



Fig. 38. Plan of "tash-öi" near Shindi, Quruq-tagh. Complete and broken hatchings denote standing and fallen down masonry respectively.

It is almost impossible to determine the age of these stone houses only from the potsherds found. Their position high above the ground with a fine prospect along the river valley made them very suitable as look-outs, and it is possible that they were constructed in connection with the watch-tower at the mouth of the valley described above. It is a priori very reasonable to suppose that all these structures in the valley of the Shindi river were erected, or at least inspired, by the Chinese to safeguard the traffic on the Silk Road passing not very far to the south of the Quruq-tagh range.

C. Grave near Shindi.

When at Shindi with NORIN, in November 1928, I examined a grave about 3 km. to the east of the village. It was situated on a small elevation near NORIN's point 1561 (cf. sheet Shindi of NORIN's map), and consisted of a rectangle measuring 5×6 m. with an outer and an inner wall of stones, and between these a filling of gravel. Half a metre of loessic earth covered an irregular layer of smaller slabs, and below this we found some remains of a very much decayed human skeleton. The left arm was lying higher than the traces of the skull. 20 cm. to the left of the skull there was a lower jaw of a sheep. This formed the only funeral deposit. Immediately below this we came upon rock.

The grave was of course measured, but the plan was lost in Siberia together with many other more valuable data. I am therefore unable to state with certainty in which direction the skeleton was resting, but as far as I can recollect the head was lying to the west.

Even this stone grave ABDURAHIM called a Tash-öi though it made no real impression of having been a house.