

end of the longer sides, a somewhat similar arrangement being commonly observed in the cupboards used nowadays in the Khotan region for the storing of bread and other articles.

Specimens
of architec-
tural wood-
carving.

Of far greater artistic interest are the two well-carved double brackets now marked N. xx. 02, 03, which turned up in the sand a few feet above the floor. Their almost identical dimensions (about 2 ft. long, with a width of close on 6 in.), and closely similar ornamentation leave no doubt that they were intended to form a pair. The reproductions shown in Plate LXIX of the under-surfaces of both these brackets, as well as of the side elevation, which is identical in both, together with Mr. Andrews' detailed and expert description of the pieces as given in the list below, will suffice to explain the design and ornamentation of these fine specimens of ancient architectural wood-carving. The four-petalled flower, noted already on the ancient chair from N. III as an ornament unmistakably borrowed from the style of Gandhāra sculpture, supplies in several variations the chief decorative motive. Its long-continued popularity is attested by its occurrence on modern boat carvings both in Kashmīr and on the Indus and lower Jehlam. Mr. Andrews has noted the striking similarity between these pieces and the architectural carving still practised in Bhēra and the neighbouring parts of the Punjāb, as regards the manner in which the chisel has been manipulated—an observation of special interest when viewed in connexion with the remarkable continuity of the patterns. These finds at an outlying settlement of ancient Khotan thus help to prove how far back in history the style and *technique* peculiar to the modern architectural wood-carving of the Western Punjāb reach, though this region itself has not preserved for us any known pre-Muhammadan specimens of the art.

Other ruins
of northern
group.

Trunks of dead fruit-trees emerging from the sand to the south and east of the ruined dwelling indicated the position of what had once been a large orchard. Parallel lines of fencing traceable in the low sand for a distance of close on two hundred feet marked the direction of an ancient lane, about 12 ft. broad, running from south-west to north-east. Much-eroded remains of two houses lay at short distances to the south-east of N. VIII, and another to the north-west in positions marked on the plan (Plate XXXIV). But as the protecting cover of sand was here very slight, it was difficult to trace the disposition of the rooms, and the absence of any finds was scarcely surprising. A dune rising to a height of close on 20 ft. in its central part had afforded better protection to two small ruins situated close together nearly 300 yards to the north-east. The posts of their walls were just jutting out above the slope, as seen in the background of the photograph reproduced in Fig. 47. The structures thus indicated proved to contain one and two rooms respectively, the clearing of which was effected with difficulty owing to the proximity of the high dune. No finds of any kind were made; but the construction of the timber framework, and the presence in one of the rooms of a staircase recess as described above, proved that here too the extant remains had once been surmounted by a second story. Traces of ancient fences and rush-built cattle-sheds with scattered groups of fruit-trees were noticed at several points of the area shown in the plan of the northern group of ruins (see Plate XXXIV).

Ancient
tank.

But more curious than these was the clearness with which the position and arrangement of an ancient tank (see Fig. 47) could be made out about 200 yards to the north-east of the ruin N. VIII. The ground there being quite clear of dunes, the embankment of the tank forming a square of about 48 ft. was distinctly traceable. On it were lying the shrivelled trunks of the large poplars that had once given shade to the water, while one tree still upright raised its gaunt, bleached trunk, as seen in the photograph, to a height of close on 12 ft. In the centre of the tank, which in spite of the drift-sand there accumulated still showed a depth of about 6 ft., a small mound of earth, about 5 ft. in diameter, and rising