

ANCIENT LIBYA, ARABIA AND THE SAHARA: SOME PROBLEMS AND UNCERTAINTIES

I. *Triliths*

The following remarks stem from finding a trilith (Fig. 1) in March 1977, the first ever seen by the writer, notwithstanding thousands of kilometres travelled in parts of the Sahara since 1971. Situated in the upper reaches of the mighty Oued Timersoï (Niger), its position is about 2025.7N 0705.0E; it is built at the foot of a small hill, inside a re-entrant leading off from the east bank of the oued.

In recent years in the NW Tassili n'Ajjer, J. Kunz (personal communication) has found a number of these curious monuments, although details are not to hand at the time of writing (November 1977). Palmer (Feb 1932, 42) writes of the trilith as still being an important cult object of veneration in the Saharan belt from the Upper Niger eastwards to Lake Chad, citing the case of the installation of a Teda chief; an important ceremonial act is said to be for him personally to lift a large flat stone and to place it atop a trilith and above a sacred fire, prior to seating himself on the stone. "Trilith" in this context is later explained by Palmer (June 1933, 96) as meaning three stones, with or without a covering stone. A similar ceremony is also mentioned as taking place in parts of Kunen when a youth assumes the mouth veil, called by the Touareg T'imedr, and by the Teda, Funi. (Compare small "boxes" in Niger: see Part III and fig. 6.)

In a reply to Palmer's note, Rodd (later Lord Rennell of Rodd: June 1932, 140) illustrates triliths photographed by Meinertzhagen in the Hoggar region of Algeria, although it has proved impossible, so far, to establish their location. He further states that the triliths referred to by Palmer exist in Aïr (Niger), but are not very common in the form of two pillars with a stone on top; the ordinary form consists of three pillars set upright on the plan of an equilateral triangle, with the apex directed towards Mecca and purporting to be Moslem places of prayer. He adds that the usual form of a place of prayer is a rough semi-circle of small stones on the ground, directed east. Also mentioned is "one large rectangular formal enclosure with two upright pillar stones in the eastern face. The horizontal stone slab might well have been one of many suitable pieces lying around." Both the above descriptions could apply to stone arrangements noted during 1977 (Milburn, forthcoming, types S. (a) and G. respectively.); and both types were seen in the same exact region as a long line of stones, extending rather more than 100 metres, with a rectangular prayer niche roughly at the centre, a clear-cut (though rather large) example of the small Saharan "mosques," as illustrated by Lhote (1976) on the rear cover of his book. The question does spring to mind here as to why three separate sorts of Islamic places of prayer should exist ( ? ) in one smallish zone. Meanwhile no suggestion of a cover stone was noted on one single example of the type G. complexes.

The difficulties of obtaining information from Touareg, either due to their fear, nowadays, of being thought not to be true Moslems (Mourgues, 1934) or because of their lack of interest in anything not immediately connected with everyday life (Gautier, 1907) are well-known. Such has been the writer's own experience in respect of painted "bullseyes" on the ceilings of rock shelters at Oued Dabala and Azagero (Fig. 3), also reported by R. Villemain (personal communication) at Mammanet, all three sites being in the Arlit region (Milburn, 1977a, 7).

Some triliths of apparent antiquity, since Thamudic inscriptions adorn a number of them, are noted by B. Thomas (1932, 126–129) in Arabia, particularly in Wadi Dhaghaub and Wadi Dhikur. (The classical word "wadi" is seemingly used in present-day Libya and Arabia, as opposed to the more colloquial "oued" employed in Western Sahara: in Aïr, the Hausa "kori" is often used, sounding identical to the Scots "corrie," which is thought to have exactly the same meaning.) Miss B. de Cardi also gave a paper on cairns and trilithons in the Sharqiyeh, Oman, at the 1976 Seminar for Arabian Studies held in England.

The help of Mrs. D. Kirkbride-Helbaek (Denmark) and P. J. Parr (Institute of Archaeology, London) is gratefully acknowledged and it is good to know that a considerable amount of material from Arabia has, or will be, published. One may cite here the studies already carried out by de Cardi (1971), Kirkbride (1969), Masry (1977) and Parr, Harding and Dayton (1970:1971), at the same time expressing the hope that Saharan and Arabian archaeologists and typologists will not be slow in comparing their respective finds.

To judge solely by the remarks of Mauny (1976a, 203), apparently deploring the lack of global studies by Sahara prehistorians, due to lack of grave goods from stone monuments, it does seem that they may, at the present time, have fallen somewhat behind their industrious colleagues who operate in Arabia.

