

Descriptive Study of Libyan Steles of Grande Kabylia, Algeria

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Abstract—The Libyan steles contain a good number of inscriptions. We find them on blocks of sandstone in the northern part of Grande Kabylia, Algeria. Three Libyan steles recently discovered are added to the currently known and published documents which enrich the Libyan heritage of this region. The aim of this article is to make a descriptive study of the Libyan inscriptions of these steles in order to better understand the characteristics of each stele by comparing them to the different stele already known in the region. It is certain that if other similar specimens were to be added to those we already possess, knowledge of the Libyan would gradually become clearer. The Kabylia region is certainly full of these remains that have not yet been brought to light.

Keywords—Libyan stele, Libyan inscriptions, Paintings, Engraving, Kaylie.

I. INTRODUCTION

IN Kabylia paintings and engravings are relatively abundant. Of the 54 sites discovered, 25 are holders of Libyan inscriptions. Most of these paintings and rock engravings were discovered by Poyto and Musso [1]. The research was conducted from 1965 to 1967, the total amount of discovered sites rose over 52. The bulk of these inscriptions contain ornaments painted in red ocher. They are found in shelters, on rocks and sandstone blocks of the northern part of Kabylia [1], [2], [4]. One of the most important cave paintings is located in Tifra in the northern part of Kabylia region [5]-[8].

II. STELE OF ATHERGANE

A. Situation

The Stele is located in the village of Athergane. According to the testimonies, the villagers unearthed it during the construction of the fountain.

B. Description

The surface of the sandstone stele is tinted reddish brown by metal oxides deposited by runoff water. Its dimensions are as follows:

- Height: 48 cm
- Width: 43 cm
- Thickness: 18 cm

The stele has engravings which are presented by Libyan characters. The text seems complete although the stele is amputated in the lower left.

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Fig. 1 Stele of Athergane

C. Libyan Character

The inscription in Libyan character occupies the entire stele. Most of the characters are legible apart from a few, especially the dots. The size of these characters varies from 4 cm for the smallest to 10 cm for the largest. They are roughly engraved (Fig. 2).

The inscription is made up of three lines written vertically made up of 17 characters.

- The first line on the left has five characters.
 - Each of the lines 2 and 3 has six characters.
- The inscription is shown in Fig. 2.

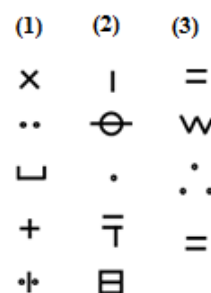


Fig. 2 Libyc inscription (Stele of Athergane)

With the scanner, the inscription can be read in three ways as shown in Fig. 3. We note that the second line of Fig. 2 has three possible readings as shown in Fig. 4. Concerning the fifth character in Fig. 4, the bar which cuts the circle seems to be a natural groove, which means that it was not made by the engraver.

First lecture	Seconde lecture	Third lecture
x =	x =	x =
.. ⊕ w	.. ○ w	.. ○ w
┌ · ∴	┌ · ∴	┌ · ∴
+ ┘ =	+ ┘ =	+ ┘ =
+ ▢ .	+ ▢ .	+ ▢ .

Fig. 3 Inscription with the scanner

	(2)	(2)	(2)
6			
5	⊕	○	○
4	·	·	·
3	Or	Or	=
2	┘	┘	┘
1	▢	▢	▢

Fig. 4 Possible reading of the second line

III. STELE OF MOKNEA

A. Situation

A fragment of a stele was discovered in Moknéa (Ifigha) in 1991 by a farmer. This fragment is kept in the headquarters of the cultural association of this region (Fig. 5).

B. Description

It is a piece of sandstone. Its dimensions are as follows:

- height: 57 cm
- width: 54.5 cm
- thickness: 11.6 to 28 cm

This fragment of a stele contains only Libyan characters and no iconography.



Fig. 5 Stele of Moknea

C. Libyan Characters

The inscription consists of five lines of vertical writing which contains nineteen characters.

- The first line on the left has three characters.

- The second line has three characters.
- The third line has five characters.
- The fourth line has four characters.
- The fifth line has four characters.

The inscription is shallow; the characters are between 1.5; 2.5; 3.5 and 4.5 cm.

With the naked eye, we notice that the inscription contains some doubtful signs as shown in Fig. 6. But after checking with the scanner, we noticed that the sign is composed of three bars simply , the other bars would be natural grooves.

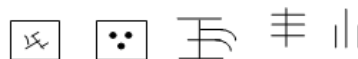


Fig. 6 Doubtful sign

Regarding the signs found in the previous two squares, they do not appear on the scanner. We noted the same observation for character ; according to the scanner we noticed that this sign is composed of the character .

As for the first character of the first line, with the naked eye we notice almost this sign . But with the scanner we see the following character: .

For the third character of the fifth line on the right, it is difficult to pronounce on its spelling: or .

IV. STELE OF MOKNEA BY SCANNER

According to the scanner we will have the inscription shown in Fig. 7 which represents the libyc inscriptions found in the stele of Moknea.

