

## A RUINED FORTRESS

In the afternoon we landed on the northern shore of a sharp peninsula on which was an old fortification. The walls consisted of tight-packed earth strengthened with tamarisk boughs and roots. The wall — marvellously strong — formed an irregular rectangle, of which CHEN made a plan.<sup>1</sup>

We climbed up onto the wall, whose top was from 1.1 to 1.5 m across, while the base was 7.5 m thick. Inside the wall was a kind of separate platform in the shape of an island 3.1 m high. The surface of the water around this was 0.55 m below that of the lake. The wall rose 6.6 m above the lake's surface. The peninsula on which stood the fort was surrounded on the north, east and west sides by the lake; and in the Lou-lan days this must have formed an excellent natural protection for this fairly strong defence-work. Along the wall facing south, in the middle of which the entrance gate is yet visible, runs a dug moat that is now full of water, turning the peninsula into an island.

## TOWARDS LOU-LAN

After a cursory examination of the fort, and the necessary photographing, drawing and measuring, we re-embarked, paddling and punting down a long channel running south-west and S. S. W. and just wide enough to take a double canoe. It went almost straight towards Lou-lan, and CHEN and I were tempted to believe that it had been dug by men's hands, and had served in its time as a navigable waterway between the town of Lou-lan and the fort.

How strange it felt to wake up on the morning of May 21st and know that we were bound straight for my old Lou-lan site, that I had been fortunate enough to discover on March 4th, 1901! Would it really be granted me to see this place, so important in history, politics, war and commerce, for the second time — after thirty-three years?

At first we followed a narrow channel, which flowed into a good-sized lake, from whose bottom tamarisks and *yardangs* stuck up. The lake in its turn grew narrower, finally coming to an end altogether, and we had to drag the canoes over a small spit of land. On the other side of this we came to another wide, open sheet of water, where tamarisks and reeds formed long strips running parallel with the *yardangs*, i. e. from N. N. E. to S. S. W.

A fresh north-easterly breeze was blowing, and we had a splendid following wind across the lake. The boats rolled, and the water grew turbid. The lake was for the most part shallow, the greatest depth being 1.8 m. The sun blazed down hotly;

<sup>1</sup> This ruin is identical with the fort L. E., where STEIN found Chinese manuscripts from the years A. D. 266 and 267. F. B.