

C. THE LOP DESERT.

From the Lop-nor region prehistoric finds were collected by HÖRNER and CHEN in the winter season 1930—31 during their important surveys of the Lop desert, which resulted, inter alia, in the only existing map of Lop-nor in its present northern position. In 1934 Mr. CHEN made a few additional finds along the lower part of Qum-darya, and in the same season I found some places with worked stones etc. mainly in the desert south of Yardang-bulaq.¹ They are all mentioned in the descriptive list together with the stray finds from the historical period; in this chapter only the main types will be discussed and such combinations of finds as probably mark dwelling sites.

Hypothetical dwelling sites.

The most important objects for dating prehistoric cultures are as a rule the ceramic wares. Unfortunately very few potsherds have been collected together with worked flints in the Lop desert. In HÖRNER's collection there is one instance, K. 13363, and in my own collection there are three instances, Nos. 22, 25 and 28.

These potsherds are rather homogeneous as to their general appearance and more worn by the moving sand than the sherds from the time of Lou-lan. This circumstance shows either that they are of a quality inferior to that of the Lou-lan pottery or that they have been exposed for a longer time. Both possibilities suggest an earlier age than the Lou-lan occupation. The ware is light brownish with red and grey stains. Rather coarse-grained sand has been used for mixing with the clay. Most of the sherds are plain. No. 28: 1 has a raised border below the rim, and 28: 2 has had a raised décor of applied bands with striations. It is not impossible that the decorated sherd Pl. 29: 2 is of prehistoric origin, though its surface is well-preserved. A few more potsherds found separately and without accompanying stone implements may also belong to this group.

We will now examine the worked flints from those localities which may be regarded as probable dwelling sites. I take only those places where there is no admixture of metal or definitely Lou-lan time pottery. The first four are situated near to the south of Qum-darya below Yardang-bulaq. The places are mentioned in sequence from west to east; cf. the maps Fig. 36—37.

No. 22 is just a couple of diminutive flint flakes beside a single potsherd, and No. 25 has one potsherd, an irregular flint core, a couple of flakes, the coarse knife or bifacial implement Pl. 5: 10 and two large flint blocks with chipped-off surfaces. I

¹ On HEDIN's earlier maps the name Yardang-bulaq has been applied to a well otherwise called Dolan-achiq 10 km. NNW of the true Yardang-bulaq, which is situated only about 3 km. NW of Yaqa-yardang-bulaq. At Dolan-achiq there are no yardangs.