	↑↑	K	
		H	
	M	?	
	□	R	
	(4)	(2)	
?		≡	H
↑↑ K		? □ □	B . R ?
N	≡	┘	G
(5)	┌		N
	=		
		(1)	
	(3)		

Fig. 7 Stele of Moknea by scanner

V. STELE OF IHITOCEN

A. Situation

The stele in Fig. 8 has been found in the village of Ihitocen, commune of Bouzeguene. It had been reused in the wall of an old house.

B. Description

The stele is presented in a rectangular form of sandstone, tinted with reddish brown. Its dimensions are as follows:

- Height: 1 m
- Width: 30 cm
- Thickness: 25 cm

It includes engravings of Libyan characters. The stele is incomplete and in a dilapidated state.



Fig. 8 Stele of Ihetocen

C. Libyan Characters

The inscription in Libyan characters occupies the upper half of the stele. The characters are deeply and roughly engraved and are large and measure between 5 and 7 cm. The depth is on average 4 mm. The text is difficult to read because of the grooves.

The inscription can be read in two ways according to the inscriptions shown in Figs. 9 (a) and (b).

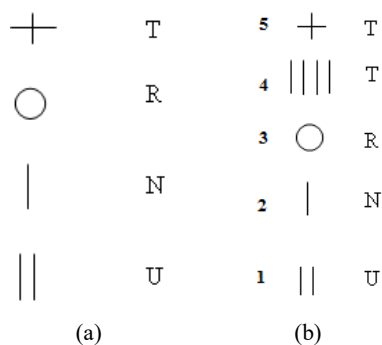


Fig. 9 Stele of Ihitocen by scanner

VI. STELE OF TAKHLIDJT

A. Location

This stele is discovered in the village of Tahlidjt commune of Abi Youcef Daira of Ain El Hammam by villagers during the cleaning of the village (Fig. 10).

B. Description

The stele is in the triangular form of mutilated sandstone. Its dimensions are as follows:

- Height: 70 m
- Width: 40 cm
- Thickness: 15 cm

It includes engravings which are represented by Libyan characters and two enigmatic patterns. The stele is incomplete.

C. The Enigmatic Patterns

On the right side of the inscription, we see two doubtful patterns, the first from below looks like a palm, the second from above in the shape of a sun or a palm or else a hand, fingers widely spread out like a fan.

D. The Libyan Characters

The inscription in Libyan characters occupies the left side of the stele, but it seems incomplete. The characters are deeply and roughly engraved and are large and measure between 5 and 7 cm. The depth is on average 4 mm. The inscription consists of a single line written vertically. It is composed of eight characters. For the seventh character, it is difficult to pronounce on its spelling because of the break that this character has suffered.



The inscription can be read in two ways as shown in Fig. 11. Note: We notice in the seventh character of this line two possible representations of the inscriptions: we do not know if it represents  or  because of the break. We read WDZF son of FTT or WDZF son of FHT. The first W cannot be the particle meaning "son of" it would be part of the proper name, but the second means "son of". The tables established by Chabot [2] do not contain these two formulas.



Fig. 10 Stele of Takhlidjt

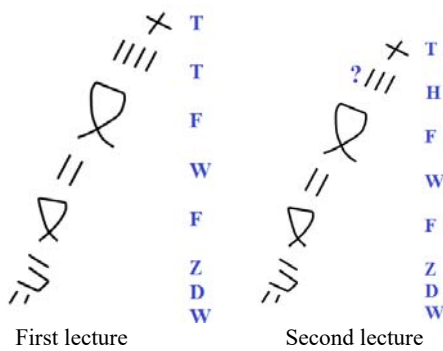


Fig. 11 Libyc inscription

VII. STELE OF AT YAHIA N°1

A. Situation

In the village Tagnit commune of Ait Yahia Daira of Ain El Hammam, two steles of the Abizar type (stele of At Yahia n°1 and At Yahia n°2) were discovered by a villagers. According to the testimony, these two steles were discovered one in front of the other (Fig. 12).

B. Description

The stele is in the form of a triangular shaped sandstone slab. It is a bit mutilated on the right side. Its dimensions are as follows:

- Height: 105 cm
- Width: 60 cm
- Thickness: 20 cm

The stele includes engravings which are represented by figurines and Libyan characters. The text seems complete.

C. The Figurine

The drawing represents a person from the front, rounded head, pointed beard, holding a shield and two javelins in his left hand. The right hand is raised, and between the thumb and

the four fingers is drawn a small round and hollow object which is assimilated to a throwing weapon [6]-[8].



Fig. 12 Stele of At Yahia n°1

D. Libyan Characters

The inscription in Libyan character occupies a left side portion of the stele. It is not very legible with the naked eye, especially the first line on the left. The size of these characters varies from 2 cm for the smallest to 3 cm for the largest.

The inscription is made up of two lines written vertically made up of eight characters. The first line on the left has four characters. The second line has also four characters.

With the scanner (Fig. 13) the inscription can be read in two ways.

