

Bundle of
Ephedra
twigs.

The exact significance of this and the other images similarly deposited must remain a subject for further inquiry. Placed over the breast of the body was found a small bundle, L.S. 6. 03 (Pl. XXVI), done up in a thick woollen fabric and wound tightly round with a cord of straw and goat's hair. It contained fragments of twigs which Dr. Rendle, Keeper of Botany at the British Museum, has identified as belonging to the *Ephedra* shrub, treated by the Parsis as the representative of the sacred Haoma plant of Zoroastrian cult (see *Add. and Corr.*).

Burials of
indigenous
population.

The advanced state of decay of the contents of these graves was in striking contrast with the conditions observed at the cemeteries of L.F. and L.H. Though placed high above the riverine plain and on a barren Sai, these graves may possibly have been exposed to slight subsoil moisture penetrating from such occasional drainage as passes down the shallow beds from the hills to the north. Yet the evidence was sufficient to show that the bodies buried in this little cemetery of L.S. belonged to the same autochthonous population of herdsman and hunters sparsely inhabiting the Lou-lan tract of which we had found remains on the desolate Mesa of L.F. a year before. Practically all details of the burial customs there observed were represented here also.

Date of
burials at
L.S.

The objects found here once again illustrated how widely these semi-nomadic Lou-lan people differed in civilization from the Chinese who frequented the high road along what is now the dried-up river. The same striking contrast would present itself to the archaeologist who many centuries hence might have to compare relics from the quarters of the present Chinese rulers of the Tārīm basin with those left by, say, the last generation of the Lopliks, those true successors in manner of life, though not in race, of the Lou-lan people. Where civilization is comparatively so simple and necessarily so tenacious in its fashions, it is difficult to mark changes and by them to determine chronological sequence unless there is ample material. As this is lacking here, it is impossible to indicate the relative age of the burials at L.S. It must be borne in mind, however, that the upper portion of the Kuruk-daryā course probably received seasonal floods for some time after the occupation of the area round the Lou-lan station, L.A., had become impossible. Hence grazing would very likely have continued longer on the river banks than on the ground of the ancient delta, just as we observe it now along the terminal course of the Keriya river, while it has ceased on its dried-up delta.⁸ Thus the graves of L.S. and the neighbouring cemetery L.T. may possibly be of somewhat later date than those of L.F.⁹

Cemetery
of L.T.

As the examination of the half-dozen graves still left at L.S., some of them on a slightly lower level, was not likely to add much to the evidence already secured, I took my little working party on the following day to the burial-ground which on Lāl Singh's plane-table was marked as 'Cemetery No. 2'. We duly found it about five miles to the east of L.S., at a point where the line of 'coastal' Mesas was broken by great gaps, the glacis on the north sloping down straight to the gravel 'foreshore'. It occupied the top of a small gravel-covered hillock rising slightly above the level of the latter. The graves, about twenty-two in all, covered an area of roughly 20 yards from north to south and 16 yards across. Their position was marked by the tops of narrow boards emerging, as at L.S., above the surface and forming small palisade-like enclosures. But multiple rows of posts around these, such as were found about some graves at L.S., were here absent. The enclosures were on the average 5½ feet long and about 1½ feet across. The narrower or foot end here, too, always pointed westwards.

Owing, perhaps, to the nature of the soil, which on excavation proved to be soft loess under

⁸ See *Desert Cathay*, ii. p. 397; *Serindia*, iii. pp. 1240 sq.

⁹ The only indication in support of this approximate dating, and it is a slight one, might be sought in the use of the face-cloth (L.S. 3. 01, Pl. XXV). This was not found in the

case of the L.F. burials, and might possibly suggest the influence of Chinese examples. But L.Q., too, not far from L.F. also yielded a piece, L.Q. iii. 01, which might be described as a face-cloth.