

D. GRAVES AROUND YAQINLIQ-KÖL.

About 7 km. west of Grave 10 I was shown another burial place situated between the lake Yaqinliq-köl and Qum-darya, a couple of kilometres to the south of the latter. On top of a small yardang were the remnants of a rectangular structure 2.3×1.6 m., made of horizontal logs piled up between four corner posts, Pl. I a. At each end of it was a less distinctly marked rectangle, and in one of them parts of a child's skeleton were exposed. The middle part had had a roof of logs, which had now fallen in. The orientation of the structure was N 24° W—S 24° E. At the northern end stood two poles, each bearing an antelope head, probably denoting that we had to deal with a Mohammedan burial place. ÖRDEK confirmed this view, though he was ignorant of its age or to whom it belonged. The wood in the logs was certainly much weathered, which revealed a certain age, but as the structure did not resemble any of the graves of the Lou-lan time known to me, I was quite convinced of its Mohammedan character, and I therefore left the place untouched in order to avoid creating ill-feeling among the local people.

I have since learned that Ural-Altaic peoples, whether Mohammedans or not, put up animals' skulls on graves, and that this custom is apparently of considerable age and not necessarily associated with Islam. The use of horns of argali and ibex as offerings on Mohammedan tombs in our own day may be a survival of this custom. I therefore feel more and more inclined to believe that this burial place is of greater antiquity than I ascribed to it when on the spot.

Near to the east of Yaqinliq-köl I was shown another place said to contain a grave. The only thing to be seen on the dry tamarisk mound which was indicated as the place was the skull of a horse wound round a couple of times with ropes.

A little higher up the river, and close to its right shore, 8—9 km. NW of the grave shown in Pl. I a, Mr. CHEN found another grave. It was situated on the flat ground. The greater part of a coffin was exposed, and it was surrounded by upright poles. It did not resemble the graves seen by Mr. CHEN in the delta of Qum-darya.

Grave 10 and this group of tombs seem to be younger than the Lou-lan occupation, and they may all be pre-Mohammedan. For Grave 10 I suggest the approximate date 600—1,000, and the three graves around Yaqinliq-köl may possibly fall into the same period. If we accept this supposition we have to draw the conclusion that Qum-darya carried water sometime during this period, and for a sufficient length of time for people to come and settle here.

It is useful to draw a modern parallel. Qum-darya has by now carried water for 17—18 years. Nowhere along the desert part of it are there so many settlers as among the numerous winding river branches and small lakes around Yaqinliq-köl and Qum-köl where "The Small River" branches off. It is the good grazing (but only partly the fishing) that has attracted the shepherds from the old course of Tarim to move hither with their herds during the summer months. I heard of no "sum-