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Alain Rodrigue
Inscriptions? What inscriptions?

Werner Pichler in memoriam

Keywords: North Africa, Morocco, rock art, Libyco-Berber script, fauna, research methods

During the periods when I had the pleasure of working with Werner Pichler, and thanks to the numerous discoveries we made together concerning the Libyco Berber inscriptions of the south of Morocco, I was taught two lessons from him: kind, skilful and keen appreciations from this intelligent man.

Werner Pichler was not a "parietalist" (and he considered himself as a baby born in this matter), but he was a brilliant research worker and in this way he was served by a great power of observation and deduction. Not more than two or three periods in the south of Morocco were enough for him to understand the engravings. Of course, as a linguist, he was particularly interested in the Libyco Berber inscriptions, as the common use now currently calls them.

Together, we worked on the already known inscriptions and sometimes on published ones. By his side, I had the pleasure -and the surprise !- to notice that the old inscriptions hadn't been correctly observed and registered. In a line of signs, one or many of them hadn't been noticed, making the reading in fact notably different. During our trips, we had the opportunity to record a lot of new inscriptions. What I insist on, in this brief note, is that we discovered many of these inscriptions in well known sites which had been so many times visited, even by myself! The most outstanding example of this statement is the discovery of three lines of inscriptions which are part of one of the best known engravings of men in the High Atlas¹, the "sacrificed man", on which I worked during my studies of the engravings of the Moroccan mountains.

The first lesson I was taught is the following: never to consider that the reading of an engraving is complete at the first sight, particularly when the drawing is so evident, so neat, that the subject itself erases everything that surrounds it. What is more evident, more absorbing, than the engraving of an animal that can be perfectly and immediately identified (Fig. 1)? The capture of the image by the eyes and its recognition, beside the fact that the observer is at the peak of his pleasure of observation, sets apart the discreet lines that had been drawn all around. If we take a patient and accurate look at this image, we can notice the presence of four signs in the head of the animal and five other signs above its nape (Fig. 2). These signs, which are still unpublished, could be (I insist, could be) Libyco Berber inscriptions. I warmly invite my

Moroccan colleagues to go back to the engraving and make a conclusive analysis of it.

At last, and I reach to the second lesson I talked about: it is so easy to fall into the over-looking of signs. Never to consider signs where there are none! And even from the mouth of our sadly missing friend and colleague Werner Pichler, as one says about the sole swallow, two signs are not enough to make an inscription!

¹ The references of the publications of Werner Pichler and myself concerning the Libyco Berber inscriptions of Morocco and the Canary Islands can be obtained on the site lbi-project.org.

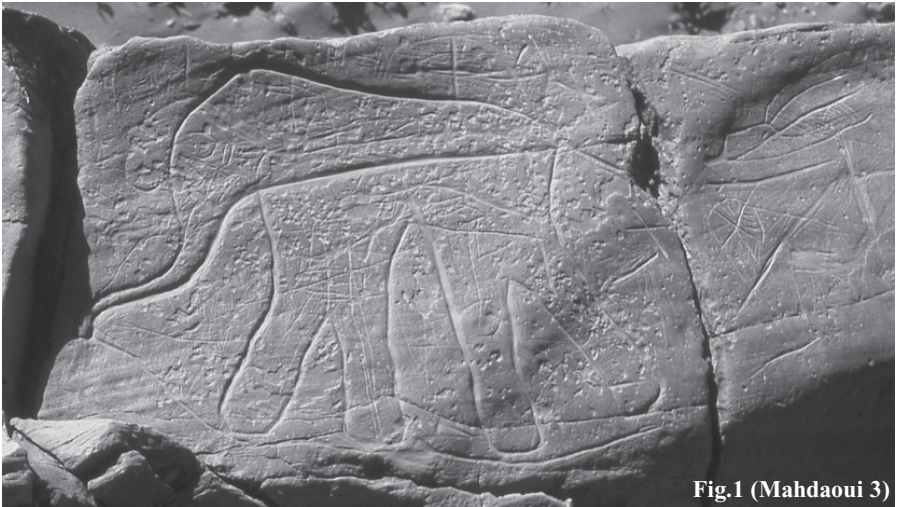


Fig.1 (Mahdaoui 3)

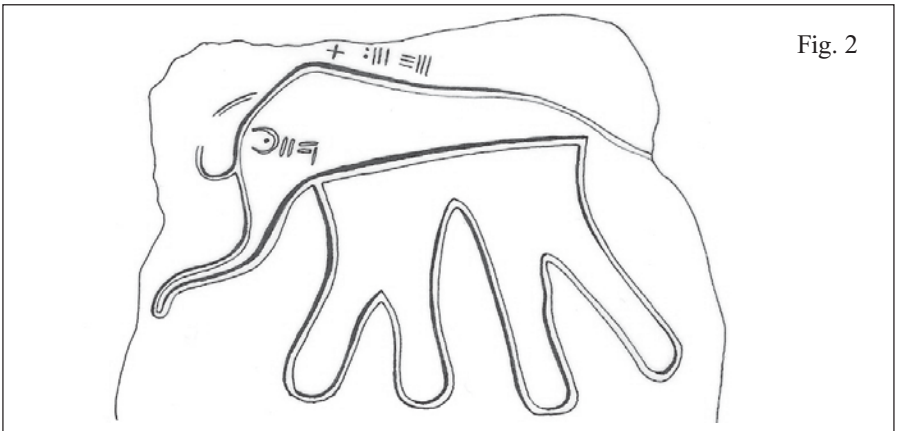


Fig. 2