

The instigator of this clause was the Minister for Education, who, in his turn, had been urged by certain learned men in Peking to forbid our expedition to carry on any kind of archaeological work or do any digging. This was why one spade was enough for the Lop-nor expedition, and why I now gave the order, »Go and fetch *the spade!*» During the hours that followed I would have given much, notwithstanding Peking's ill-will, to have had ten spades at our disposal.

The interesting spot was situated on the western slope of the *mesa*, 17.5 m above the surface of the water, and the top of the *mesa* was 25 m above our landing-place.

Some of our boatmen were already excavating the shallow grave, using their bare hands or tree-stumps that lay scattered about on the ground. The grave, which was on a smooth, terrace-like surface, was evidently a mass-grave, for when I arrived the men had already laid out on its edge three skulls and numerous other parts of skeletons, as well as various rags of clothing. The grave was covered with flat boards, while its edge was marked by a few upright posts.

With the spade the work went more quickly. I remained for a time and watched the digging, which was directed by CHEN. The whole excavation lasted from 1.10 to 3.30 p. m.

While the work was going forward I went right up to the top of the *mesa* alone. There was an astonishingly fine view all round the horizon. In the north loomed the Quruq-tagh, with the dark *sai* at its foot. For the rest, one was surrounded by the usual fantastic landscape — a maze, a jig-saw puzzle of blue-green, winding channels and lakes, with greyish yellow *yardangs* and strips of yellow reed-bed. It would be impossible to get it all clear on a map, except by a photograph from the air. I had to content myself, as hitherto, with mapping our route through this labyrinth of newly arrived water, which in its advance had filled the gullies and depressions between the *yardangs*. These appeared in the view as yellow strips, always running from north-east to south-west. Here and there the beautiful, picturesque *mesas* — resembling castles, fortresses and towers — rose above the surface of the ground, which taken as a whole was absolutely flat. There was more red in their colouring than in that of the lower *yardangs*.

I took out my sketch-book and drew a complete panorama all round the horizon, with the points of the compass marked. This done, I went down to the mass-grave again. The men had by this time laid out on the edge of the grave fifteen skulls, four wooden food-trays each with four short legs, two bows, three wooden combs, eight round or oval wooden bowls, and two light-grey clay vessels. There were also a few hair-pins, made of bamboo and lacquered; a crushed wooden jar, cylindrical in shape, and showing signs of pretty lacquering; a small covered basket; four wooden spindle whorls; a pair of small leather slippers; several pieces of silk of different colours, some with beautiful patterns; and a few small silk purses, with delicate chain-stitch embroidery, these latter especially pretty.