

storms of drift-sand which have swept over them would have filed right through them, or some time or other have broken them to pieces. Their power of resistance is thus evidently very great; but they are strongly impregnated with sand, which possibly helps to retard the effects of corrasion, and so they still continue to stand upright on their roots, which have hardened in the dry clay soil. This dry *kötäk* burns with extraordinary ease, but sinks when put into water.

Sometimes we crossed over stretches of soft powdery soil, the surface of which was littered with fine gravel; in appearance this soil looks like the gravelly scree or the *saj* (though this last is hard), though the gravel does not contribute to make the ground firm. In such places as this *jardangs*, or clay ridges, are entirely absent; but there are a few scattered mounds of dead tamarisks; and the dunes on the south are not very far away.

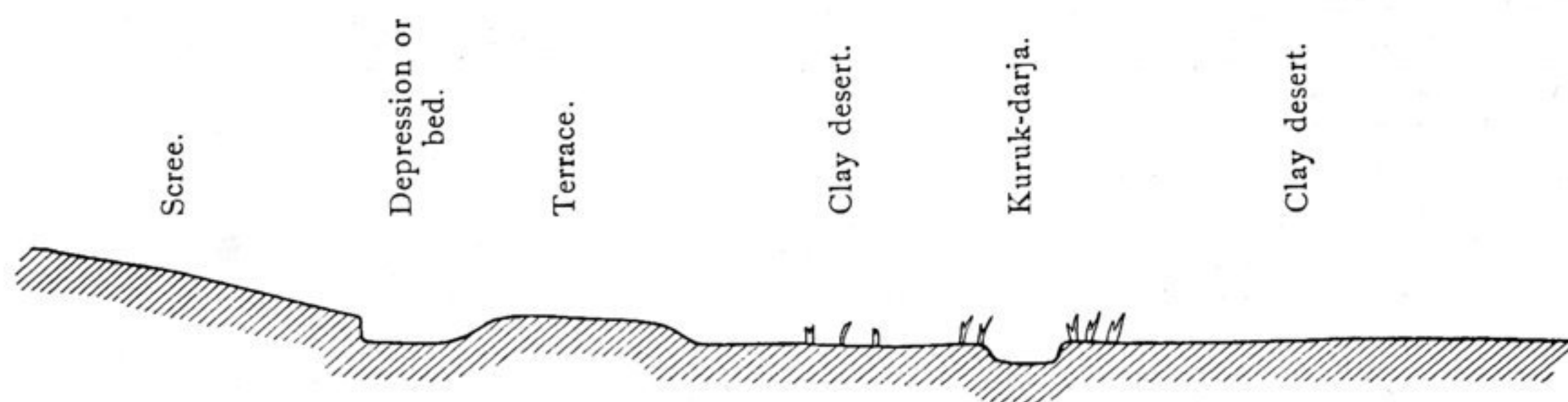


Fig. 47. THE DEPRESSION BETWEEN THE TWO TERRACES AND THE KURUK-DARJA.

There was an abundance of dead forest on the banks of the next bend of the river, many of the trees being of a considerable height. The bottom of the channel was strewn with coarse sand and gravel. Then came another tract of *jardangs*, a formation that is extremely difficult for camels. It was very seldom that we were able to proceed far in one and the same gully; generally it was up and down, up and down, first up over one clay terrace and then down into the next gully, and so on unceasingly. Some of the broken ridges stood up like tables and platforms, their edges having been eaten away by the wind and their feet cumbered with blocks of clay that toppled down when the terrace wall became too far undermined. Already we made the observation, that the gullies with which the ground is furrowed run predominantly in the direction of the prevailing wind.

When the surface became all too difficult we preferred to travel along the edge of the *saj* terrace, and this led us to the south-east. It also afforded us a first-rate view of the country to the south. Every now and again we caught a glimpse of the windings of the river-bed through the labyrinth of the *jardangs*, and above the latter rose the grey trunks of the dead trees and the equally grey tamarisk-mounds. The surface of the *saj* is hard, and thinly sprinkled with gravel. Otherwise it is composed of the same fine-grained yellow clay as that of the level desert below; this we were easily able to see in the steep sides of the ravines. In the same places we were also able to ascertain the dip of the loess-like clay stratum, namely 17° towards S. 70° W. The stratification of the clay desert is just as evident, although its inclination is a trifle towards the south-west. Except for a very occasional tamarisk, the *saj* is almost barren. At the back of the nearest foot-hills we could perceive a dark and