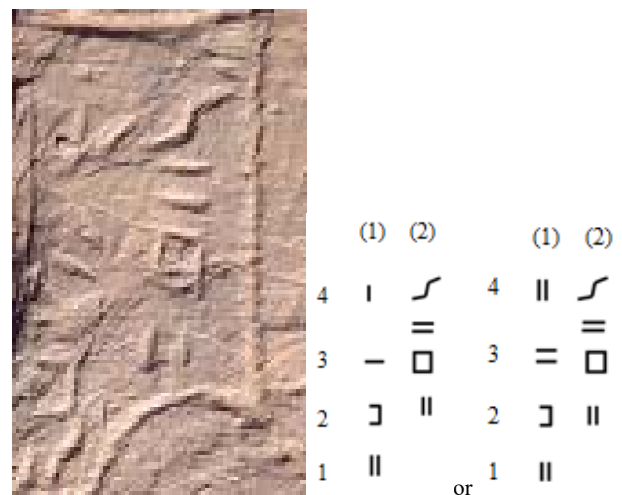



Fig. 13 Stele of At Yahia n°1: By scanner

Note: One can note that the first line on the left has two readings. For the third and fourth character in this line, we do not know if they represent the following signs | and — or ||

and .

VIII. STELE OF AT YAHIA N°2

A. Description

It is a fragment of a stone stele; the surface of this stele is tinted reddish brown (Fig. 9). Its dimensions are as follows:

- Height: 55 cm
- Width: 80-95 cm
- Thickness: 25 cm

This fragment of a stele contains figurines and Libyan characters which are very legible.

B. The Figurine

The fragment of a stele has a line drawing that is legible but incomplete because of the break. A person on horseback holding a shield and two javelins in his left hand, his face and his chest appear from the front.

The right hand is raised; between the four fingers joined together and the thumb, a small round and hollow object is drawn.

The face is round; the man has a long, pointed beard. The nature of the garment is difficult to identify.



Fig. 14 Stele of At Yahia n°2

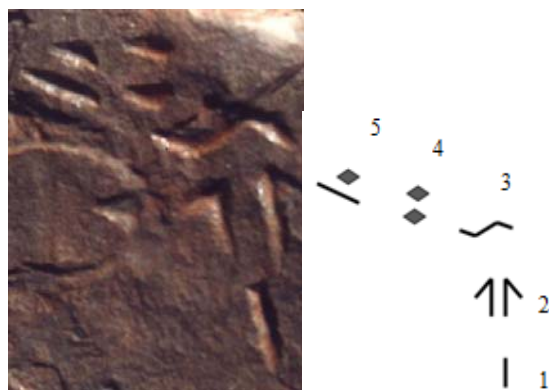



Fig. 15 Stele of At Yahia n°2: By scanner

C. The Libyan Characters


The inscription consists of a single line of writing made up of five characters written in boustrophedon. The stone is broken, we do not know if the inscription is complete.

The inscription is deep, the characters measure between 4, 5 and 7 cm. The last two signs are doubtful. With the scanner, the inscription can be read as shown in Fig. 15.

We note that the fourth character is composed of two points, already found in Morocco, and for the first time in Grande Kabylie. The fifth character is doubtful; it is made up of a bar and a period . This character was already discovered in the Boudjima stele (Great Kabylie), but with the point on the left.

IX. CONCLUSION

The main interest of these new discovered steles of the Grande Kabylie (Fig. 16) lies in three main characteristics:

- The steles n° 1 of At Yahia and Thakhlidjt are of oriental type even if they are in this region traditionally located in full western zone.
- The terms WDZF FTT or FHT and WDZN and RLI or RLW deserve special attention because they are not listed in the tables established by Chabot.
- The stele No. 2 of At Yahia has two doubtful signs: one which is composed of two points, found for the first time in Grande Kabylie, and the second is formed by a bar and a point already found in this region but in this way  the point is on the left side.

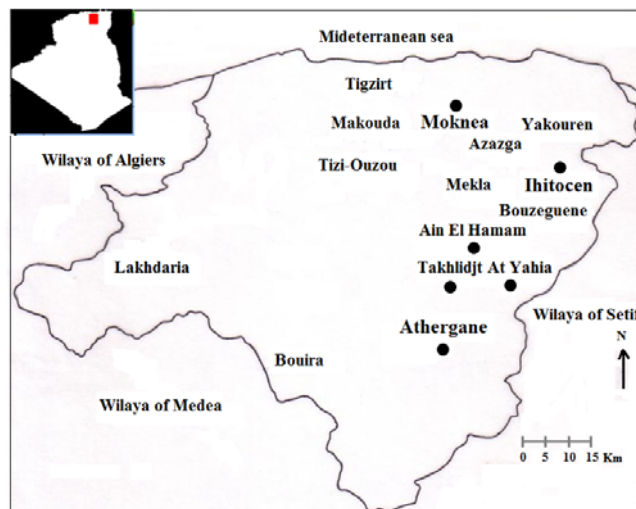


Fig. 16 Wilaya of Tizi-Ouzou map

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