## II. *The keyhole tombs (monuments en trou de serrure) of central Sahara*

Some time ago a suggestion was made (Lhote, 1967, 124) as to the similarity of distribution zones of keyhole tombs ("MTS") and paintings of chariots drawn by horses "at the flying galop." Although this almost certainly referred solely to the confines of Algerian territory, paintings of the same type have occurred in the Fezzan (Mori, 1965); it is thus surprising that, to date, we appear to have no record of one single MTS in modern Libyan areas. P. Graziosi and F. Mori have each been kind enough to emphasise the little that has been published on Libyan stone constructions, with the exception of large concentrations apparent in the works of Daniels and Ziegert.

When in 1957 R. Mauny wrote a plea for travellers to keep a sharp lookout and to record essential details, his request met with considerable success. Although it is probably difficult these days to go far off the beaten track in the Fezzan, unless involved in some large, static "expedition", there is absolutely nothing to stop the willing tourist from keeping his eyes open while en route. Assuming that anyone at all has troubled to read this far, then a rough plan of any stone edifice encountered—together with its dimensions, height and orientation—will be very gratefully

received. Dimensions can be roughly obtained by counting the number of paces in a given direction. Meanwhile a colour photograph of a classic MTS is shown on the back cover of Hugot and Bruggmann (1976) as well as inside the book itself.

The object of these notes (Cf. Fig. 2.) is therefore to recount various aspects of these graceful monuments, published and unpublished, in the hope of stimulating interest in the chances of finding some in modern Libya. Apart from the abundant literature available, the writer had in 1976 the very considerable advantage of a journey on foot, in the NW Tassili n'Ajjer, where he was able to study at first hand a number of MTS, with special reference to siting, orientation and possible relationship to other monuments.

Without pretending to possess details of each MTS cited in French literature, since nomenclature is often confusing, a general idea of the apparent known limits of geographical distribution is given below:—

NORTH	Tahihaout	2629N 0612E approx.	Reported by M. Vallet (1960, 238)
SOUTH	(i) Laouni	To west(?) of <u>2030N 0547E</u> (Position of well).	Reported by M. Vallet (op. cit.) to west of the main track Tamanrasset to Agadez.
	(ii) "NE part of Adrar des Ifoghas."	No positions given.	Reported by H. Lhote (1944, 70).
EAST	T-in Rada	<u>2342N 1054E</u>	Reported by H. Lhote (1967, 123).
WEST	Oued Akefou, "NE of In Ziza."	2331N 0233E (= position of In Ziza)	Reported by E. F. Gautier (1908, 77).

References taken from Official Standard Names Gazetteer (1972) are underlined. The writer feels disinclined to include a dubious example shown by Vallet (op. cit) "30 km east of In Djazzal, Adrar des Ifoghas": apart from doubt expressed by Vallet himself, the tomb is very far south indeed (although note those mentioned by Lhote above, with no specific geographical positions) and its orientation is apparently almost due south. As will be seen, the normal orientation is generally between NE and SE. In any event, Maître (1966, 280) considers that MTS are rare even in the Hoggar: the main area is the Tassili n'Ajjer.

A large concentration of MTS occurs in the Fadnoun district, southwards from Illizi (2629N 0828E); this has been studied by Savary (1966) in a work devoted to examining a quantity of MTS by means of aerial photographs. In the introduction, G. Camps mentions the 158 examples used by the author to demonstrate that corridors of the monuments—often visible from far off—were directed towards the rising sun on the day of death of each occupant. It would appear that then, as now, the most frequent regional deaths occurred in the first two weeks of March (Savary, 1966, 6–7).

At the same time, Camps draws attention to certain analogies with European types, such as dolmens with a corridor below a tumulus (Western Europe) and with certain sacred wells of Sardinia; in this context one may cite those of Santa Cristina and Santa Vittoria di Serri. While the orientation of Santa Vittoria is not comparable

to that of MTS corridors, it is just worth looking at the plan of the Treasury of Atreus and also at the dromos of various tombs of the necropolis at Salamis, Cyprus, both for overall typology and orientation. The preoccupation with burials of hearses and chariots, including war chariots, at Salamis, may indeed provide food for thought in the context of Lhote's statement on the dispersion of MTS and chariot paintings. (CF. Grinsell, 1975, 157–163.)

Gabriel (1970, 13) compares MTS with certain graves of Tibesti; see in particular the small “beak”—reminiscent to that shown by his fig. 4.—which occurs at Amguid in a MTS excavated by Voinot (1908, Pl. VIII.a.). This, however, does look as though it has been added later to the MTS. It is also tempting to wonder whether the large tomb known as La Guancha, Grand Canary—notwithstanding its apparent late dating—may have been built by people possessing some vague tradition of Sardinian wells. A pattern for the re-examination of hallowed theories has now been set by Camps (1974, 506) and it may not be too late to hope that La Guancha may one day be re-investigated, with full regard being paid to scientific dating aids available at the time.

