

tionary; at all events that portion of it which is permeated by the roots of the tamarisk remains stationary, though the flanks or wings do pursue their course unchecked. In this way the mound comes eventually to be isolated or free-standing, or nearly so. This explanation of their origination and mode of formation is not alone sufficient, for tamarisk-mounds are also formed in districts where there exists no sand, nay

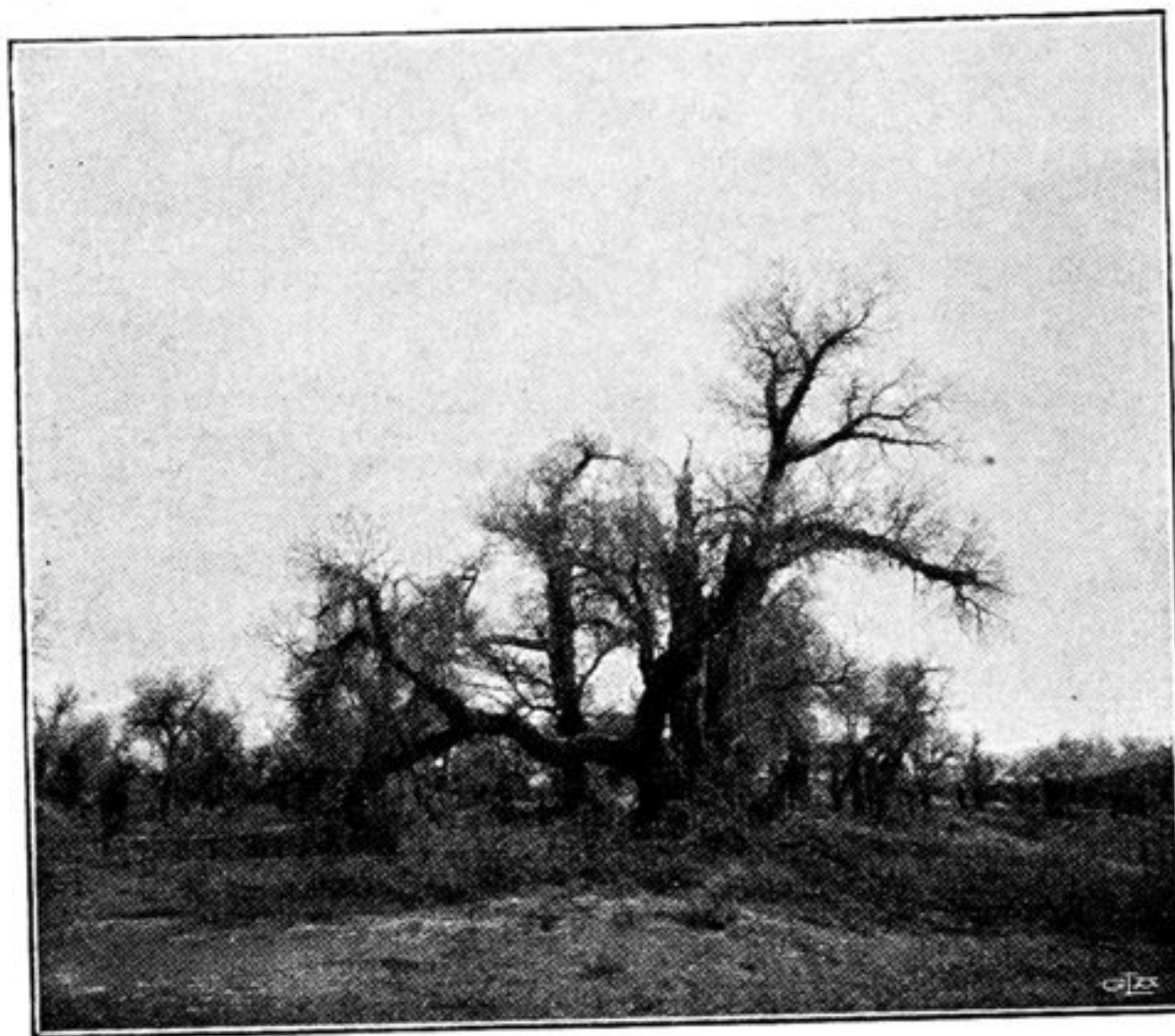


Fig. 340. A TOGHRAK MEASURING 6.80 M. AROUND ITS BASE.

actually in regions where it may be assumed that there never has been sand, as at Dunglik on the road from Abdal to the mountains. Here the explanation given in an earlier chapter holds good, coupled with the tendency which the bush itself shows to raise its mound, partly by holding together the material that accumulates about its roots, partly through the leaves and branches which it drops, and partly again as a consequence of its own growth upwards. (See also Pl. 56.)

