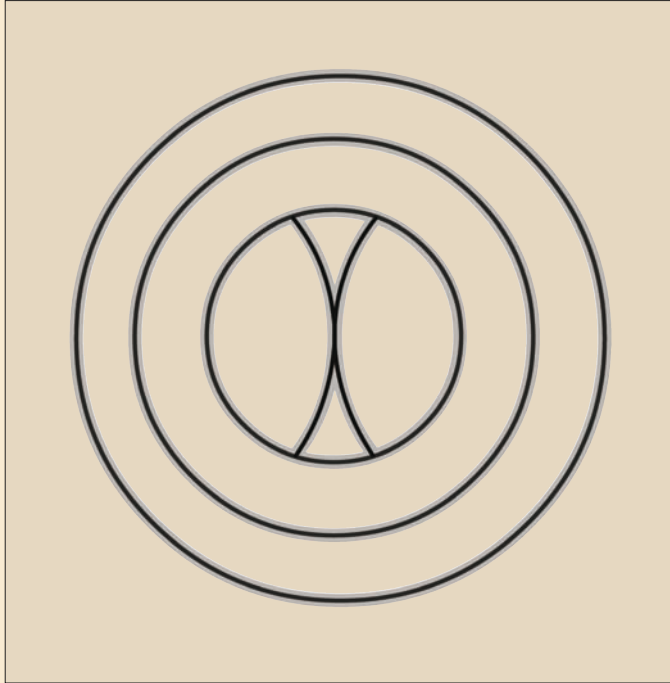


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Alain Rodrigue, Francis Auvray, Jean-Pierre Levallois, Mado Villet

## **New rock engravings at Imaoun (Morocco)**

Keywords: Morocco, Imaoun, rock art, bovids, spirals

### Résumé:

La région d'Imaoun (Akka) est connue pour ses stations rupestres. Le site principal a été inventorié à plusieurs reprises. Depuis une dizaine d'années, la zone prospectée a livré de nouveaux sites. La publication de nouvelles gravures contribue à abonder un inventaire qui est loin d'être exhaustif. Quelques remarques et hypothèses sont proposées au sujet de la chronologie.

### Abstract:

The region of Imaoun (Akka) is well known for its rock engravings sites. The main station was entered on inventory several times. For about ten years, the zone has been prospected and new sites were discovered. The publication of new engravings contributes to set up the inventory, far from being complete. Some remarks and hypothesis are made about the chronology.

### Zusammenfassung:

Die Region von Imaoun (Akka) ist gut bekannt für ihre Felsbild-Fundstellen. Die Hauptstation ist bereits mehrere Male zur Erfassung der Paneele aufgesucht worden. Seit rund 10 Jahren ist die Region Ziel der Forscher, wobei auch neue Stationen entdeckt wurden. Die vorliegende Publikation mit neuen Gravuren erweitert das Fundinventar, jedoch ohne vollständig sein zu können. Einige Anmerkungen und Hypothesen betreffen die Chronologie.

### **General context**

The enclosed plain of Imaoun, bounded in the north by the first hills of the Anti Atlas and in the south by the ridges of the Bani, possesses one of the most important rock engravings sites of Morocco. As it has already been shown in the past that it is actually a "unique rock art site" as written by S. Searight (Searight, 1996). Amongst numerous drawings of oxen and wild fauna (estimated 740), the station shows spectacular pecked-and-polished large crosses and a great number of spirals and winding lines. The greater part of this kind of drawings (56%) led the author (Searight, 1999) to the conclusion of a sacred, mystical place.

Though, other inspections in the enclosed plain (*fejja* in Arabic) showed numerous smaller stations in the north and in the south of the main site (Fig.

1). They are notably smaller and do not show the "mystical" aspect of crosses and winding lines (Salih & Heckendorf, 2000), but only few bovids, felids and rhinos. Every expedition around Imaoun brings a lot of new discoveries (Garcin & Garcin, 2004).

In the spring of 2013, the authors of the present note discovered a new rock engravings site, five kilometres north-east of the main station, grounding their research on oral informations but without any precise indications. The engravings station is located along the Wadi Imi Tek, one of the rivers (with the Wadi Akka and the Wadi Touna) composing the inverted delta-shape plain of Imaoun, two kilometres south of the road to Tata. The ridge bearing the engravings is oriented east-west. The first drawings can be seen immediately above the river bank, from the eastern flank to the top of the hill (Fig. 2). There are some destructions at the summit (copies and over-pecked cars...), but the whole collection of drawings is in good conditions. First we give a panel (Fig. 3) which shows the number and percentage of each subject.

