

fuel; we were unable to find anything better than the roots of dry tamarisks, together with two or three old poplar trunks, which showed at any rate that, barren as the country now is, this tree was formerly able to thrive there.

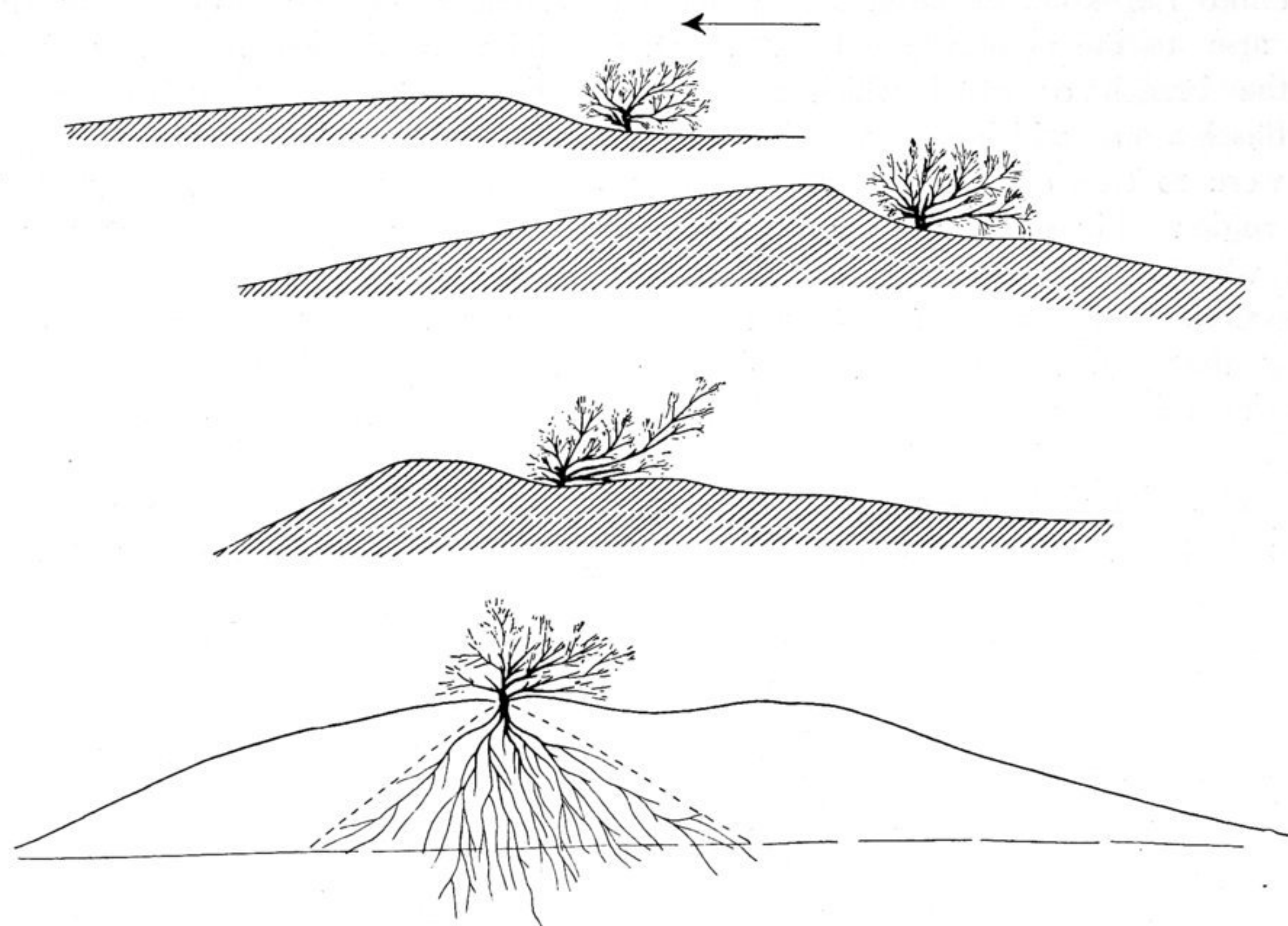


Fig. 357. SHOWING ONE OF THE WAYS IN WHICH THE TAMARISK-MOUNDS ARE FORMED BY HELP OF A SAND-DUNE, WHICH IS LATER ON, BY SOME REASON OR OTHER, BLOWN AWAY OR SWEEPED AWAY BY WATER.

On 14th February we made a short march of 15 km., for we had to stop at Basch-aghis, the last place at which we should find water before we reached the Tarim, so that we had to provide ourselves there with a supply of ice. There is a distinct path leading thither, a short distance from the left bank, though the river itself is generally hidden by the thick reeds. We had no difficulty in identifying the site of the lake of Koschmet-köl, in the long string of grey, roughened surfaces, at once level and barren, which still wear the appearance of having been under water. The dunes grow distinctly lower towards the north-east. The border line between the sandy desert and the steppe is very sharply drawn; the latter has not yet succeeded in spreading itself over the former lake-basin, but stops abruptly on its margin. No sand is visible towards the south. The steppe vegetation consists of kamisch, scrub, and tamarisks, now abundant, now sparse. The young tamarisks have already begun to build up their conical bases, by arresting the sand, which will gradually be detained and held fast by their roots. The latter part of the journey led through new lakes and marshes, which had formed the year before in the basin of the old lakes, after the northern river-arm had brought a fresh accession of water. These new lakes consisted often of pretty large expanses of ice, surrounded by reeds and mounds, and on the north by sand; in general they penetrate the yellow reeds in