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## **The inscription of Azrou Klane (Southern Morocco)**

Keywords: Morocco, rock art, inscriptions, Libyco-Berber

### Zusammenfassung:

Die Autoren präsentieren eine neue Libysch-Berberische Inschrift im Süden Marokkos. Eine kurze Beschreibung der Fundstelle und des Kontextes der Inschrift wird durch einen vorläufigen epigrafischen Kommentar ergänzt, der vor allem die besondere Situation der Zeichen für den Lautwert /k/ behandelt.

### Abstract:

The authors present a new Libyco-Berber inscription in the southern part of Morocco. A short description of the site and the context of the inscription is followed by a first epigraphic comment which in particular deals with the situation of signs for the phoneme /k/.

### Resumen:

Los autores presentan una nueva inscripción líbico-bereber localizada en el Sur de Marruecos. A una breve descripción del sitio y del entorno de la inscripción, le sigue un comentario epigráfico provisional, que aborda, fundamentalmente, la particular situación de los signos para el valor fonético /k/.

### **The site**

The rock art site of Azrou Klane is located some seventy kilometres east/south-east of Assa, in the northern region of the Wadi Draa and two hundred kilometers south of Agadir. The region is slightly mountainous but possesses all the climatic, botanical and geological conditions of the desert. The site is located in a river bank (the Wadi Azrou Klane), directly beneath Mount Taskala (898 m).

The rock art itself consists of drawings, pecked out a dark purplish-blue sand stone surface, practically horizontal. However, it looks as if the majority of the drawings have been made head-up in the direction of the very smooth declivity (10° to 15°). This is particularly obvious with the drawings of horsemen or animals. It's the case of the well-known drawing of a boat.

The rock art site of Azrou Klane is probably the most ancient Moroccan rock art site ever noticed. It has been published in 1875 by Duveyrier, following the observations and an article of a rabbi, travelling in these regions at that time. Very strangely, each person who visited the site since the discovery talked about the drawing of a boat, something amazing indeed, when one can notice that the ocean is eighty kilometres far from the site.

Simoneau (1977) registered the site “Azrou Klan” by the inventory number 150 220 without any comment.

The first real inventory, as far as we know, appears in the very well documented article of Martinet (1996). He mentioned 178 drawings, including 22 horsemen, 19 feet or sandals, camels, various animals, many enigmatic signs and what he calls “signe en +, signe en t, signe en m”, all drawings usually considered as “libyco-berber”. We barely can imagine that Martinet



Fig. 1  
The inscription  
(photo)

didn't see the inscription nevertheless he didn't speak of it in his article. He didn't give any drawing of the "signes".

After our visit, in December 2005, we registered an inscription, at one end of the rock surface, very close to the river bed. The engraving is very discreet, the patina is dark and some drawings are difficult to follow. We spent a noticeable time to bring into relief the exact contour of each sign. Our drawing gives back the normal disposition and direction of the inscription, the reader standing at the bottom.

The three (or four) vertical lines of script present 14 (or 16) signs (= characters), in total seven (or nine) different ones (fig. 1/2/3). This basis is by far too small to achieve severe results concerning the whole alphabet. While line 1 and 2 are beyond any discussion it is not sure if the sign # is the first one of line 3 or if it belongs to a fourth line which continues with a very dubious sign.

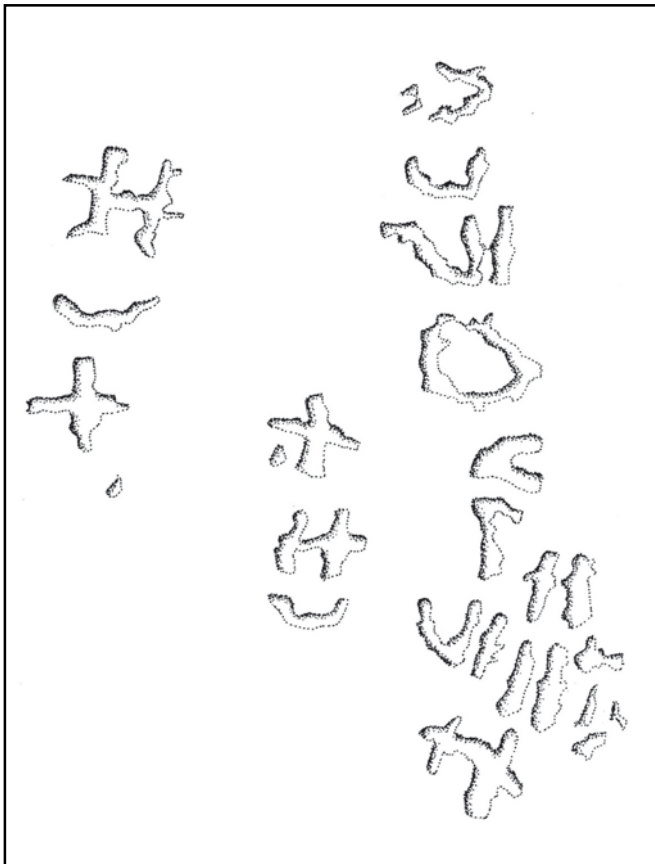


Fig. 2  
The inscription  
(sketch)

		>	
#		∩	
∩	+	∩	
+	#	∩	
	∩	<	
		∩	∥
		∩	?
		#	or : #
line 1	line 2	line 3	line 4 ?

Fig. 3  
The inscription  
(scheme of lines)

What can be said from the epigrapher's point of view are some noticeable details:

- # can supposed to be a variant of ∩, otherwise the possibility of confusion would be too high.
- There are no dotted signs or typical signs for Tifinagh alphabet. Therefore, we can exclude that the inscription is very young.
- The most important sign seems to be ∩ (two times in line 3).

The general situation concerning the representation of signs for /k/ in Morocco presents as follows:

Among the collection of IAM (Galand 1966) no usual sign for /k/ (like ∩ or ∩) appears, the only one possible is lh in IAM 21.

Among the corpus of Moroccan rock inscriptions possible signs for /k/ are very rare too: ∩ at Meskaou, possibly ∩ at Tisserfine (comparable with an example on Fuerteventura: ∩ at Morro de la Montaña Blanca).

Among the rock inscriptions of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote ∩ is a comparably seldom variant of the frequent signs ∩ and ∩ (the second one is attested as a sign for /k/ by a biscript at the site Cuchillete de Buenavista/ Fuerteventura).

Interestingly enough signs like |Λ, Λ|, |V, V| do not occur among the numerous inscriptions of Fom Chenna/Southern Morocco, but they are usual in the southerly adjacent territories of the Western Sahara and Mauretania. This last observation is not surprising if we consider that the site Azrou Klane is the southernmost one of Morocco excluding the Western Sahara.

As we do not know the language used in this inscription every linguistic comment is highly speculative. However, we can notice that the sequences of line 1 and 2 are identical with personal names on North African steles: TMS/Z\* (= RIL 331) and MS/ZT (= RIL 675).

Based on the epigraphic examination we can suppose that this inscription is older than those contemporary with the typical Libyco-Berber depictions of Fom Chenna. This assertion is confirmed by the observation that the patina of the characters is darker than that of the depictions of horsemen and camels on the panels nearby.

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\* The signs for sibilants are the most instable ones among Libyco-Berber alphabets. Therefore, we never can be sure which phoneme is represented by which grapheme.

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Rodrigue, Alain; Pichler, Werner (2007): The inscription of Azrou Klane (Southern Morocco).- *Almogaren XXXVIII* (Institutum Canarium), Wien, 135-139