With regard to imperfect or unfinished examples of MTS, Lhote (1967, 118) shows a specimen lacking a corridor in the region of Serouenout, seemingly indicating that the corridor will thus have been the last item in the construction programme; and in consequence ascribing a lesser degree of importance to the azimuths of corridors. Yet the writer feels unable to agree that the same be true of another MTS at Tin Abdallah (Reygasse, 1950, 59), where a pair of clear lines leave the main tumulus, without ever arriving at the external eastern wall. Surely this indicates that the orientation had already been decided upon, even though the monument were never actually completed.

It looks, from the picture, as though the tomb had not been damaged by flooding, a phenomenon frequently observed in 1976 around Gara Tesmad (2539N 0745E), where there are also a couple of MTS that differ from the accepted pattern. The first of these, at the ENE slope of the mountain, has no corridor and seemingly no provision for one, being composed of a large tumulus, with two parallel bordering walls on the west side and only one on the east; this latter effectively prevents an uninterrupted stretch of “paving” between the tumulus and the far end of any corridor, had one existed. A pair of small platform cairns (thanks are due to Miss A. S. Henshall for this nomenclature) lie adjacent to the SW border. The second example of an unusual MTS lies on the apparent southern slopes and its corridor faces towards 175°, as far as this can be determined from the stubby external features. The overall effect is very like a true keyhole rim, the actual hole being formed by the tumulus contained within the single continuous wall. Another freak monument, probably only a badly-built one, lies along the route from In Salah towards Amguid, on the western ascent towards Meksem el Djenoun, apparently at about 2629N 0439E.

To deal next with seemingly-associated constructions, albeit of possibly differing age, it has been impossible to avoid gaining the strong impression that a classic tumulus upon a large circular “paved” platform (“tumulus sur plateforme” or

“TSP”), in the vicinity of one or more MTS, may prove to be the rule rather than the exception. Luckily, from one viewpoint at least, the writer had forgotten the words of Savary (1966, 26) to the effect that the TSP is probably the most common edifice found in the Fagnoun. The TSP is apparently known to Savary as a “bazina à dallage circulaire concentrique” and to Camps (1961, 161) as a “bazina à carapace.” Thus the journey was started with a completely open mind.

It is not true that the reverse applies, namely that MTS will necessarily be found close to TSP. There are lone TSP in the Hoggar, at least as far north as the Arak Gorge (2518N 0345E), and even beyond, as noted during 1976 and 1977. But in Western Aïr only one was seen in trips lasting a total of some 30 days or more (Milburn, 1976, 3).

About 170 indicated kilometres down the main track from Tamanrasset towards Niger there were noted some half dozen, mostly on east-facing forward slopes and all on the eastern side of the track, from which they are not visible. The examples shown by Monod (1948, 16) seem different, although the notion of a tumulus, surrounded by a proportionately-large platform, is clearly evident in Western Sahara too, as it is in Grand Canary (Jiménez, 1971, 202). Indeed, Fleming (1972, 309) has evoked a situation where the mound enclosing a megalithic tomb occupies an area one hundred times greater than that occupied by the tomb itself. Can there be a parallel here with the size of a platform in relation to the tumulus that stands upon it or around which it is built? Note also the comments of Henshall (1963, 68 & 101.) on this latter possibility.

Fleming also cites the impressive visual appearance of round mounds, showing that of Los Millares: if we disregard the forecourt, the general form is not unlike that of a TSP. (Fleming, op. cit., 310). The only TSP possessed of a seeming orientation yet known to the writer was seen at about 77 indicated kilometres south of Tamanrasset on the track towards Niger; it lies to east of the track, some 100 metres from it and the tumulus alone is partly-visible from the west. A portion of the platform seems to have been omitted (or later removed?), thus forming a V-shaped missing segment whose approximate orientation is towards 140°. From NW to SE the platform is some sixty paces diameter, or six times that of the tumulus.

The following list shows those zones where TSP and MTS may possibly be positioned close to one another intentionally, although the question of which got there first, in each case, must remain open:—

- |    |  |                                      |   |
|----|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Track Arak--Tamanrasset                        | <u>2418N 0458E</u>                   | MTS on E side: TSP on hill on W side.<br>About 500 metres apart.  |
| 2. | Amguid   | <u>2626N 0522E</u><br>(General area) | At least 4 MTS visible from cliff-top.<br>1 TSP almost touching a MTS (= Voinot area of operation, 1908.) |
| 3. | Edjeleh  | <u>2541N 0513E</u><br>(General area) | 5 MTS and 2 TSP, mostly delapidated.<br>Very fine interior “paving” of some MTS.                          |
| 4. | Oued Adje, To north of track.? 2 km from pass. | <u>2548N 0747E</u><br>(General area) | 2 MTS: 1 TSP on adjacent ESE-facing forward slope.  |

