

I have already stated, that the man whom I sent out to the north-east observed old huts in two places. We now discovered yet a third little fishing-station on the shore, consisting of two small kamisch-huts of the usual character, and situated on the belt of sand itself, and, the sand being just there high, they were buried in it nearly 2 m. deep, up to the eaves in fact. Thus the huts had proved a greater hindrance to the drift-sand than the belt of tamarisks amid which they were built, for amongst these latter the sand was only one meter high. The fact of the belt of sand thus faithfully following the shore, whether that extends south-west or north, has therefore nothing to do with the lake, but is due to the little belt of steppe-plants and tamarisks having arrested the drift-sand.

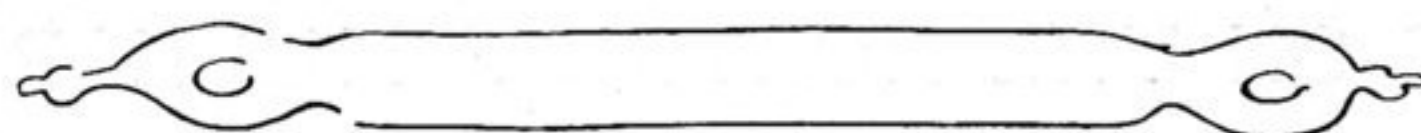


Fig. 113.

Some of the posts belonging to the framework of the huts stuck up out of the sand, and also 75 cm. of the end of a canoe, which was left propped up against one of the huts when they were finally deserted. As the canoe, so far as it projected above the sand, was perfectly free from blemish, I thought I would use it for examining the adjacent parts of the lake, and I therefore had it dug out; but when we had removed about 1.25 m. of the sand, we found that the canoe was split and rotten. The excavation brought to light however a duck carved in wood; a stick with simple ornamentation, such as the natives use to stir their mutton with when boiling in the pot; and a piece of board of the shape shown in fig. 113, which I understand is used in weaving. Of course from these things it would be impossible to infer anything as to the age of the station, for they are precisely like those used in the Lop country at the present day, and were in a good state of preservation, so that they could not be many years old. On the other hand similar objects of wood which I unearthed at Lâu-lan, and which had been buried in the sand for 1600 years, were in an equally good state of preservation. But there are other, rather important, inferences that might be drawn from these finds. Without doubt the village was deserted in 1876—77 when Prschevskij paid his first visit to the Kara-koschun, and noted down every fishing-station beside and in the lake; this one does not appear in his list. Further, the station and the lake had then almost exactly the same relative positions as now. The huts were only 80 m. from the shore, and everywhere throughout the Lop country you find that the natives prefer to erect their homesteads and villages amongst the sand if they possibly can. Hence the belt of vegetation, and the little belt of sand on which it is growing, were clearly in existence when the huts were built. It is equally evident, that no Lop fishermen would have settled there had there not been good fishing in the lake. Accordingly when these huts

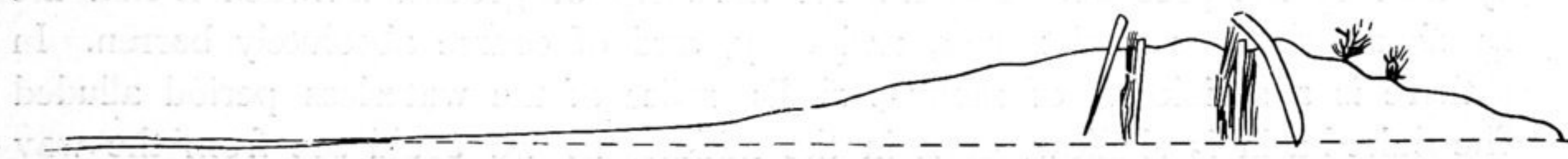


Fig. 114. THE HUTS AT THE PRESENT TIME.