

PART III.

THE NORTHERN BORDER REGION OF LOP-NOR

I. A QURUQ-TAGH ROCK CARVING.

When HENNING HASLUND and I travelled from Shindi to Ying-p'an, in April 1928, we followed the most direct road through the Buyantu-bulaq¹ canyon, a small road that is far from suitable for camels. In the deep-cut valley with its luxuriant vegetation of poplars and tamarisks the going is good except for one place where the path leaves the canyon and runs up among the mountains on the right side to avoid an impassable spot in the river valley where there is a waterfall. In this detour in the mountains the camels had a very hard time crossing steep slopes, ravines with large boulders and some passages that were too narrow to allow a loaded animal to pass.

6.5 km. south of Shindi we saw that the lower part of the beautiful steep cliff, more than 100 m. high, on the left-hand side of the valley was covered with rough pictures engraved in the rock, Pl. XV. We did not stop to examine them at that time, but on my next visit to Shindi I spent several days in early November at the spot, filled the engravings with white colour, and took many photographs, some of which are reproduced here.

After having got access to "Innermost Asia", published in 1928, I found that STEIN had been the first foreigner to observe these rock pictures, but he had had no opportunity to pay any closer attention to this interesting place, which he calls Inkur-otak.

The brook makes one of its largest windings at this place, encircling a small open space with poplars, tamarisks and high grass. The foot of the limestone cliff with the engravings is washed by the water of the brook.

¹ The name given to the Shindi river by the Turks is Buyantu-bulaq, i. e. a mixture of Mongolian and Turki, not altogether uncommon in this region. It means 'the propitious well'. In HEDIN's German transcription the first part is spelled Budschentü; those using English transcription have written it Bujentu. It is interesting to note that STEIN, unaware of the first part being Mongol, supposes the name to be a "transformation which the name Bejan-tura has undergone in careless Turfanlik pronunciation" (Stein 1928, p. 752 note 6). Bejan-tura is the name given to the Buddhistic ruins at Ying-p'an. ABDURAHIM assigned the same name to the ruined tower in the northern mouth of the Shindi river. According to JARRING bejan is a medicinal plant, tura is tower. ABDURAHIM pronounced the river name something like Bøjentu-bulaq.