5.	Immatoda	<u>2545N 0751E</u>	1 large TSP: 1 small TSP near guelta. 1 MTS ca. 1 km to south.
6.	Oued Akarcheshou	<u>2538N 0741E</u> (General area)	1 TSP and 1 MTS close together, in front of a major painted abri. 1 MTS say 60 metres away to 285° and a third MTS ca. 400 metres away to 340° approx. A second TSP lies within 150 metres of the last MTS, bearing 230° from it.
7.	Gara Tesmad	<u>2539N 0745E</u>	2 TSP: 3 MTS: one unfinished MTS: 1 “pseudo” MTS.
8.	Ridge running north to south for 2 km south of Gara Tesmad		From approx. south to north:— 1 MTS on W slope: 2 ruined MTS or TSP on E slope, opposite: 1 large V-shaped cairn (“heel-shaped cairn”), at foot of E slope: 2 TSP.
9.	Between Gara Tesmad and Hassi Tanankort	2543N 0746 E (General area)	1 MTS on flat ground: 1 TSP ca. 100 metres to north.
10.	2–3 km to NNE of Hassi Tabankort	2550N 0742E	2 TSP & 1 MTS together on a small low escarpment.

Thanks are due to J. Kunz for the chance to accompany his party in the area of sites 4 to 10 above.

Reygasse (1950, 53) shows a TSP close to a larger MTS at Gara Tin Abdallah (Tihodaïne), Tassili n’Ajjer. The question as to whether the platform is bordered by slightly higher stones (as some are, notably in Hoggar) or is totally flat and sanded-up, is academic.

The overall favoured position of MTS and TSP, seen outside the Tassili n’Ajjer proper, seems to be on an east-facing forward slope. Edjeleh provides an excellent example and its MTS are visible from some kilometres away. Lone TSP often obey the same rule, as do crescentic tombs (“croissants”) and various “monuments à bras,” including V-shapes.

Alternately, especially in the Tassili n’Ajjer zone visited with J. Kunz, MTS and TSP may be on totally flat ground and even facing into a cliff or hillside (as at Amguid), if indeed TSP can be said to face in any direction. In such positions both types can be extremely difficult to pick out among a mass of stones, unless one has approached to within a few metres distance. Thus the inevitable question must be asked: why are such constructions situated, at times, so as to be visible from afar and, at others, with seeming total disregard for such prominence? Does this reflect changing religious requirements? Or construction by a different race? Here one needs to assume—and it may be a dangerous assumption—that both types are the work of one and the same people at any one period of their floruit.

The largest MTS ever seen is thought to be that observed by Colonel Brenans in the area south of Fadnoun, some 150 metres long (Lhote, 1967, 122.); another of 118 metres length is reported by M. Chatry (1959, 250) at a position of 0536.30E 2602N. A good average size seems to be about 40 metres. The platform of the TSP above-mentioned—some 60 paces diameter, measured from NW to SE—is the largest known to the writer.

Apart from later constructions built upon—or partly upon—TSP and MTS, demonstrating the greater age of the two latter, some are built touching them or beside them. A TSP observed in Hoggar by F. Trost (personal communication) had a crescentic cairn touching the platform on one side, seemingly at the east border. The MTS excavated by Voinot at Amguid in 1908—seen in January 1976—is very delapidated. Possibly stones have also been later removed for twentieth century constructional purposes nearby.

Turning to the sketch made by Voinot (Pl. VIII. fig. 2.), later additions probably comprise 1) the crescent to south-east: 2) the two “arms” fitted to the tumulus at the east end of the corridor: 3) the small tumulus to south-west of the main burial tumulus of the MTS itself. Voinot notes further examples of the last feature elsewhere, although the writer has seen nothing similar. The small “beak” tacked onto the south-east margin of the main burial tumulus is probably also a later addition, besides, as above-stated, recalling certain features of Tibesti graves (Gabriel, 1970.). The orientation of this particular MTS is  $88^\circ$ ; that of two others adjacent is  $105^\circ$  and  $85^\circ$ , with lengths of around 60 and 45 paces. Torrential rain cut short observations and it was necessary to move fast towards Tamanrasset in order not to fall behind with the programme.

A summary of excavations undertaken is given by Lhote (1967, 120) and results are as discouraging and as inconclusive as might be expected some years ago. The location of grave goods found is unstated and they are to be presumed lost. (Note the remarks of Lhote, 1976, 138.). In autumn 1976 G. Camps informed the writer that no MTS remains have yet been scientifically dated.

In conclusion it is necessary to lay the strongest possible emphasis on what is unknown about these enigmatic constructions, their builders, their chronology and their religious significance, rather than upon the little that is known. It is thus to be hoped that future research, especially in the Fezzan, by fully-qualified technicians, may provide the information that to-day is so sadly lacking.

