

no room for any doubt. The kulan shows, it is true, the same vertical stripes, but the tiger is recognisable from his long tail without any tuft at the end and from his claws.

The question arises, who can have drawn these artistic rock-pictures in this dreary and uninhabited mountain region. Were they Lopliks or gold-miners from the southern Tarim basin? To this question the answer is No. In the first place, these people would never have occasion to do it, and in the second place they would be unable to draw them, for I have never observed amongst them any evidences of a similar artistic skill. Only once have I seen rock-drawings undoubtedly executed by Muhammedans, and they too represented wild animals, namely on the stone Tamgha-tasch beside the Kara-köl in the Eastern Pamir, where Kirgis (Kirghiz) live. But the rock-drawings with which I am now dealing are executed with a much surer eye and greater skill. No, it is more likely that the draughtsman was a Mongol, and that the drawings date back to a time when the Kara-koschun region was inhabited by Mongols, indeed they may even date back to the epoch of the ancient Lop-nor. In any case the hunters are professional hunters, who hunted the tiger in order to sell the skin to the Chinese, as also kulans and yaks, again for the sake of their skins, though no doubt for their flesh as well.

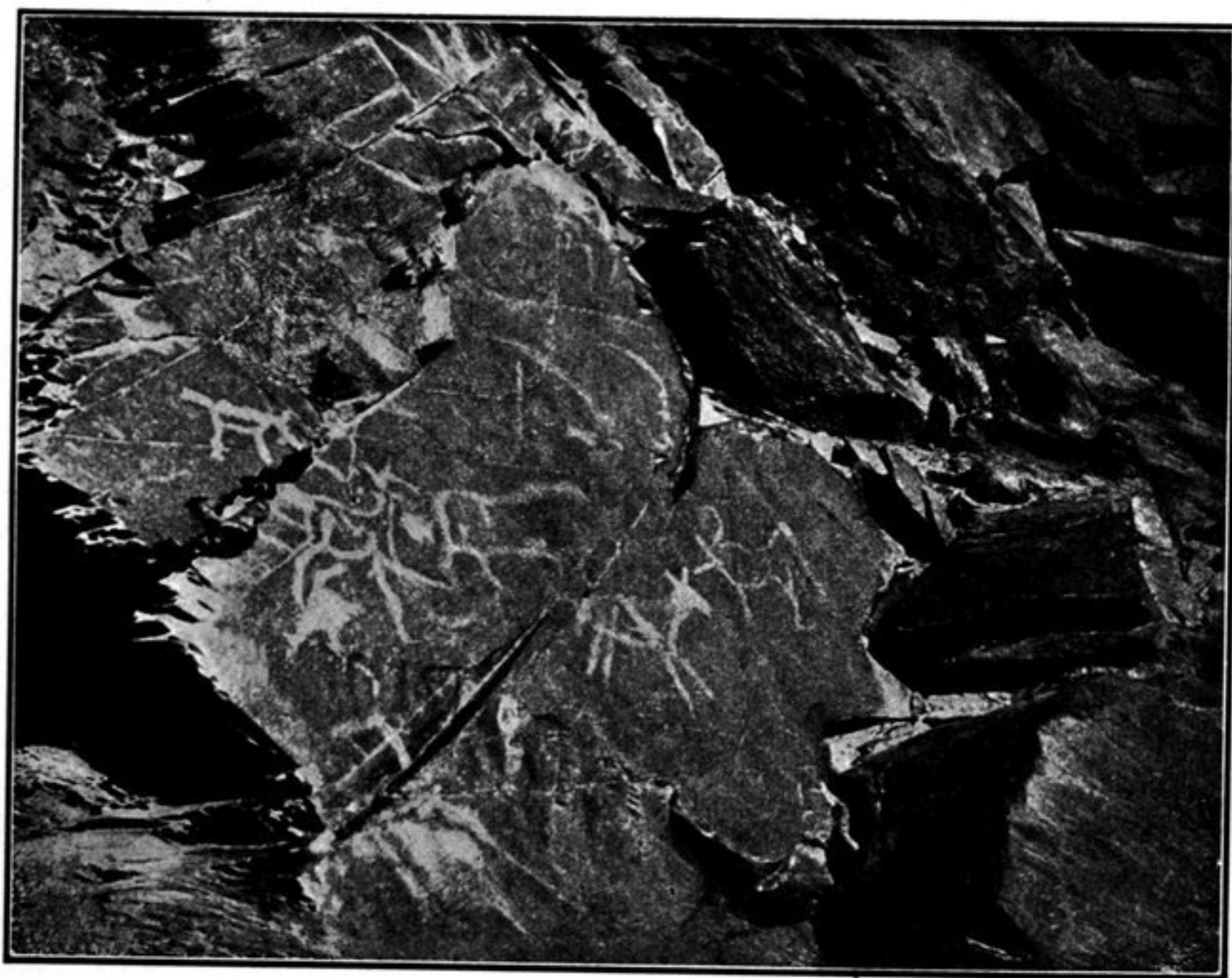


Fig. 155. THE ROCK-DRAWINGS.

And at Camp LXXI we discovered unmistakable evidence that Mongols had indeed visited that region, namely an *obo*, or a group of slabs of schist, propped up on end one against the other, with the inscription »On mane padme hum» engraved upon them a multitude of times, the letters being of two different sizes. We also came across several similar stones, inscribed all over with the same apostrophe, lying scattered about the flat entrance of the glen around our camp. Here there cannot possibly be any mistake; nobody except Mongols could have prepared these stones,