### **The bovids**

As one can notice, the bovids represent the major part of the collection, what is not really new among the majority of rock engravings stations in Morocco. They are pecked in different styles, although a small lot seems to bear identical details and could be the work of the same engraver (Fig. 4 ; 1, 6). It must be noticed that the majority of them are looking rightward. It is remarkable too that all of them (except one) show bent-forward horns, simple or double (Fig. 4) and that there is no case of U-shaped horns.

Two techniques of engravings were used : contours (Fig. 4 ; 9) and complete pecked surface (Fig. 4 ; 10). This group of oxen and cows includes few noticeable details, despite the fact that the engravers sometimes indicated the spots of the coat (Fig. 4 ; 1, 2, 4, 6) in full checked lines or stripes (Fig. 6 ; 3). Two curious drawings can be noticed, never seen before, of what could be a kind of "signature" of a single engraver : round puckers under the belly (Fig. 4 ; 4, 6), with no satisfactory explanation. One of the late cows shows udder (Fig; 4 ; 4) and an other one a split hoof and a trident tail (Fig. 4 ; 5).

### **Non identified animals**

In this group, we consider first what could be oxen or cows. These animals are in such a bad shape that a doubt still remains. We have two images of cows without horns (Fig. 5 ; 4, 6), the second one forming a group with two riders pecked in the same technique and patina. Other ones are schematic or incomplete (Fig; 5 ; 2). Other images could be elephants (Fig. 5 ; 1) or dogs

(Fig. 6 ; 11), but we can reach the conclusion that the series could also be imputed to the poor skill of the engravers.

### **The enigmatic drawings**

They are of two kinds :

- spots, lines, circles and serpentines (Fig. 5 ; 10 to 12) ... non figurative drawings that can be found on almost every rock art station in Morocco, particularly the ones presumably being recent.
- organised drawings of spirals and roundels (Fig. 5 ; 8, 9), what links this station to the main one of Imaoun where they are particularly numerous. It must be noticed that the snake-shaped lines or spots do not have patina, while the organised or constructed drawings of spirals bear a brown patina, which is the case in "central" Imaoun.

### **The wild fauna**

This group is mainly composed of ostriches (Fig. 6 ; 6 to 8), some of them chased by dogs, opening their wings and fleeing ; antelopes (Fig. 6 ; 2, 5), once again chased by dogs, and two doubtful drawings of what can be considered as felids (Fig. 6 ; 9). A discrete drawing can be the image of a camel (Fig. 6 ; 10).

### **Comments**

The human presence is scarce. There is only one engraving that can be registered as a human silhouette (Fig. 6 ; 3), under the belly of a huge cow, linked by complex spirals and lines to a second one. Of course, men must be taken in account when they are riding horses (Fig; 5 ; 6, 7). Five large blocks, located at the summit of the ridge, bear numerous cupules, some of them being five or six centimetres wide and one or two centimetres deep (Fig. 10).

This new station of north-east Imaoun gives evidence of two periods (Fig. 7): the oldest one is documented by the complex spirals and roundels, with drawings which bear a strong brown patina and few bovids. In this case, the station of Imaoun north-east can be considered as a satellite of "central" Imaoun (Fig. 8). The second period is documented with drawings (60%) of bovids, dogs, horsemen and ostriches (Fig. 9). A new indication is from now on to be considered in Morocco: could the cows with a single forward-looking horn be more recent than the animals with U-shaped horns?

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### Legend of figures:

Figure 1: Location map (G.E.). Main site of Imaoun, four secondary sites and new site of Imaoun north-east.

Figure 2: Engraved block above the river bank (photography M. Villet).

Figure 3: Distribution of the subjects in Imaoun north-east.

Figure 4: Bovids (drawings A.R.).

Figure 5: Animals, horsemen and spirals (drawings A.R.).

Figure 6: Bovids, wild fauna and dogs (drawings A.R.).

Figure 7: Two types of patina (photography A. Rodrigue).

Figure 8: Full patina complex spiral (photography A. Rodrigue).

Figure 9: Bovids without patina (photography A. Rodrigue).

Figure 10: Blocks with cupules (photography M. Villet).