### III. *The “Garamantean” stelae of Niger and some thoughts on orientation*

The complex monuments of Western Air at which stelae occur have been briefly mentioned (1977b, 147, type C.) and will be dealt with more fully in a future publication (Milburn, forthcoming, type C.). Illustrations are given at figs. 2. and 3. of the first-cited work.

These stelae (Figs. 4. and 5.) may be compared to those of the Fezzan (Daniels, 1970, 41 & fig. 9: Sergi, 1936, 3) in that they are flattish and rather thin. Their most interesting feature, however, is that they are merely propped against the outermost border of the tomb, just as they have occurred in modern Libya, leaning against the eastern side of squarish stepped monuments. These are sometimes incorrectly termed “chouchât” (singular: “choucha”). Camps (1961, 173) maintains that the true choucha is found only in eastern Algeria, its name deriving from the local “chéchia” headdress, although the term has been adopted by French writers to embrace these circular, drum-like structures throughout the whole Sahara.

One thing here is certain: one does not come upon such stelae partly buried in the

ground, notwithstanding numerous other upright pillar-type stones of the region, on which no detailed publication has seemingly been attempted. (Cf. Huard & Massip, 1967: Lhote, 1973: Milburn, 1977b, figs. 6. and 7.). Indeed, fig. 5 shows stelae and towers positioned upon solid rock.

If these Niger monuments are contemporary with the lines of small accessory towers (or lines of “autels”/“foyers”) set a few metres to the east, in a straight or curving line (Fig. 5.)—and the two occur so often together that one cannot entertain much doubt on this score—then they appear relatively young in comparison to other types, notably the enigmatic Niger crescentic tombs (“crescents”). Sometimes they are built very close to such crescents, or even set between the arms of a west-facing specimen, where their towers will not interfere with the crescent. Such towers can, however, cut right across earlier structures: at Mammanet in 1976 the southern tower of a line of six was observed to be standing squarely upon the north “tail” of an east-facing crescent, presumably built from material taken off it. And fig. 4. shows a line of “autels” cutting across an earlier stone circle, formed of low slabs, deeply-embedded in the ground and of unknown significance. It would, additionally, be useful to possess further details of “large conical rubble heaps,” mentioned by Thomas (1932, 126) close to Arabian triliths, and to which he attributes a sacrificial significance.

Unfortunately, all such tombs seen to date have been opened, although French literature appears mute upon the very existence of this type of structure: the towers (and the smaller “autels” and “foyers”) occur beside other monuments, over a wide area, but are not thought to have yielded positive results in past excavations. Where the towers are well-built conical specimens it may be tempting to suspect Touareg as the culprits, although just how far back in time in anyone’s guess. Such towers also occur at Tit, near Tamanrasset, but are allied to chouchât and lack “Garamantean” stelae.

Ziegert (1969, 56 & Taf. III A 1) offers further grounds for speculation on a possible connection between tombs of Fezzan and Niger. His “Umgang mit Bruchsteinen gepflastert und durch schräggestellte (ursprünglich gerade?) Platten nach außen abgegrenzt” at Germa appears somewhat similar to the paved area (Fig. 6.) leading outwards to the single border of some Aïr specimens, complete with their stelae and line of towers. Only time will show and meanwhile it would be a pleasure to indicate some tomb locations to any specialist contemplating serious excavation.

The question of orientation has caused much ink to flow in the past; the object here is to add more fuel to the fire. The small “boxes” of stone slabs (Fig. 6.), tacked onto the west or south-west perimeter, are hitherto enigmatic. In 1976, south-west was felt to be the commonest heading: resulting from this year’s investigations, however, west seems to predominate. Dare one call them triliths, formed of 3 uprights plus a “lid?”

It is regretted that, as these notes go to press, J. Kunz has just kindly provided brief verbal information about some further “boxes”, apparently grouped together in NW Tassili n’Ajjer to form a kind of enclosure. Further details are not to hand.

Niches in a quantity of structures on Seal Island, Libya, face towards the south-



west (Bates, 1914, 183). Had these been illustrated, additional to others of more conventional orientation further on (1914, 247–248), less speculation as to possible Libyan influence on tombs of Crete (Evans, 1928, 37) might have followed. While it seems nowadays accepted (Camps, 1955, 195; Hood, 1971, 31) that the Seal Island monuments will be later, further confusion has arisen from a possible printing error (Evans, 1928, fig. 17b.). This places at Seal Island a structure actually in the Algerian Hodna, near M'sila, thus some 1500 kilometres distant from Seal Island. It was previously illustrated by Randall–MacIver and Wilken (1901, Pl. XV). But the error has been faithfully reproduced at least as late as 1970.

