

direction there lay scattered bronze arrowheads, all manifestly unused. Their shape and weight exactly agreed with the ammunition of Han times so familiar to me from finds along the *Limes* of Tun-huang. There could be little doubt that coins and arrowheads had dropped from some convoy of stores proceeding to Lou-lan in Han times. Their having remained on the ground is easily accounted for if we assume the convoy to have moved at night-time and a little off the main track, but still in the right direction.

That day's long march was taking us past a far-stretching array of big Mesas which with their fantastically eroded shapes curiously suggested ruined towers, mansions or temples. It was easy to recognize in them those wind-eroded mounds which an early Chinese text mentions near the north-western edge of P'u-ch'ang, or the 'Salt Marsh', *i.e.* the ancient Lop sea-bed, and in which Chinese eyes saw the ruins of a mythical 'Town of the Dragon'. Finally, after continuing our north-easterly course for another day across bare clay and gypsum detritus, we arrived at a forbidding belt of salt-coated erosion terraces. They clearly corresponded to those which Chinese notices of the ancient route to Lou-lan repeatedly mention as the dreaded 'White Dragon Mounds', and graphically describe. Progress between them was very trying for our poor camels' feet. They were sore already, and the painful process of 're-soling', as described above, had to be resorted to night after night. But still worse was it to face the crossing of the bed of the dead Lop sea with its terrible surface of hard salt which I knew to lie beyond.

I was just preparing to climb a prominent Mesa which had served as our guiding-point and to use it as a look-out,