

The ruins of Lôu-lan on the contrary are not only not sanded up and protected by dunes, but they are actually in the highest degree exposed to wind and weather, and these have moreover excavated the surface around them in such wise that each house stands on a separate platform, while to the leeward, that is to the south-west of each such platform or mound, only the very slightest amount of drift-sand has been able to settle and remain. Any objects that may have been left here must therefore lie on the surface, swimming as it were on the ground, and thus would be easily destroyed. Consequently there survive only a few objects which happen to have been especially favourably situated with regard to the wind. In excavating a house such as that which I have just referred to we were therefore digging down through the original solid ground underneath, into which no objects are able to penetrate.

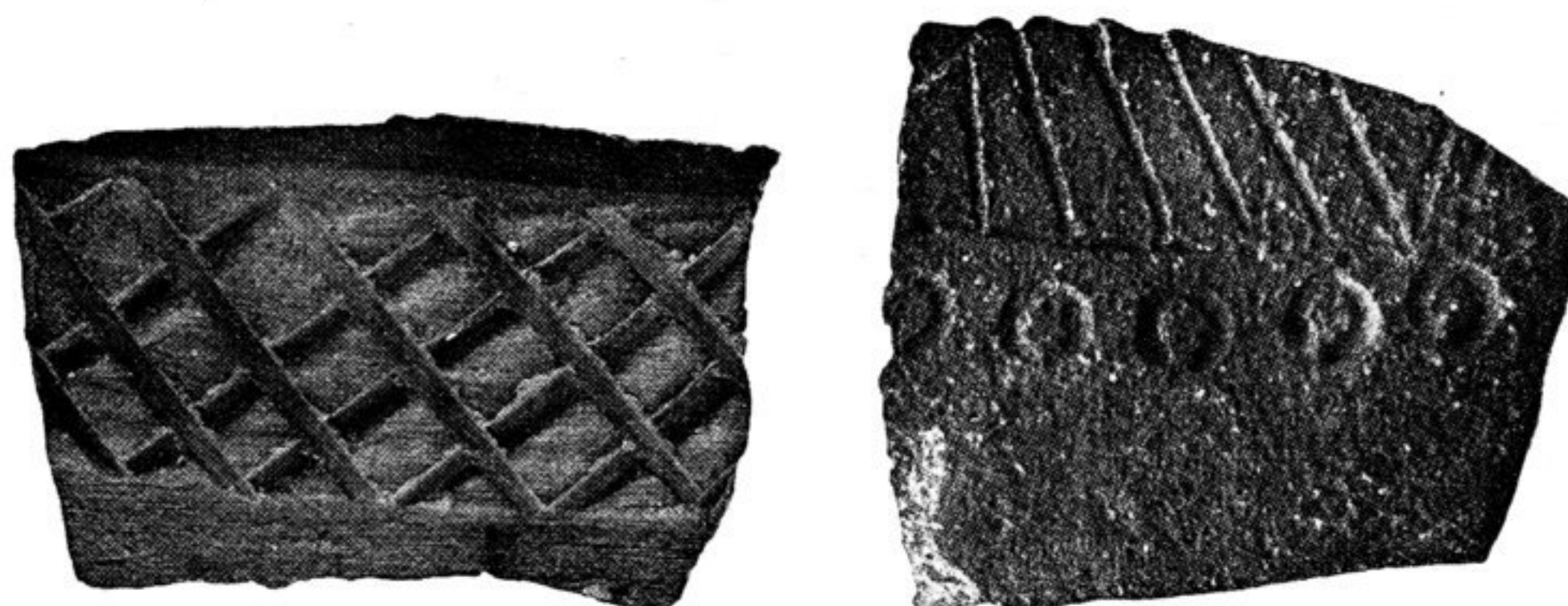


Fig. 287. CLAY VESSELS WITH ORNAMENTATION.

In the ancient village where we encamped we counted nineteen distinct houses; but if we add to these the separate heaps of beams and traces of walls, the number will easily amount to thirty. Moreover there were in all probability several kamisch huts as well, so that one might justly speak of a large village or a small town. The houses which I measured are generally oriented from N. 30° W. to S. 30° E., and from this direction the deviations are but slight. When viewed altogether, they form a zigzag line from north to south, the starting-point of the line being the tower, which appears to have been encircled at its base by some sort of structure, such as a circular platform with a balustrade, a low shed, or so forth. At any rate there were a great number of beams, posts, and planks scattered round about it.

Starting from the tower, then, we have, close to its south-east base, a confused heap of beams and posts which pretty obviously belonged to a house, though the way in which they lay afforded no clue to its ground-plan. There were no foundation-beams visible. The house would appear to have fallen to pieces all at once, in such a way that all the materials of which it was built were jumbled together in indistinguishable confusion. South-south-east of the tower is a structure of two rooms. In its case it was easy to follow the plan, for its foundation-wall was composed of bundles of kamisch arranged horizontally one upon the other, this same material being also employed in several of the other houses. Although kamisch apparently possesses little stability and durability, it must nevertheless be endowed with a respectable power of resistance, seeing that, at all events at the bottom, it has been able to maintain