Arnaud (1901, 66) apparently visited the identical M'sila site, where Camps (1961, 177) notes a difference between the reports of Arnaud and Randall–MacIver and Wilken. The former writes of “concentric circles divided up into alveoli by rocks running from the centre to the perimeter like the spokes of a wheel.” Such a description appears not to fit the un-numbered picture of Arnaud (1901, 69); but the writer has observed a similar feature in a multi-bordered Niger tomb (Milburn, 1977b, 147, type C.). And its occurrence in two widely-separated zones may not be mere chance.

At this point one may note the very different orientation of the passages of some British Isles megalithic structures whose architecture suggests a relationship, as do the available dates hitherto. At New Grange, Eire, the great Boyne passage-grave has an entrance-passage sited in such a way as to allow the rising midwinter sun to illuminate it; at the Scottish Balnuaran of Clava, the two cairn passages point to the spot where midwinter sunset will have occurred about 3500 to 4000 years ago. In this Clava context Henshall (1963, 28–29) has suggested the connection of death and winter with midwinter sunset in the south-west; she has also mentioned the predominating westerly headings of the Irish Wedge-shaped Gallery Graves. And the heading of the passageway of the Stanydale Temple, Shetland, (Thom and Thom, 1977, 14) faces out towards the rising point of the sun at the Spring Equinox.

If the apparent suggestions of Calder (1949–50, 199 and 204; 1960–61, 30) as to possible similarities of architecture between Maltese and Scottish monuments be acceptable—such acceptance naturally being dependent on “diffusionist” or “non-diffusionist” beliefs—apparent links between Skara Brae (Orkney) and Portugal in prehistoric times allow one to surmise that travel between Malta and Shetland would not have proved utterly impossible. Thus contact between Malta and Africa—or even Shetland and Africa—will also have been feasible, especially if Saharan crescents and heel-shaped cairns turn out—as seems more than likely—to be merely protohistoric.

The writer has not wished, in previous works, to seem to be insisting on a connection between monuments found in the northern European/Scottish seaways and in Africa. Yet the very existence of heel-shaped cairns in Shetland and in the Sahara (Milburn, 1977c)—possessed of similarities of orientation, plan and prominence of siting—is troubling to a degree. Here one may echo the wise words of that great traveller, Lord Rennell, (1967, 221) on the importance of returning, revisiting and re-examining, a procedure which applies equally to European spheres as to the Sahara.

#### IV *Inscriptions of Libyco-berber type*

It would be presumptuous to pretend to be able to offer any solution to the problem of decipherment of texts, including Tifinagh. This has been tackled by various specialists and the difficulties are well-known (Galand, 1975a). Pending a more detailed report, which it is hoped to attempt eventually, the aim here is to underline one serious threat to future progress, namely the present apparent lack of any international efforts to cooperate at any level whatever.

One expert is currently collecting material and may, one day, feel able to start compiling a corpus. A second academic has kindly offered to store fresh material in an archive. Both are clearly doing their utmost. Yet—in order to obtain the full benefit of tourist cooperation—it remains to be decided—most urgently—in exactly what manner inscriptions should be recorded, so as to be presented for storage, in a uniform way and according to a standard procedure, still to be worked out by multi-national specialists.

In an age where specialisation is more than ever the rule, it may be easy to level accusations of insularity at those who do their best, at their own level and on their own terrain. Yet cases of true insularity can and do occur, as shown by Engljähringer and Kraml (1978). Their views are very clear indeed:—There has been little international team-work in the past.

Thus, in the interests of a possible contribution towards the solution of the final problem, that of decipherment, the following list of more or less modern works is offered below. It is by no means comprehensive; yet all authors mentioned appear to have concerned themselves, according to their various specialisations and in one form or another, in unravelling the current impasse.

*General*: Basset (1948): Camps (forthcoming): Galand (1975a): Gostynski (1975):

Marcy (1956): Mauny (1954): Zöhrer (1939).

*Adrar-n-Ifoghas (Mali)*: Mauny (1954): Zöhrer (1952–53).

*Air (Niger)*: Lhote (1950): Mauny (1954): (See also Rodd [1938]).

*Canary Islands*: Alvarez (1964): Cuscoy and Galand (1975): Galand (1975a).

*Central Sahara/Hoggar*: Lhote (1944, 1962): Morabito (1976): (See also Reygasse [1932]).

*Libya*: Brogan (1975): Daniels (1975): Ziegert (1969). (See also Beguinot [1935])

*N. W. Sahara*: Galand (1975b): Nowak and Ortner (1975).

*Tassili n'Ajjer (Algeria)*: Lajoux (1977).

*Tibesti*: Hagedorn (1966).