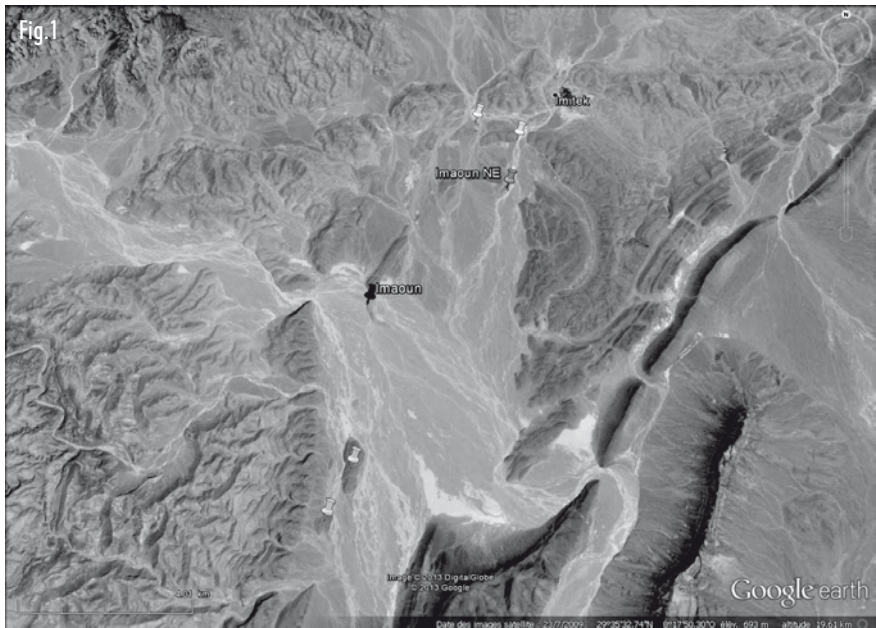






Fig. 2

Fig. 3

| Fig. 3             |    |
|--------------------|----|
| SUBJECTS           | Nb |
| Bovids             | 28 |
| Enigmatic          | 22 |
| Undetermined fauna | 10 |
| Ostriches          | 6  |
| Dogs               | 5  |
| Riders             | 3  |
| Felids             | 2  |
| Antilope           | 1  |
| Camel              | 1  |
| TOTAL              | 78 |

