

next morning it proved quite a little museum of local architectural ornament and household art. In the verandas, to start with, there were gracefully designed wooden pillars decorated with carvings which to my eye appeared strangely familiar from their resemblance both to Gandhāra art and its reflex in the wood-carvings of ancient Khotan sites (Fig. 15). On the four sides of their capitals there was displayed in relief an ornament clearly derived from the classical acanthus, a design which I later encountered as far as Lop-nōr.² The abacus above showed that elaborately carved open lotus which is common in Gandhāra decoration and traceable also far away eastwards.³ The band inserted between capital and abacus was decorated either with a leaf-ornament recalling a half-open lotus or with a fret design which has its counterpart in ancient Turkestan wood-carvings. In the carved diaper covering the four sides of the pillars I could easily recognize a somewhat florid development of that peculiar four-petalled flower which the wood-carvings excavated at the ancient sites of Niya and Domoko⁴ prove to have been a favourite decorative motif in Buddhist Khotan art from the third century onwards. It was used to fill oblong spaces, and was certainly derived from the Graeco-Buddhist style of Gandhāra.

Reminis-
cences of
Gandhāra
motifs.

Equally striking were the reminiscences of that style and of its early Central-Asian reproduction in the bands of fresco decoration in terra-cotta, black, and white which adorned the upper portion of the veranda walls. Here the constantly recurring motifs of the lotus fully open or in bud, of the 'Chakra', and of the four-petalled clematis-like flower with or without square frame, looked as if they were derived from that frescoed wall in the hall of the ancient dwelling N. III which I remembered so well from my first excavations at the Niya Site.⁵ All these motifs, down to the halved flowers with four petals used to fill corners, had their exact counterparts in the decorative elements of Graeco-Buddhist reliefs from Gandhāra. The reappearance of these antique designs was none the less startling because the execution was coarse and manifestly recent. In fact, Obaidullah Khān told me that this pictorial decoration had been done only three or four years before my visit, while the carved pillars of the verandas he remembered to have been set up some twenty years earlier.

Interior
architecture
of house.

But far more interesting still proved the interior of Obaidullah Khān's house, said to have been built some sixty years before. It contained among other accommodation two fine rooms provided with Aiwāns or skylights (called *kumāl* in Khōwār), and excellent carving on pillars and panelling. Of one of these which served as *baipash* or 'state room' I was able to take a photograph (Fig. 16) and a plan (Plate 1). Its architectural arrangement alone, as shown by the plan, would have sufficed to rivet my attention; for while its ceiling, with successive courses of massive beams enclosing a series of gradually narrowing squares, reproduces exactly the system of roofing which is known to us in stone from ancient shrines of an area extending from Kashmir to Bāmiān,⁶ this room in its ground-plan accurately illustrates what the halls of the ancient residences excavated at the Niya Site must once have looked like. There were raised sitting platforms on either side of the gallery into which the main entrance opened; a narrower platform under wooden arches opposite to this gallery; and in the centre the open fire-place under the skylight just as the ancient halls at the Niya Site showed it often.⁷

Decorative
wood-
carving.

The decorative details of the wood-carving seemed directly derived from equally antique models. That on the pillars and pilasters showed diapers in which the four-petalled flower, conventionally

² Cf. the carvings LB. 0014 in Pl. XXXII; M. v. 001 in Pl. XXXIV.

³ See LB. II. 0014 in Pl. XXXII; M. v. 0012 in Pl. XLVII, &c.

⁴ Cf. e. g. N. XII. i. 2; XXVI. iii. 1 in Pl. XVIII; LB. II. 0016, 0017 in Pl. XXXI; N. XIII. v. 1 in Pl. XIX; F. II. ii. 01

in Pl. XVII, &c.; also N. vii. 4 in *Ancient Khotan*, Pl. LXVIII; i. p. 334.

⁵ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, i. p. 333.

⁶ Cf. Foucher, *L'Art du Gandhāra*, i. p. 143.

⁷ Cf. *Ancient Khotan*, Pl. XXVIII, XXX, XXXIII; and below, Pl. 8 (N. XII), 10 (N. XV), 14 (N. XXIV), 15 (N. XXVI).