

CHAPTER VIII.

THE AUTHOR'S OWN JOURNEY IN THE KURUK-TAGH.

I will now proceed to describe my own journey in the Kuruk-tagh system. My route lay, as I have already said, between Grum-Grschimajlo's and Roborovskij's second journey. I had crossed the Desert of Gobi not far west of Sa-tscheo, and had struck the Atschik-bulak, Toghrak-bulak, and a third small oasis situated to the north of the last-named, and thence proceeded towards the north. I had no intention of crossing right over the Tschöl-tagh and descending to the lowlands of Hami. I was solely concerned to find out how far the Kuruk-tagh range, which is so distinctly marked on our maps,* actually does exist, a thing of which I was very doubtful. At all events the portion of the range which lies east of Altmisch-bulak and north-east of Kara-koschun could not have such a pronounced south-easterly trend as it is shown to have on our maps, for this would ill accord with the statements as to its orographical structure which the travellers give of it. Another principal goal of my journey was Altmisch-bulak and the ruins I had discovered to the south of it the year before. In fact, it would have been much easier to have gone straight to Hami than to have crossed, first north, then west, an absolutely waterless country like that. We had to travel 328 km. without finding the least sign of a spring, and had we not by chance stumbled upon a small snow-drift our position would have been extremely critical. Here then if anywhere the name of Kuruk-tagh is justified.

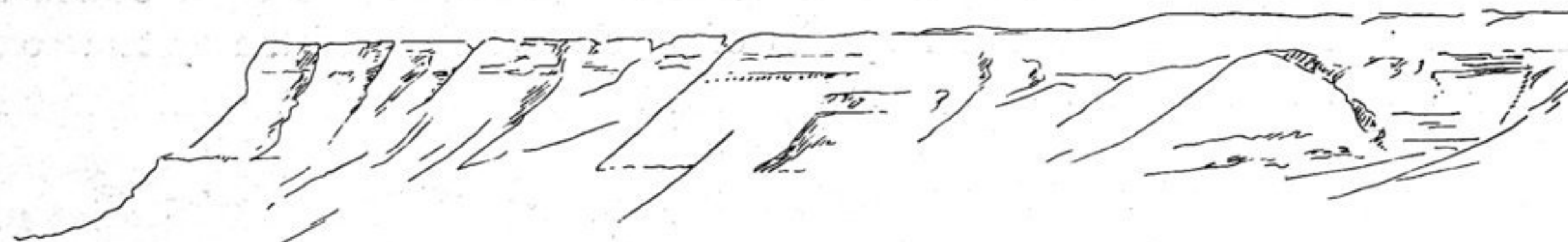


Fig. 71. CLAY TERRACE OF KURUK-TAGH.

We began this journey on 9th February 1901 at Camp No. CXLI, situated at the extreme northern edge of the belt of steppe and desert which extends from

* See especially *Karta Juschnoj Pogranitschnoj Polosij Aziatskoj Rossij* — Hami sheet.