One final thought here (and it is easy to be wise after the event). The moment to begin studying Tifinagh was surely at the turn of the century, shortly after which changes in the manner of Touareg life rapidly ensured that women had less and less time to devote to one of their traditional pastimes. (Cf. Zöhrer, 1939, 136). As things now stand, there is a great deal of lost ground to be regained.

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**AKADEMISCHE DRUCK- u. VERLAGSANSTALT  
GRAZ – AUSTRIA**



Fig. 1: A trilith of Oued Timersoï, Niger, (Foto J. Rutherford, Christchurch, New Zealand).

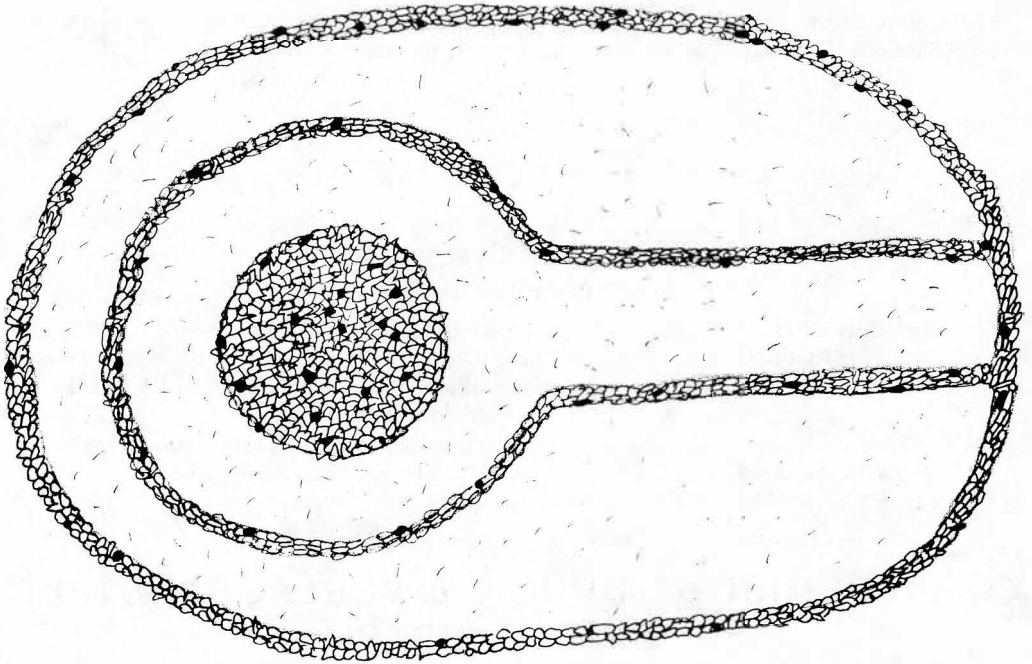


Fig. 2: A keyhole tomb (monument en trou de serrure). Often about 40 metres long the corridor faces roughly east. Such tombs are often visible from afar, especially when sited on an east-facing forward slope.



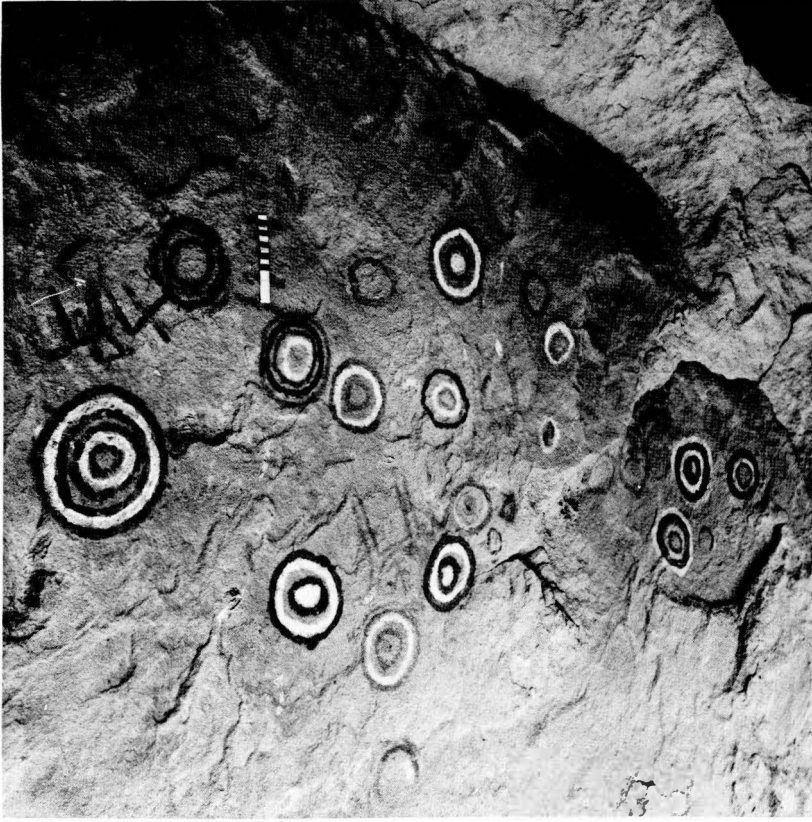


Fig. 3: Red, yellow and black “bullseyes” painted on the ceiling of an abri in Western Air, Niger. Primitive animal designs among them recall others seen in Mauritania (Aïoun-el-Atrouss) in 1973 and come firmly within the Arabo-Berber-Modern Group of Mauny(1954). (Foto Milburn)



