

fans that are now absolutely bare, were susceptible of only one explanation and that obvious enough. They had grown up at a period of more abundant rainfall, when water descended over these fans with sufficient regularity to permit the trees to grow up and live to the great age indicated by the size of the fallen trunks. There were other observations which pointed to the 'desiccation' of this hill range within historical times. At two points Barat pointed out in the distance the position of copper-mining pits (Map No. 5. c. 1) which had been worked in old times and which were by no means exhausted. But a recent attempt to reopen them had proved futile, as the water formerly carried by the gorge near which the more westerly of the two is situated had dried up, and a 'Kak' or natural cistern supposed to have existed near the other could not be located. We subsequently came upon abundant slag from the copper-smelting operations that had once been carried on along the old river-bed presently to be mentioned.

Line of old  
route.

On crossing a fan farther east we came upon a line of decayed cairns running straight to the north-east. This, as the map will show, is exactly the direction that an old route running along the foot of the range towards Tumshuk and beyond would have followed as the shortest line. Wishing to visit the reported ancient site of *Khitai-shahri*, we had to keep first due east and then after fifteen miles to take a turn to the south-east. This brought us presently to the meandering course of a dry river-bed lined by broad belts of *Toghraks*, all dead, but most of them still upright. There could be no doubt that it was a branch of the *Kāshgar* river, which had at one time approached the foot of the hills at this spot and receded again, probably centuries ago. Leaving this old bed to the north but keeping within the riverine belt of dead forest, we were at last brought by Barat to the site known as *Khitai-shahri*.

Site of  
*Khitai-*  
*shahri*.

The site is marked by a badly decayed wall of stamped clay traceable for about 300 yards, but only in short sections, along a NE.-SW. line. At both ends of this line the wall seemed to have turned at right angles, but could be traced only for a very short distance among close-set tamarisk-cones and dead *Toghraks*. The ground near by is thickly covered with *shōr*, and this obviously accounts for the far-advanced decay of the enclosing wall. It stands nowhere to a height of more than four and a half feet and its present thickness is only two feet or so. At about 120 yards to the ESE. of the northern corner a small mound of salt-permeated earth rises to about eight feet from the ground, with a diameter of about 46 feet at the base. A cutting had been made across the top, but showed neither brickwork nor distinct layers. Pieces of slag and broken pieces of well-burnt pottery, apparently old, could be picked up both inside and outside the extant segment of wall; its ornamentation with comb-drawn pendent loops and twisted fillets looked distinctly ancient.

Salt bog fed  
by *Kāshgar*  
river.

Next morning we turned once more to the north-east, and after recrossing the old river-bed and proceeding a little more than a mile came upon plentiful living tamarisk and other scrub. Not far beyond the dry river-bed I noticed a low embankment suggestive of an old canal. Curiously enough the amount of living vegetation, including abundant reed-beds, increased as we approached the foot of the hill chain. Its explanation was furnished by a far-stretching belt of salt bog, which we perceived winding through the reed-covered area to the south. This low-lying ground is evidently still reached by occasional floods from the *Kāshgar* river-system. The obstacles that such inundations often create during the summer months in the area crossed by the present high road between *Faizābād* and *Marāl-bāshi* were brought home to me by the difficulty experienced in bringing our camel convoy, which had strayed to the south of the salt marsh, safely back to the track followed by Barat. It cost the animals a long and trying detour and us some anxiety and weary waiting. We spent most of the time in trying to locate a well that Barat remembered to have found years before at a point of the reed-covered depression stretching north of that marsh.