

## CHAPTER XLV.

### TOWERS, WOOD-CARVINGS ETC. OF LÔU-LAN.

What at the first sight cannot fail to arrest attention is the great difference that exists between these old villages and places and those that stand beside the Kara-koschun. The former were in every respect more solidly built and more populous, and for a long period were not moved from their sites; the latter on the other hand are fragile, temporary kamisch huts, which have to be abandoned repeatedly time after time in consequence of the instability in the distribution of the water. In all the Kara-koschun area there does not exist at the present day a single dwelling that in point of solidity can be compared with any even of the more modest of the timber houses of Lâu-lan. The only modern place that has houses equally as solid is Tscharklik, but it lies outside of the Kara-koschun region. The road which once ran through Lâu-lan was, in respect of traffic, as a means of communication, and as a highway for the passage of troops, unquestionably far more important than is now the southern caravan-route of East Turkestan. Upon the strength of one of the documents I discovered, as also by analogy, we may safely state, that there formerly stood on the shores of Lop-nor huts as ephemeral as the kamisch huts that now stand beside the Kara-koschun. That fishing was there carried on is evidenced by the great abundance of fish-bones. No doubt the people possessed boats from which they carried on their fishing, and the fishermen will have dwelt in temporary huts erected close beside the lake. But all traces of them have completely disappeared; indeed it would be surprising if they had not, for such slight and perishable structures would be quite unable to withstand the storms of centuries.

The clay tower (A on the plan) rises 8.8 m. above the top of the wind-eroded platform or mound on which it stands, and is visible to a great distance across the flat Desert of Lop. At its base it has a circumference of 49.80 m. It is however difficult to make out what its ground-plan is, owing to the heaps of soft grey material which have fallen off it and now lie heaped up against it all round. Indeed its general shape has been distorted by the weather. Certain of its external features appear to suggest that it was constructed in two stories, the lower one cubical, the upper cylindrical, though with regard to this I am unable to speak decisively. There