

area west of the bridge and close to its left bank (see plan, Pl. 6) I found that among the remains of dead arbours and garden fences half smothered in the sand there survived also ruins of small structures, N. XLIV. Beyond them and after crossing a well-marked depression adjoining to the north-west, I came to my surprise upon the remains of a large and remarkably well preserved vineyard. The panoramic view, Fig. 131, shows most of this interesting ground as viewed from the south, and its survey, as reproduced in Pl. 6, will help to localize details.

Fringed by tamarisk-cones rising to 40 feet and more above the original ground level there extends here an oblong open space measuring roughly 260 yards from north-west to south-east and about 150 yards across. A fence of brushwood strengthened by rough posts, such as is often found around the yards and dead arbours of ancient dwellings at the Niya Site, once enclosed the whole area. Its line could be traced all round, except where it lay smothered under the foot of sand-cones, as it was for the greater part along the north-eastern side. Fenced area.

The northern portion of the fenced space was occupied by a vineyard, edged and here and there interspersed with fruit trees, largely apricot, peach, and *Eleagnus* (*jigda*). The method of planting the vines could be traced with almost uncanny clearness, and the Niya labourers with me recognized it at once as the method still in vogue everywhere in the oases of the Khotan region. The vines were planted in regular rows, as shown by the plan, Pl. 6, with about twenty feet interval between the rows, and along these, quite close to each vine stem, were fixed stout posts, which once carried the trellis needed for the trailing branches. Where the soil, held together by the posts and vines, had resisted wind-erosion and still rose to about three feet above the present, lowered, level of the ground, as seen in Fig. 132 on the right, each vine stem and post was found almost intact in its place, notwithstanding the lapse of over sixteen centuries. N. XLIV. 01-12 are specimens of wood taken from the vines and fruit trees (apricot, *Eleagnus*, peach, apple, walnut) found here. Ancient vineyard.

To the east of the surviving portion of this ancient vineyard the ground once probably forming part of it had been eroded to a depth of about 25 feet. Here a gap in the chain of high tamarisk-cones had evidently admitted the powerful winds blowing from the north-east, thus giving them a chance of carrying on with exceptional effect their work of slow but unrelenting destruction, which I had so frequently observed in the Lop Desert and elsewhere. The still larger and somewhat deeper depression that the panorama and plan show between the vineyard and the once fenced arbour and small structures farther south had, as seen from across the dry river-bed on my first rapid visit, presented the appearance of a large rectangular tank or reservoir. Closer survey did not furnish evidence confirming this impression; yet the NW. and SW. sides of the depression, meeting at what is nearly a right angle, looked curiously straight to the eye. Effects of wind-erosion.

Immediately to the south-east of it there stretched a long row of dead trees, all cultivated poplars (*Terek*), belonging to an ancient arbour or avenue (Fig. 104). Behind them, splintered posts rising above little terraces covered with sand and tangled dead tamarisk growth marked three or four small ruined structures, N. XLIV. The clearing of them yielded no finds other than a large quantity of oat straw heaped up in a corner of the rush-wall structure iii, which manifestly had served as a cattle-shed. The larger walled enclosure to the south-west of it had probably a similar purpose. The other ruins, i, ii, were those of small habitations built in timber and wattle, the rooms in which were badly eroded. Clearing of ruined structures, N. XLIV.

On December 16th I moved my camp to the north-west, partly for the purpose of seeing the ground that stretches between the ancient river-bed and the line of ruins previously explored south of the Stūpa of the site, and partly in order to bring my labourers nearer to any ruins not already cleared which a small search party sent out three days earlier with Surveyor Muḥammad Yāqūb Clearing of dwelling N. XLV.