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Megalithic engraved structure in the South of Morocco

1. Introduction

Some fourty kilometers s/w of Foug Zguid has been discovered an important group of rock engravings. They are unpublished, although rock art was signalled in this area some years ago without any further precision. This brief note is not intended to study these engravings, but to publish a particular monument which is located inside the rock art zone. We think that it is the first time that an engraved megalithic structure is signalled in the South of the country.

2. The monument

It is five meters long and a bit less than four meters large (Fig. 2). It is composed of five huge blocks of sandstone. Three of them may have been artificially aligned. Two other blocks mark the corners of the structure.

Two low walls made of partially buried blocks, still in post, surround the area in the s/e and s/w sides. Other blocks can be seen in the n/w side and may be the rest of a dismantled wall, or, more probably, the location of the gate.

All the blocks of the walls are mostly of the same size, around fourty centimeters long. Some of them are pebbles, others are sharply cut out but they all proceed from the disintegration of the surrounding sandstone bed.

The three main blocks (Fig. 1) are one and a half meter long and one meter high. The block in the eastern corner is the biggest one and is two meters high. The central platform has been levelled and is horizontal, despite the natural declivity of the top of the ridge.

3. The engravings

Four of the five blocks bear engravings. The naturally polished surfaces of the blocks have rounded outlines which is the case of almost all the engraved blocks of the site. But this does not seem to have rebuffed the engravers. In

fact, the result is that some engravings start at one side of the block and end at the other side: the difficulties to take a photo are considerable! This is generally the case of the winding lines ("serpentine"), particularly numerous in this site.

Other subjects are spirals, concentric circles ("cocade") and animals (Fig. 3): bovines, elephants, antelopes ... that can be found in the other sites of Glab es Sghrir and Mhrimima.

The hardness of the sandstone of this zone is high. The drawings are not profoundly pecked out and none is polished.

4. Discussion

It is hardly likely that the structure is a game of the nature. Although three blocks at least are huge and certainly heavy, they may have been moved and set in place by men. The will to obtain a strictly delimited area is also clearly obvious.

It is definitely not realistic to think that the blocks could have been pecked *before* being put in place. On the other hand, the monument may have been constructed well before the engravings were made. The main problem of this type of monument is here: are the engravings contemporaneous with the structure?

It would be easy to talk about the ritual or sacred part that this kind of monument could have played. In fact, if the monument – blocks and engravings – was elaborated as a whole, it is necessary to consider the destination and the role of the latter and to propose as an hypothesis that they are closely linked with particular social (or religious?) practices.

Megaliths, in the exact meanings of "menhir" or "dolmen" do not exist in the Maghrib, except in the North, where they proceed from the European bronze ages civilisations. On the other hand, *round* enclosures made of erected stones, with or without a paved area, are common in the North and the South of the Atlas mountains. We know at least one rectangular megalithic structure looking alike the one here described in the High Atlas (Yagour). But it does not bear engravings. Rectangular structures with engravings are known in Libya, but nothing of the type seems to exist in the Sahara.

Other structures of this kind certainly exist in the region of the Draa valley. They may have escaped the searcher's notice. Excavations would be necessary to show if the inside area has been used as a grave for instance, or, what seems to us to be a better track, if the walls possess real foundations.



Fig. 1 The megalithic structure (photography by the author).

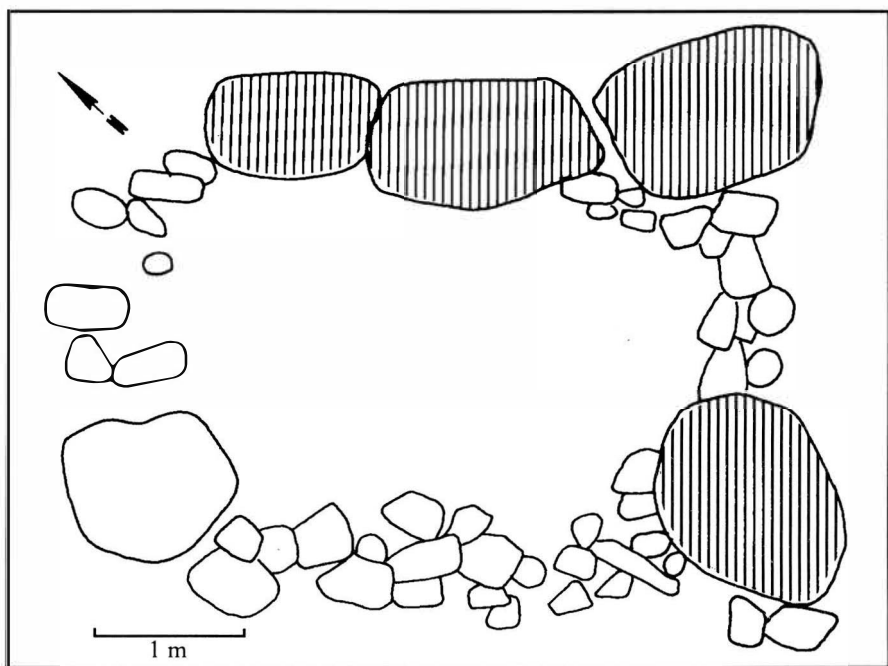


Fig. 2 Sketch of the structure. Hatch-lined blocks bear engravings.



Fig. 3 Engravings on the southern block (photography by the author).