X	+	

Fig. 7 11 distinguished signs



Fig. 8 Site of Azru Miyazen

I	I	III	1	↑↑
O	⊙	⊖	z	Z
U	↑	W	≡	

Fig. 9 14 distinguished signs



Fig. 10 Site of Ahmil

All the characters in this inscription are around 36. Of the 36 characters we could distinguish 18 different signs (Fig. 13).

I	II	IIII	HH	-
z	z	O	⊙	Γ
↑↑	□	U	.	

Fig. 11 14 distinguished signs

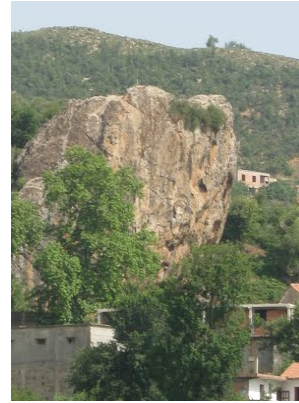


Fig. 12 Site of Azru Bouar

1	II	T	≡
I	-	v	↑
□	++	.	z
+	□	O	O
≡	IIII		

Fig. 13 18 distinguished signs

III. SITE OF AZRU BURZOU N°1

It is a huge rock with a shallow shelter. The wall of this shelter is smooth yellow, includes cave paintings (Libyan inscriptions of human and animal silhouette, and enigmatic drawings in the form of dots (Fig. 14).

All the characters in this inscription are in the order of 9. Of the 9 characters we could distinguish 5 different signs (Fig. 15).

IV. DISCUSSIONS

All the characters of Libyan inscriptions with rock paintings that we have examined show the existence of 80 different characters. However if we take into consideration that some signs are only variants of the same letter, and others are doubtful or badly engraved, we will have (Fig. 16) an alphabet of 35 signs and a point for Grande Kabylia.

We can see that there are three different categories of characters present in these Libyan inscriptions with cave paintings: Category of sure signs come up often and repeat themselves. There are 31 characters and a point (Fig. 17).

Categories of the attested but rare signs include especially the signs belonging to the Western alphabet. There are 13

characters (Fig. 18).



Fig. 14 Site of Azrou Burzou n°1

⌊	⌘	□	⊓
≡			

Fig. 15 5 distinguished signs

·	..	:	...	-	=
≡	≡≡			○ □	⊙ ⊠ △
⌊	⌋	+ x	⌘ ⊖ ⊕	⌘ ⌘	≡
⊓	⊔	⊓	⌈	1 ↑	⊓
⌋	⌈	⌋	⌘ z ⌘	≠ ++	⊓
≡	^ v	>	≡≡		



Fig. 16 Alphabet of Grande Kabylia

·	-	=	≡	≡≡	⌘	⌘
⌘	z	⌘	□	⊙	⌘	⊓
□	○	x	+	1	↑	⊓
⌋	⌋	⌋	⌋	⌈	⊓	⊓
⌋	⊓	⌋	⌋			

Fig. 17 Categories of sure signs

..	...		⌘
⊓	≡	≡≡	
⌈	++	⌋	
>	v	^	

Fig. 18 Categories of attested but rare signs

Category of doubtful and badly engraved signs are like the following one: . It may represent: 

V. COMPARISON OF ROCK PAINTINGS INSCRIPTIONS WITH LYBIAN ONES

According to the result of analysis of steles with Libyan inscriptions of grande Kabylia [4]-[7], there are 14 different signs and 44 are in common with the rock paintings with Libyan inscriptions (Fig. 19)

The rock paintings with Libyan inscriptions include 13 different signs and 44 common with the steles with Libyan inscriptions (Fig. 20).

VI. CONCLUSION

At the end of our study, it seems useful to summarize the results below:

- Among the 8 studied sites, there are 7 inscriptions written vertically and one only horizontally,
- Most of the inscriptions are painted in red ocher,
- The sites with rock inscriptions have a number of characters worthy of an alphabet.
- The graphic set of Ifri N'Dllal site alone contains more than half of the characters of all the rock inscriptions [3].
- We see that almost all the signs of the alphabet of Dougga [5], [6] are found in these inscriptions (20 signs) (Fig. 21).
- Libyan steles include 13 different signs 44 in common with rock paintings with Libyan inscriptions.
- The rock paintings with Libyan inscriptions include 14 different signs and 44 in common with the steles with Libyan inscriptions.
- The translation of these inscriptions proved to be impracticable because some characters are indecipherable.
- The age of these inscriptions remains difficult to fix due to lack of archaeological clues.

·	-	=	≡	≡≡			⌘	⌘	⊙	○	△	⊓
+	⌋	⌋	⌘	⊙	⌘	⌘	⊓	⌈	⌈	1	↑	⊓
x	⌋	⌋	⌋	⌋	⌈	⌈	⌈	⌈	⌈	1	↑	⊓
⌋	⌋	⌋	⌋	⌋	⌈	⌈	⌈	⌈	⌈	1	↑	⊓
⌋	⌋	⌋	⌋	⌋	⌈	⌈	⌈	⌈	⌈	1	↑	⊓

Fig. 19 Steles with Libyan inscriptions

·	..	:	...	-	=
≡	≡≡			○ □	⊙ ⊠ △
⌊	⌋	⌋	⌋	+ x	⌘ ⊖ ⊕
⊓	⊔	⊓	⌈	1 ↑	⊓
⌋	⌈	⌋	⌋	⌘ z ⌘	≠ ++
≡	^ v	>	≡≡		

Fig. 20 The rock paintings with Libyan inscriptions

·			≡	≡≡	○	⊙	⌋	⌋
⊓	+	⌘	⌘	⊓	⊓	⌋	⌋	⌋

Fig. 21 The rock paintings inscriptions in commons with Douga

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