Fig. 4: In this Air picture, the scale lies across a stone circle, with the RH end pointing north. Beyond it, a line of “autels” (low tower-like stone piles) cut across the circle. In the middle distance is visible the border of the parent tomb, with a number of stelae leaning against it. (Foto Milburn)



Fig. 5: With the scale pointing north and set upon a southerly tower, in a curving line of some dozen structures, some stelae are visible beyond. Their parent monument is out of sight to the left. The flat stone in the right foreground appears to bear primitive engravings. Although such are common in Western Aïr, they were not seen when the picture was taken, illustrating both the dangers of being in a hurry and of working entirely alone. (Foto Milburn).



Fig. 6: An Aïr tomb with a paved area leading outwards to its single delapidated border, seen from the west. The scale lies across a small “box”, formed of three slabs set in the ground, whose coverstone, if any, has vanished. The stelae at the east border are not visible, being lower than the tumulus. (Foto Milburn).

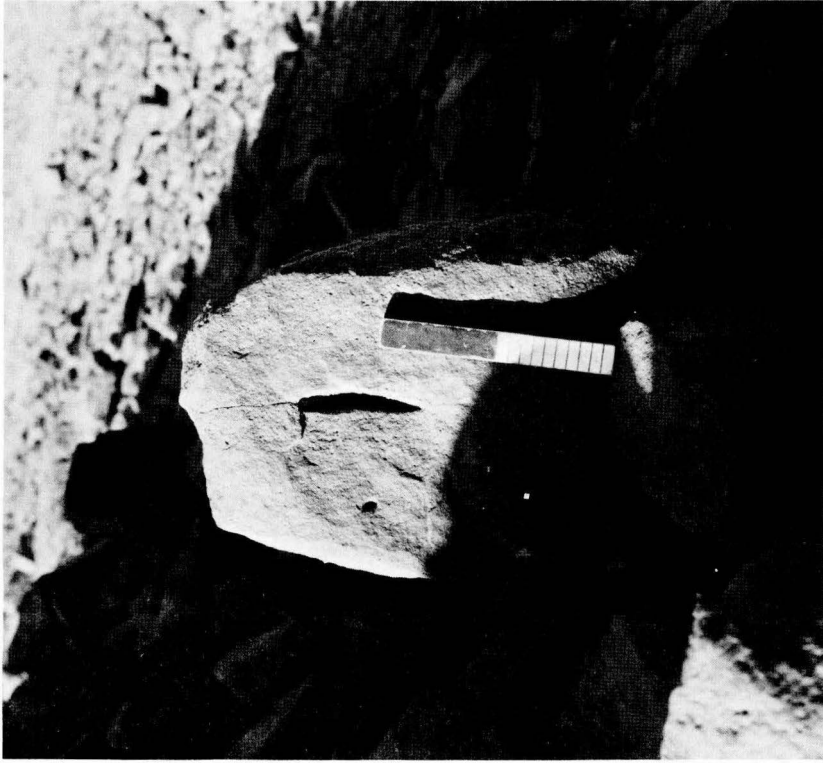


Fig. 7: A small pierced menhir standing before a choucha of Western Air. The hole is aligned roughly north to south, its patina is light brown and the scale is 20 cm long. Compare the larger pierced menhir, cited by Mauny (1976b, 175), found in the Rio de Oro zone of West Sahara. (Foto Milburn)



Fig. 8: A horizontal Tifinagh inscription at Moradi, Niger. In four cases, at the same site, an oval-shaped depression (to north of the inscription, in this picture) was placed to the Tifinagh characters. Any possible connection remains unproven. (Foto Milburn)



Fig. 9: A small stone circle of Timersoï, seen from the south. Some hundred metres to Westward, David Britt found a fallen stone pillar beside a dry well. On this pillar were two Tifinagh inscriptions. A possibility exists that the pillar once formed part of the circle. (Foto Milburn)



Fig. 10: A keyhole tomb of Gara Tesmad, Tassili n'Ajjer. The corridor faces away from the camera: the monument is ca. 40 metres long. (Foto Milburn)