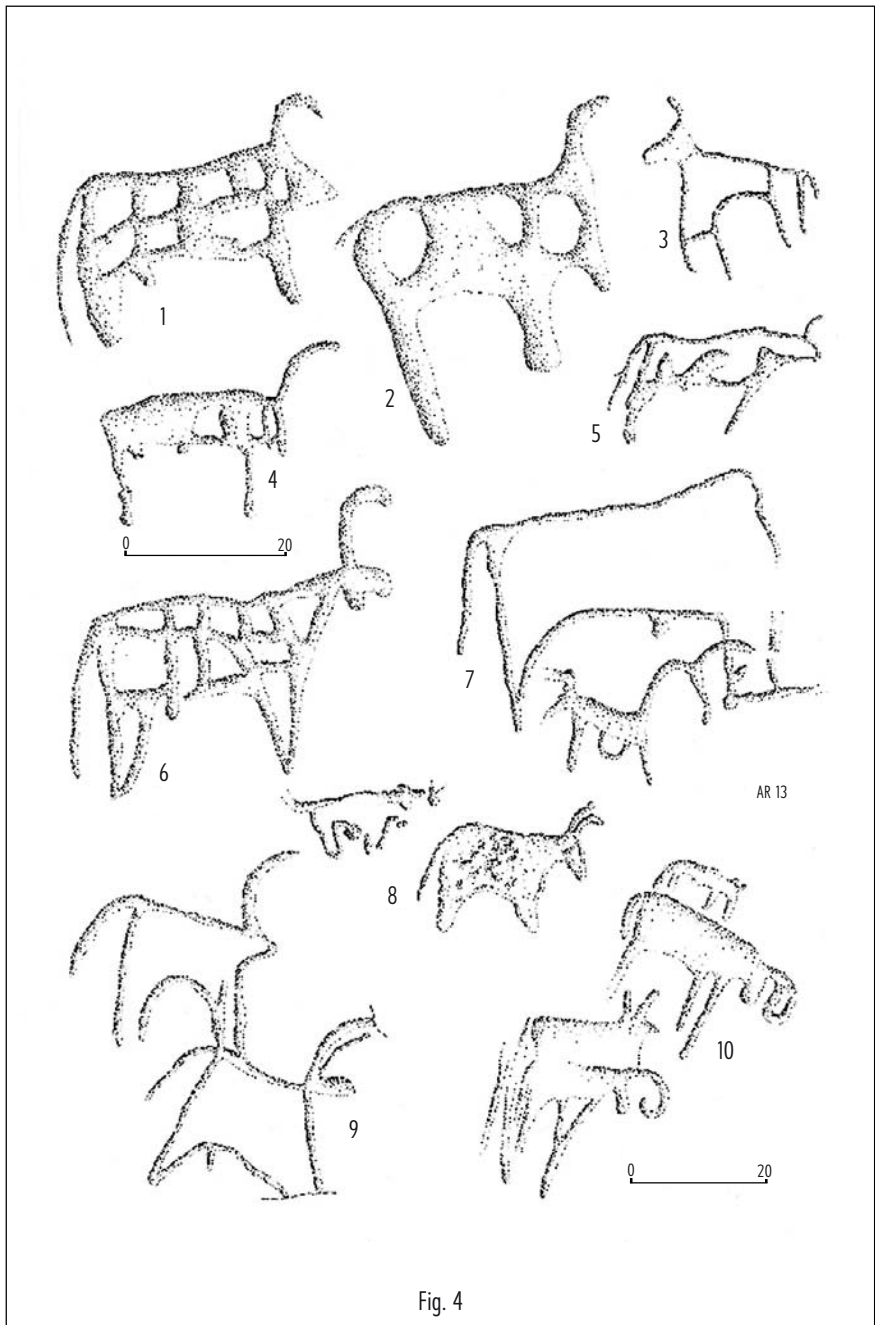
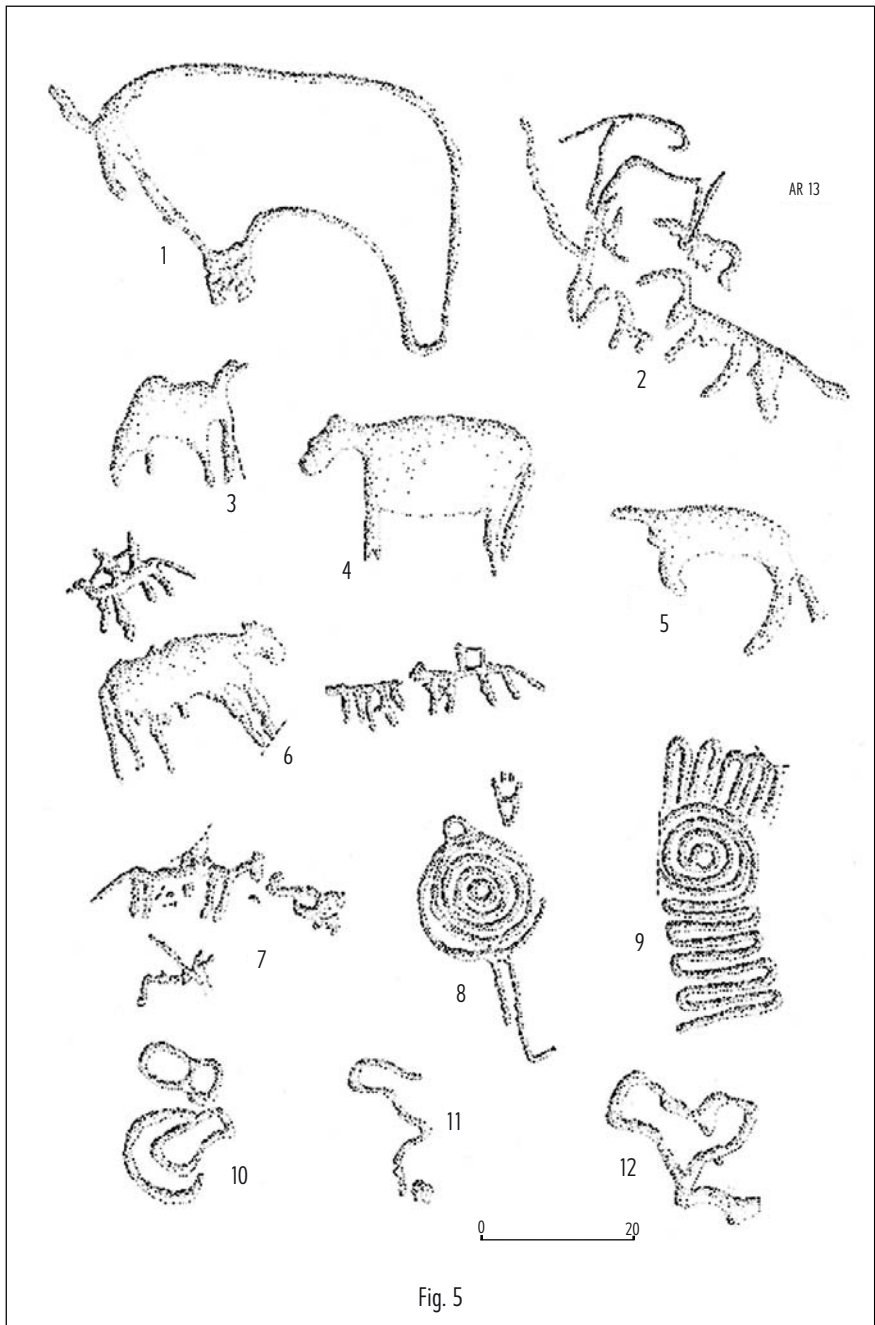


