



Fig. 15. Excavation of the second grave, that of a young woman

and other barbarians; she had seen the war-chariots with their archers and spear-men, the great trade-caravans passing through Lou-lan, or resting in its inns; and she had seen the innumerable camels carrying bales of China's precious silk westward along the Silk Road.

In the afternoon sunshine CHEN and I began a fairly minute examination of the clothing in which she had been committed to the earth. She wore on her head a kerchief wound like a turban, and round this a simple band. She was dressed in an outer and inner garment of silk and hemp. On the breast lay a small, square red piece of embroidered silk. Her feet were stuck into woven silk slippers. Her waist was encircled nearest the body by a sort of girdle.

We took away samples of all these garments, some — the headdress and slippers for example — entire, and a pouch of beautifully patterned silk in many colours.

Outside the coffin, at its head, we found a rectangular four-legged food-tray with a low rim, a red-painted bowl and the skeleton of a whole sheep — provisions for the traveller on her journey to another world.

The unknown young lady was left in her coffin in the starlight just for one night; and the breezes caressed her yellowing cheeks, and her long hair. For one single night in about 2,000 years she had risen up out of her grave and returned to the world. But now she was only a dried-up mummy. The land where she had spent her short life lay around her, yellowish grey and desolate; the returning water had not yet recalled to life the woods, gardens, meadows and fields she had seen so long ago.