

While we have been surprised at the abundance of the data in natural and artificial records offered by the region toward these solutions, we are impressed with a realization of the intimate relation in which this region stands to the Quaternary and prehistoric history of the whole continent. Physically it forms part of the great interior region extending from the Mediterranean to Manchuria, whose history has been one of progressive desiccation, but in Russian Turkestan the effects of this have been mitigated by the snows of the lofty ranges and the lower altitude of the plains.

Archeologically this region has, through a long period, been a center of production and commerce, connecting the eastern, western, and southern nations, and its accumulating wealth has made it repeatedly the prey of invading armies. It has been from remote time the field of contact and contest between the Turanian

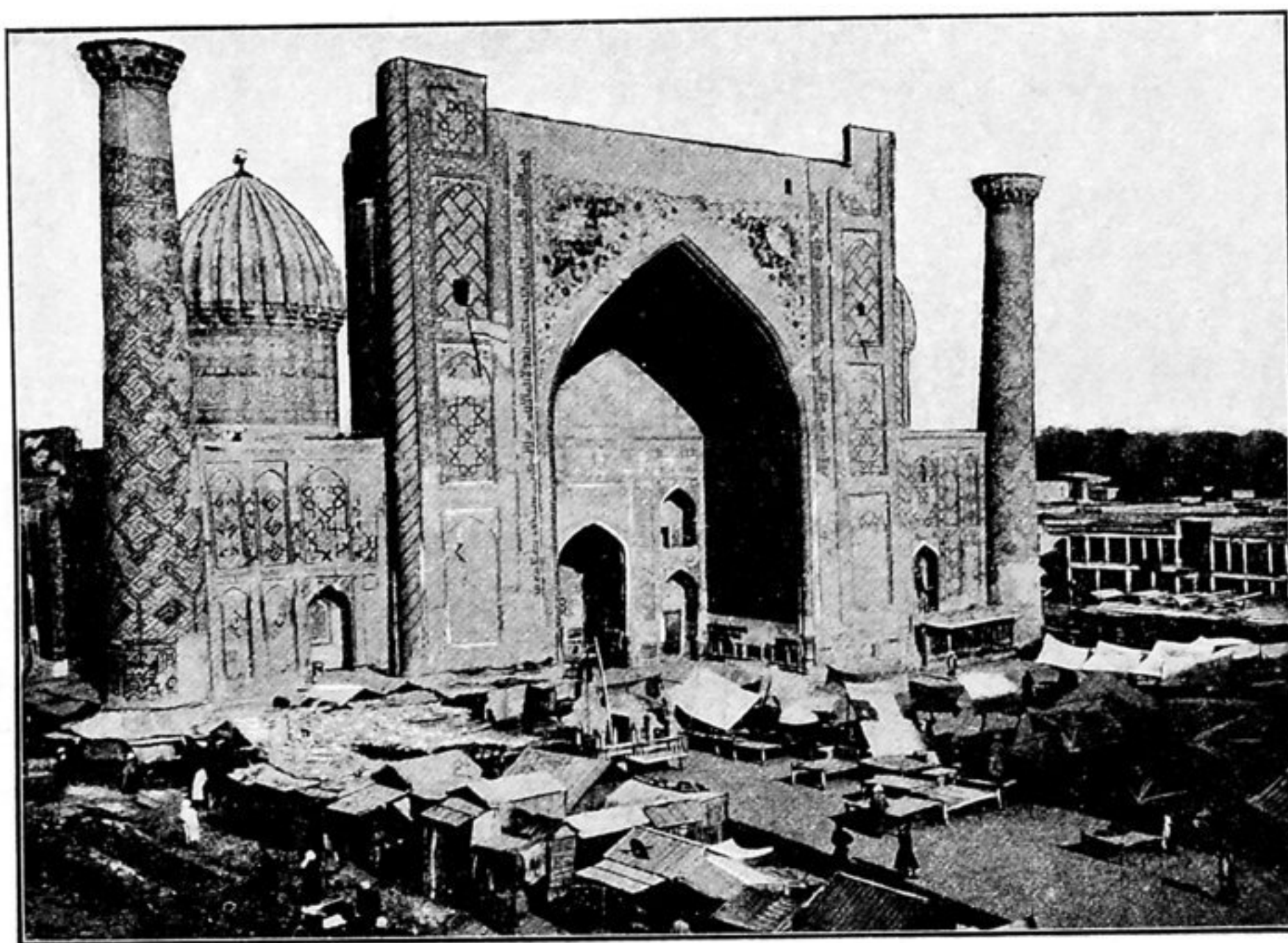


Fig. 8.—A Mosque of Mediæval Samarkand.

and Aryan stocks; but its problems, both physical and archeological, are parts of the greater problem underlying the study of the development of man and his civilization on the great continent and of the environment conditioning that development.

The many fragmentary peoples surviving in the remote corners and in the protected mountain fastnesses of Asia, preserving different languages, arts, and customs, indicate a very remote period of differentiation, with subsequent long periods for separate development. They point also to the long periods of unrest and battling in which the survivors of the vanquished were forced into their present refuges. And this unrest was probably the remote prototype of that which in the later prehistoric and historic time sent out its waves from the Aralo-Caspian basin. It was probably from the beginning a condition in which the slowly progressive change toward aridity in interior Asia was ever forcing emigration outward, displacing