

tomb chamber was gained by dropping down to the floor a foot or two lower. This entrance had been originally walled up with rough brickwork, through which the first plunderers had broken a hole sufficiently large for a man to crawl through. The tomb chambers in Ast. i. 1-6 were either square or oblong, the largest measuring 11 feet square and the smallest  $9\frac{1}{2}$  feet by 6. The height within varied from 5 to 6 feet; the walls were, as in most of the tombs elsewhere, left unplastered and showed the bare clay seamed by layers of fine gravel.

In clearing the approach trench to Ast. i. 1 a number of small silk pieces were first discovered, including the fragment of a fine figured silk in twill weave, Ast. i. 1. 08, 011 (Pl. LXXVIII, LXXXIII), and also two fragments of a Chinese text or document on paper mounted on silk damask. These may have been dragged out of the tomb when the boards of coffins were removed. The interior near the entrance was found filled with sand to a height of 2 or 3 feet, clear evidence that the tomb had remained open for some time before the accumulation of drift-sand blocked the opening broken through the wall. This may also account for the much-decayed condition of the two corpses found lying side by side on a simple mat near the western wall. The heads of both had been detached, evidently when the bodies had been thrown out of their coffins. Only shreds remained of the shrouds, which consisted of plain cotton fabrics with a covering of thin discoloured silk. But on the head of one of the bodies a circular piece cut from a figured silk and surrounded by a frill of plain silk pleated, Ast. i. 1. 01 (Pl. LXXX), survived in a very perished and brittle condition.

Clearing of  
tomb  
Ast. i. 1.

It was the first specimen of those ornamented face-covers found at this cemetery which furnished a very interesting series of polychrome figured silks, almost all distinctly 'Sasanian' in their style of decorative design. The patterns of this and other figured silks here recovered, whether of Western or Chinese origin, will be conveniently discussed together at a later stage, after the tombs explored and the objects found in them have been described. Other pieces of striped coloured silk and damask, i. 1. 09-10 (Pl. LXXXIV), were found clinging to the wall in the north-western and south-eastern corners of the chamber. Five pottery vessels of different shapes and sizes, including the goblets i. 1. 05-6 (Pl. XC), the large jar i. 1. 03, and the small bowl i. 1. 07, were found lying along the southern wall towards which the heads of the dead had been turned. They, no doubt, were intended to hold food placed in the tomb for the use of the dead. Their bodies are painted grey or black with decorative bands, consisting mainly of large white discs and of petals in red. Pottery with a similar type of decoration prevails throughout the Astāna tombs. The fact that the painting was done in tempera and therefore perishable proves that this pottery was specially decorated for sepulchral purposes. Near the entrance was recovered the small wooden duck i. 1. 012 (Pl. CIV), of graceful shape, excellently carved in the round and its colours well preserved. Like two similar carved ducks in other tombs it may have been deposited with the dead as a symbol of felicity.

Finds in  
tomb  
Ast. i. 1.

In the tomb Ast. i. 2 next examined, the two bodies that it contained were found in a badly decayed and damaged condition. The deposits still traceable comprised some rough pottery bowls decorated as in i. 1, of which i. 2. 04 (Pl. XC) is a specimen; remains of food still adhere to its bottom; also the wooden food bowl i. 2. 05 (Pl. XCI); all of these had been placed along the southern wall towards which the heads of the dead were turned. There, too, were found the wooden duck i. 2. 06 (Pl. CIV), with a realistically carved head, and fragments of what appear to be two distinct Chinese documents. A mass of fragments of fine blue silk, all painted, has owing to their very fragile condition proved very difficult to open out; they appear to be the remains of a hanging, similar to that recovered in Ast. ix. 2, which had fallen from the back wall and thus got broken up.

Objects  
recovered  
from  
Ast. i. 2.

The adjoining tomb, Ast. i. 3, yielded several interesting discoveries, even though the two bodies it contained were badly decayed and had evidently also suffered from rough treatment at