

solid granite. The water is, it is true, saliferous: the aerometer recorded a specific gravity of 1.012. But below the springs there were cakes of ice some decimeters thick, which, although fouled on the surface by wild camels and antelopes, nevertheless, when cleansed and thawed, afforded excellent water to drink. Thence it was said to be two and a half days' journey to Singer, over tolerably level ground, with small hills of no great consequence, and a comfortable pass in the neighbourhood of Singer. The district round Jardang-bulak is said to be called by the Mongols Schare-chaesun, or the Yellow Kamisch.

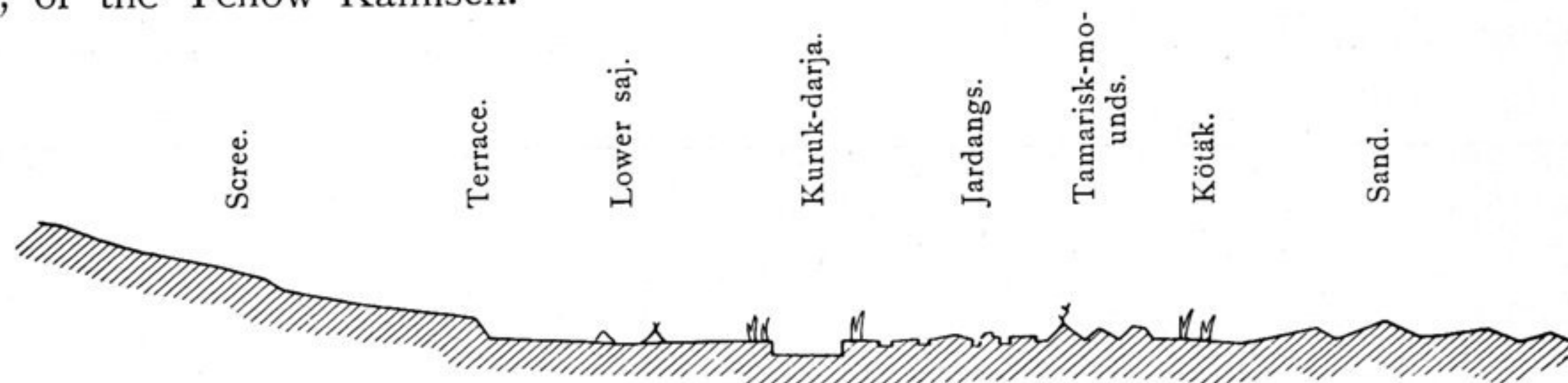


Fig. 50. VERTICAL SECTION NOT FAR FROM JAKA-JARDANG-BULAK.

On 18th March we directed our steps towards the Jaka-jardang-bulak, across gently undulating ground, with small rounded gravel resting on loose material; but the latter (lower) part of the journey the ground grew dusty and powdery. On the left was, quite close to our route, a spur about 100 m. high, in which the dark schist crops out in two or three places, otherwise the detritus gravel predominated throughout. The flank of this spur is seamed by a multitude of small gullies and ravines all opening out towards the south; the *jars*, or erosion terraces, which border them consist of the same clay as heretofore. Amongst the gravel there are not seldom pieces of dark violet porphyry. The farther we advanced down the gently inclined slope, the more numerous grew the step-like shelves and terraces pointing towards the desert. There are also numerous detached clay blocks, resembling the ruins of houses and walls. It is in vain one looks for a trace of human beings; there is not so much as a footpath. We saw however a ravine, or »corridor», with sides some 10 m. deep, and higher up bordered, as it seemed, by a dark rock, severely weathered. This ravine, known as Kara-aghis, is reported to possess in its upper part a salt spring surrounded by grazing. Finally, after passing yet another series of shelves and terraces, we descended to the level ground by a second ravine, in which we found the salt-spring of Jaka-jardang-bulak. The rivulet which flows from it gives out however just below the spring. It must therefore be rain-water that finds its way through the ravine, and affords nourishment to a small patch of exceedingly vigorous kamisch just beyond the end of the ravine. On the north this field of kamisch is fenced in by the fantastic, greyish-yellow walls and blocks of the clay terrace. To the south the desert is level, and there is no high sand visible. The ground is everywhere richly impregnated with salt, in some places actual lumps of it lying embedded in the ground.

On the 19th March we travelled towards the east-south-east and the south-east. The kamisch patch of Jaka-jardang-bulak soon came to an end. On our left we had constantly the upper terrace, sharply outlined like a wall or a series of