

the elaborate system of ancient stationery was exactly the same in this far-off eastern corner of the Tarim Basin as in the Khotan region. But the other document on wood, far rougher in appearance, helped to call my attention to an essential difference. It was an oblong piece of thick bark, cut apparently from a tamarisk trunk and inscribed with two long lines of Kharoshthi. Its material looked curiously uncouth when I thought of the neatly finished and smooth tablets of the Niya site; and when I examined more closely the other Kharoshthi records just recovered, I noticed that their rough and much-cracked surface was due not so much to corrosion and exposure as to their wood being that of the Toghrak or wild poplar, instead of the Terek or cultivated poplar invariably used for the Niya records.

It was an important indication, supported by plentiful observations thereafter, that arbours and avenues must have been rare in the vicinity of these ruins. Everywhere in the structures of what for the present I prefer to designate as the eastern of the Lop-nor sites, the timber employed proved to be taken from the wild-growing poplars of the riverine jungle; nor did I succeed in tracing near it any remains of garden trees such as the Terek, Jigda, mulberry, so common at all old sites from Khotan to Vash-shahri. When I subsequently explored the western of the Lop-nor sites I found that there, too, it was only a single ruin, and that manifestly a residence of some importance, which showed the dead tree trunks of an ancient arbour. So it became evident from the first that the resources of local cultivation could not have been sufficiently important by themselves to account for these ancient settlements.

But the finds at this first ruin were not confined to written records, and among the relics of another sort were several claiming special interest. From the corner of one of the rooms there emerged two fragments of a well-woven pile carpet in wool (Fig. 116, 4). Where not too hard worn, it had preserved its colours, several varieties of brown, a rich claret tint, buff, and bright blue, in remarkable freshness. The technique in the arrangement of warp, weft, and pile