

our feet. The yellow clay sediment predominated, with its *yardang* formation, and the fresh, grey-green water-spaces shrank into mere nothings.

Here, too, the view was so fascinating and instructive that I could not resist drawing a new panorama. I had almost finished it when one of the boatmen came up and reported the find of another grave — on the eastern slope of the *mesa*.

It was situated on a small terrace. On attacking it vigorously with spade and axe we came upon a square piece of hardened ox-hide. We lifted it carefully and placed it on the edge of the grave. Then we saw at once an extremely shrivelled and mummified corpse. Unlike the woman's body described in the preceding pages, it was not protected by any wooden lid; though, like the other, it lay in a canoe-shaped coffin.

The face was uncovered and well preserved, and the features, with the powerful nose and quiet, assured smile, made a noble and dignified impression. The coffin was 1.7 m long; its breadth at the head was 0.41 m, and at the feet 0.35 m. The corpse itself was only 1.52 m in length.

This body, too, was that of a woman. On her head she wore a woollen cap with two upright pins in it, tipped with tufts of feathers; it had red strings and a split weasel-skin, with the head hanging down in front. This doubtless had a special symbolic meaning. Her hair was fairly long and grey, and was parted down the middle.

For the rest, the whole body was shrouded in a dark brown, finely woven mantle, rectangular in shape and with a lighter strip, about an inch wide, at the edges. It measured 1.85 by 1.70 m. The right-hand edge of the cloak was gathered into three small bags, with string tied round them and containing Ephedra twigs, probably having a symbolic meaning.

We lifted the body out of the coffin and spread out the mantle on the ground. Under it the dead woman wore round her waist a thin girdle, with long woollen fringes hanging down. On her feet she had boots of rough ox-hide with an inner sole of lamb-skin.

She was little and frail; brown skin, as hard as parchment, was stretched over the fine, thin skeleton. The colour of the face, too, was dark brown, unlike that of the first female corpse, whose skin was fair. On the side of the head was a lock of dark brown hair. On top of the ox-hide were some provisions in a basket. We took with us everything that might serve for purposes of identification, including the right-hand side of the mantle with the three bags.

Who had she been, this solitary old lady with the distinguished profile? Probably one of the indigenous inhabitants of the kingdom of Lou-lan.

The grave was 22.5 m above the surface of the water, and thus not quite 3 m below the top of the *mesa*. We had now found four graves, all situated high above water-level. They had probably been placed there intentionally, so as to be out of range of even the highest flood.