Fig. 4



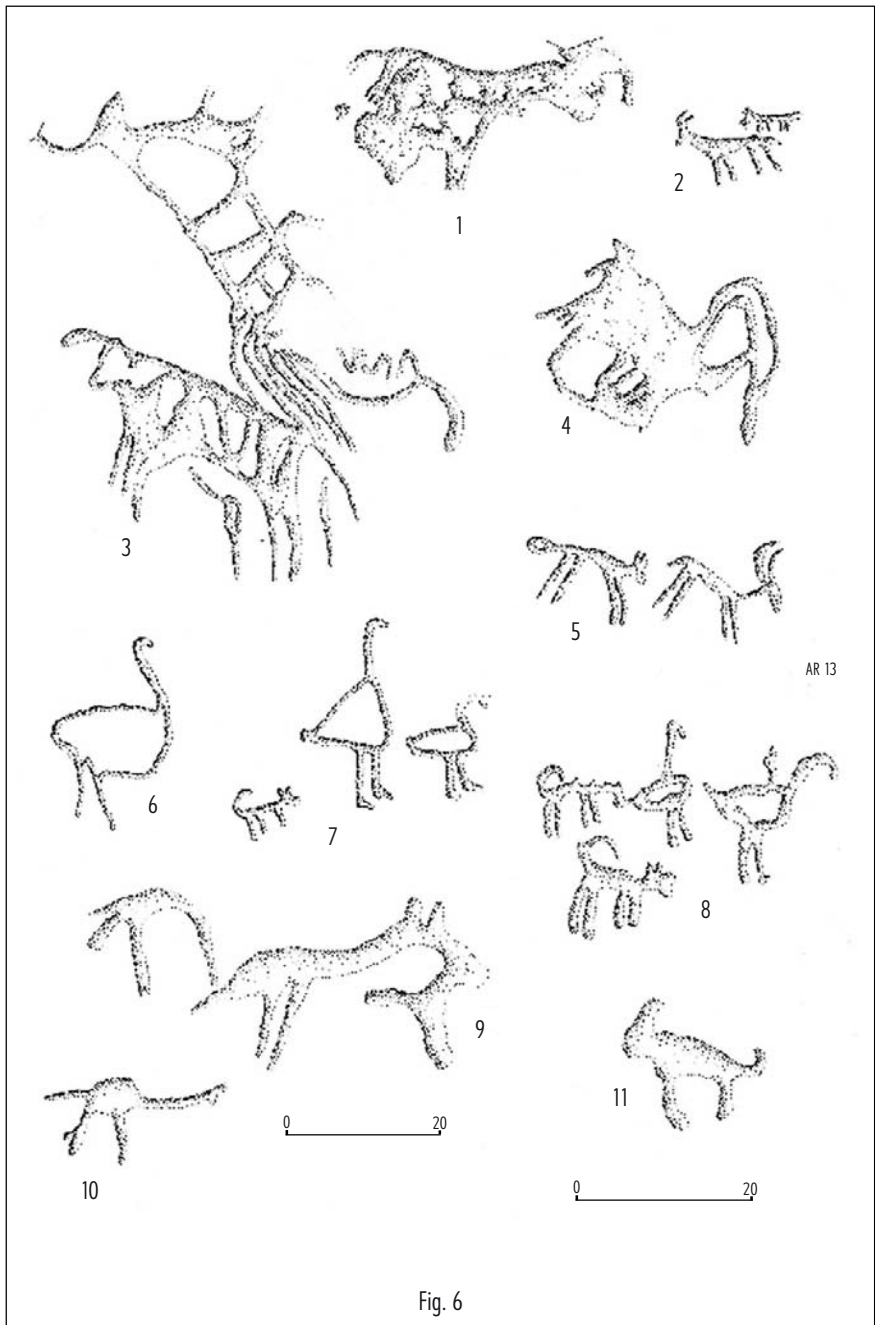


Fig. 6







Fig. 9



Fig. 10