Soon afterwards we passed on the right two old canals and a river-bed called Alim Achuning-ilegi. This last is not the same as the kona-darja just mentioned; nor is it so distinct as an old arm, owing

to its being smothered in thick reeds, and filled with tamarisk-mounds, dunes, and single poplars. Here and there there exist patches of barren saliferous soil (schor), formed by spring-water and converted in summer into marshes. At Mäpäschlik we were close to the river again. Over against Basch-jaman-kum on the left bank there are some living poplars, which so far as circumference is concerned are the

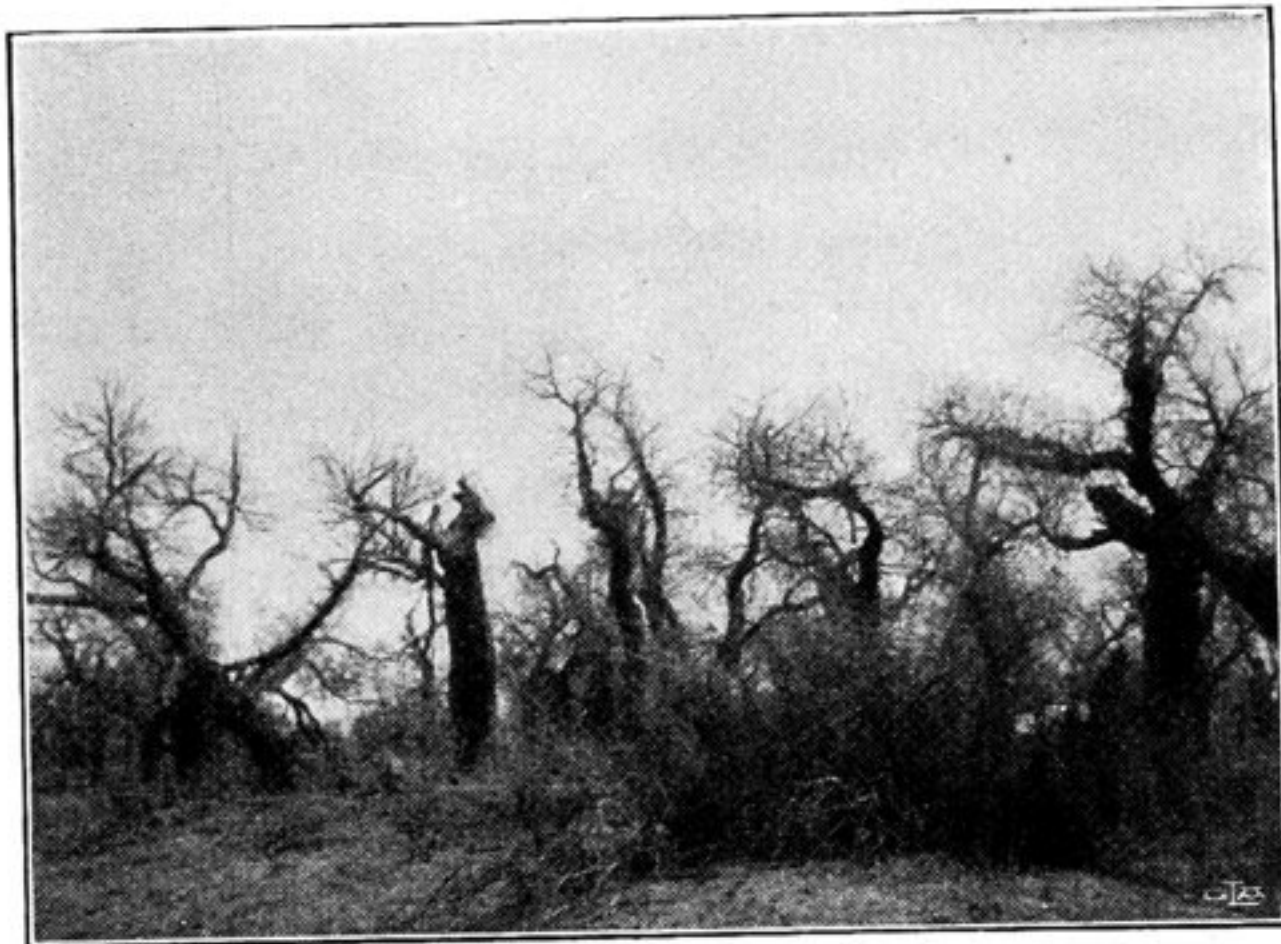


Fig. 341. TOGHRAK-FOREST.

biggest I have ever seen. Although not more than 6 to 7 m. high, two of them measured 4.75 m. and 6.80 m. respectively round the base; the actual trunk was however little more than one meter high, but was crowned by a gigantic »plume» of gnarled and fantastic branches. In these trees we have further evidence of the likelihood that the river has preserved its present position for a long time past.

Immediately beyond these poplars we found the ruins of old clay houses and walls. The general impression conveyed by the locality was, that it had been a

former Muhamedan burial-place or *gumbes*. There was a square wall, 1 to 2 m. high, and 3 m. long, which closely resembled the basement of such a structure. Another looked like a monument or an arched gateway. A little distance away were the remains of some houses, the biggest of which had inside walls measuring