

river-bed from Jing-pen until one comes to its actual junction with the Kontsche. The depression containing kamisch, which I have just mentioned, might equally well be one that goes down so close to the ground-water that the kamisch is able to maintain itself there fresh and vigorous.

Immediately north of the belt of kamisch is a slightly raised terrace, crowned with a small, isolated poplar forest, called Basch-toghrak or Kaltaning-basch-toghraghi; its big massive trees measured as much as 3.77 m. in circumference, though they are gnarled and stumpy, with few branches and twigs, so that the crown is proportionally small as compared with the stem. Dead trees are also plentiful. In fact, the clump of forest appears to be dying out. Here we crossed over a little track, the same that I followed from Korla to Jing-pen in 1896. To the east-south-east,

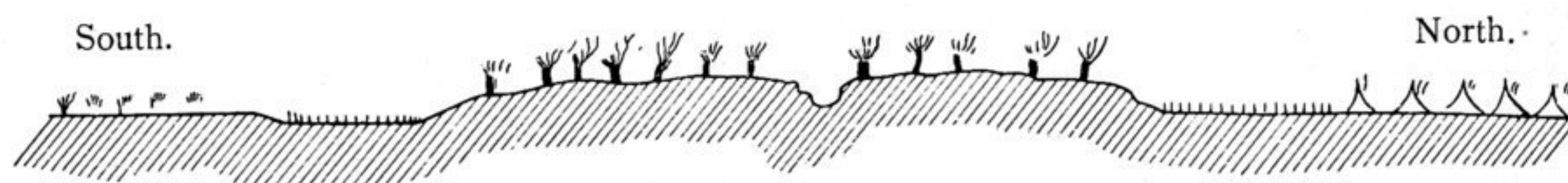


Fig. 12. VERTICAL SECTION AT BASCH-TOGHRAK.

at Kalta proper, where I at that time stopped beside a pool, there is yet another patch of forest. Kalta and Basch-toghrak are said to be almost equidistant from the river. At Kalta, again, there exist traces of an old river-bed. Three or four kilometers to the left stands the *tora* of Basch-toghrak. This, like the other roadside pyramids in this locality, was built beside the old bridle-path between Lop-nor and Korla, a road known to the Lopliks as K m r-saldi. An old man, Aksakal of Jangi-k l, who gave me much valuable information, asserted that in former times this road ran eastwards along the southern foot of the Kuruk-tagh, and eventually joined the road that led to Dung-chan (Tung-chuan). In arriving at a conclusion such as this the native is guided solely by the presence of the pyramids, which bear of course palpable evidence of the some time existence of a road beside them.

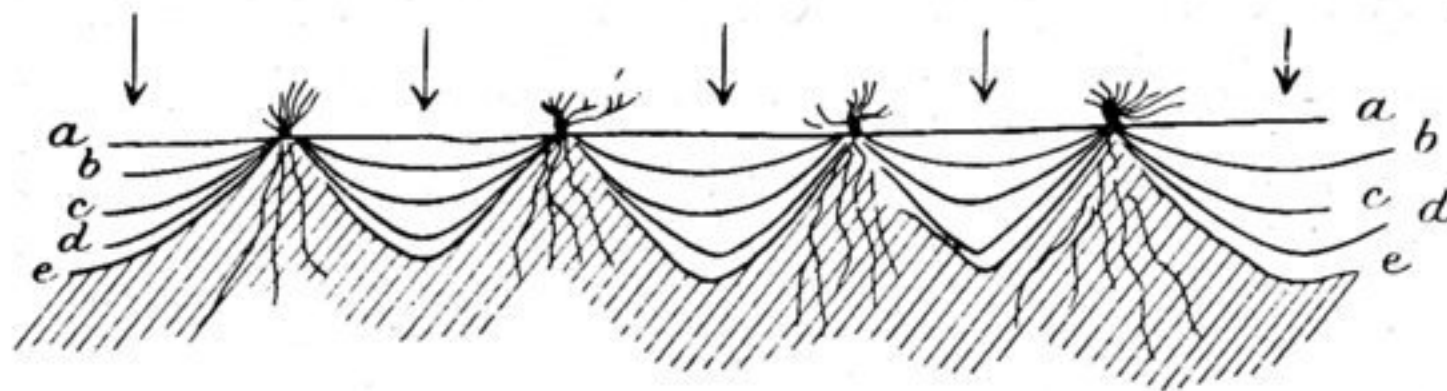


Fig. 13. FORMATION OF TAMARISK-MOUNDS.

On the north too the little terrace of Basch-toghrak is bordered by a relative depression, containing a sprinkling of kamisch. Thus, as the subjoined section (fig. 12) shows, the oasis forms an insular elevation, raised a few meters above the level surface around. This conformation affords an especially convincing proof of the effects which vegetation produces upon the surface levels, as I have assumed above for the entire stretch of country between the Tarim and the Kontsche-darja. The relatively barren soil around Basch-toghrak — or if it is not quite barren, the vege-