

Familiar and novel aspects mingled curiously, too, in the work to which I now settled down. The clearing of the ruined structures of the sand accumulated within them, the searching of the débris strewing the eroded slopes below, and so forth, would not have seemed strange to my 'old guard' from Niya. I knew, in fact, beforehand that the remains at both sites dated from exactly the same period. But to me it was a novel sensation to have to conduct these wonted operations at a site which had already been searched by an earlier European explorer. Hedin's fascinating book had, by its chapter on 'The ruins of ancient Lop-nor,' and its excellent illustrations, sufficed to acquaint me with the general features of the ruins, which a lucky chance had led him to discover in 1900, and with the remains he had been able to bring to light there on his second visit in 1901. His 'finds' had been important, indeed, and the antiquarian evidence which they furnished was in many respects quite assured. Yet Hedin, out of a total stay of six days, had been able to give only three to actual excavation at the eastern group of ruins, and a fourth at the western. He had the services of only five men besides himself, and not one among them had previous experience of such work, while the number of ruins to be searched was relatively large. Thus from the first it was clear that a thorough exploration of the site by an archaeologist was needed in the interest of science. But who could feel sure in advance of how much a site thus 'researched' would still yield in new facts, observations, and 'finds'?

Chance would have it that the very first ruin on which I set my men gave cause for encouraging hopes. It was the remnant of a house once manifestly much larger, occupying the top of a small and steeply eroded terrace due south of the Stupa and only some fifty yards off (Fig. 115). Four rooms, including one over thirty feet long, could still be clearly made out by the broken walls, built of timber and wattle exactly as at the Niya site. Plentiful débris of timber strewing the slopes of the terrace, especially to the east and the south, marked the positions where other parts of the building had once stood, and where