

from the marshy lake Avullu-köl (eastern part of lower Tarim) and in the sands between there and Yardang-bulaq he had come across a hill covered with "a thousand" coffins. Now the Turki expressions "one thousand" and "ten thousand" are not to be taken literally — numbers are very seldom definite among the Turks — they are only meant to express a large amount. The wooden coffins, he said, were piled on top of one another, and their interior was richly carved and painted. The well-preserved corpses were dressed in silk, and there was also some kind of writings on ornamented paper. He was absolutely sure of his statement as to the location of this marvellous burial place: 10 km. south of the Qum-darya at the height of Yardang-bulaq.

We certainly had considerable doubts about his description of the site and its contents, or, more correctly, we made the usual allowances for the fancies of the Turkish mind. Afterwards, indeed, it was easy to recognize how ÖRDEK mixed his fantastic tale with details that he had noticed and remembered from Lou-lan. We were too credulous, however, in believing his statement as to the situation of the place, we only doubted his ability to trace it after so many years. Otherwise the fanciful description sounded inviting, especially as no explorer had ever ventured into exactly that region.

ÖRDEK also talked about ruins of watch-towers which he had located, and both Dr. HEDIN and I got an impression that the facts hidden behind ÖRDEK's tales, when properly examined, might help to widen our knowledge of the Lou-lan civilization and, maybe, also clear up some questions about the course of the ancient Silk Road, the latter problem being of special importance as Dr. HEDIN had long hoped to be able to survey the possibility of reviving the Silk Road for motor traffic, and had in fact made it one of the tasks of this last expedition.

I was therefore told off to locate and survey the ancient remains known to ÖRDEK. He was to act as guide. Fortunately, Mr. GEORG SÖDERBOM was sent with me on this special tour, and as always he proved to be of invaluable assistance not only in making all the practical arrangements, as will be seen from the following account.

On April 29th 1934 SÖDERBOM and I started from the main camp of the expedition, which was situated near the easternmost extremity of the Charchaq hills on the left shore of Qum-darya and about 19 km. W. of Yardang-bulaq, on our search for ÖRDEK's sites. We sailed down Qum-darya to a point about 4 km. below Yardang-bulaq which became our camp B 61. The spot was selected by ÖRDEK as a suitable starting-point for his reconnaissance. His searches were much hampered by severe sandstorms, and during those days on which I went with him or reconnoitred alone to the south of Qum-darya I obtained a very vivid impression of the dull monotony of the sand dunes and confusing maze of yardangs and dead tamarisk mounds. The region is far from easily investigated. On these tours I picked up small bronze and flint objects of various kinds as well as some potsherds, and