

other peoples, and thus working against the establishment of a stable equilibrium of population. Asia is thus the field for applying all the comparative sciences that relate to the history of man. The materials lie in cave deposits, in rock pictographs, in tumuli, dolmens, and ruined towns, in languages, customs, religions, design patterns, and anthropological measurements.

Turkestan, from its geographical position, must have been the stage on which the drama of Asiatic life was epitomized through all these ages of ferment. Peoples and civilizations appeared and disappeared, leaving their records buried in ashes and earth; but the fertility of the soil produced wealth, and the position kept it ever a commercial center.

So far as our problems of archeology and physical geography are concerned, Turkestan is practically a virgin field. In geology and cartography the Russians have done a surprising amount of excellent work; but the modern methods of physico-geographic study have only begun to be applied, and the little archeological work done there has been mostly in the nature of hunting for curios and treasure, chiefly by foreigners, and in so destructive a manner that the Russian government has till now wisely prohibited excavations.

The importance of Russian Turkestan as a field of archeological research becomes evident when we consider, on the one hand, its vast number of sites of former occupation, and on the other the great distances that separate it from points at which such research has been conducted. To the south the whole region from India to Susa, on the border of Mesopotamia, is practically untouched. To the west we must cross the Caspian, to find, in the Caucasus and around the Black Sea, scientifically conducted excavations. On the east, beyond the high passes of the Tianshan, some good work has been done by Stein and Gruenwedel in the buried

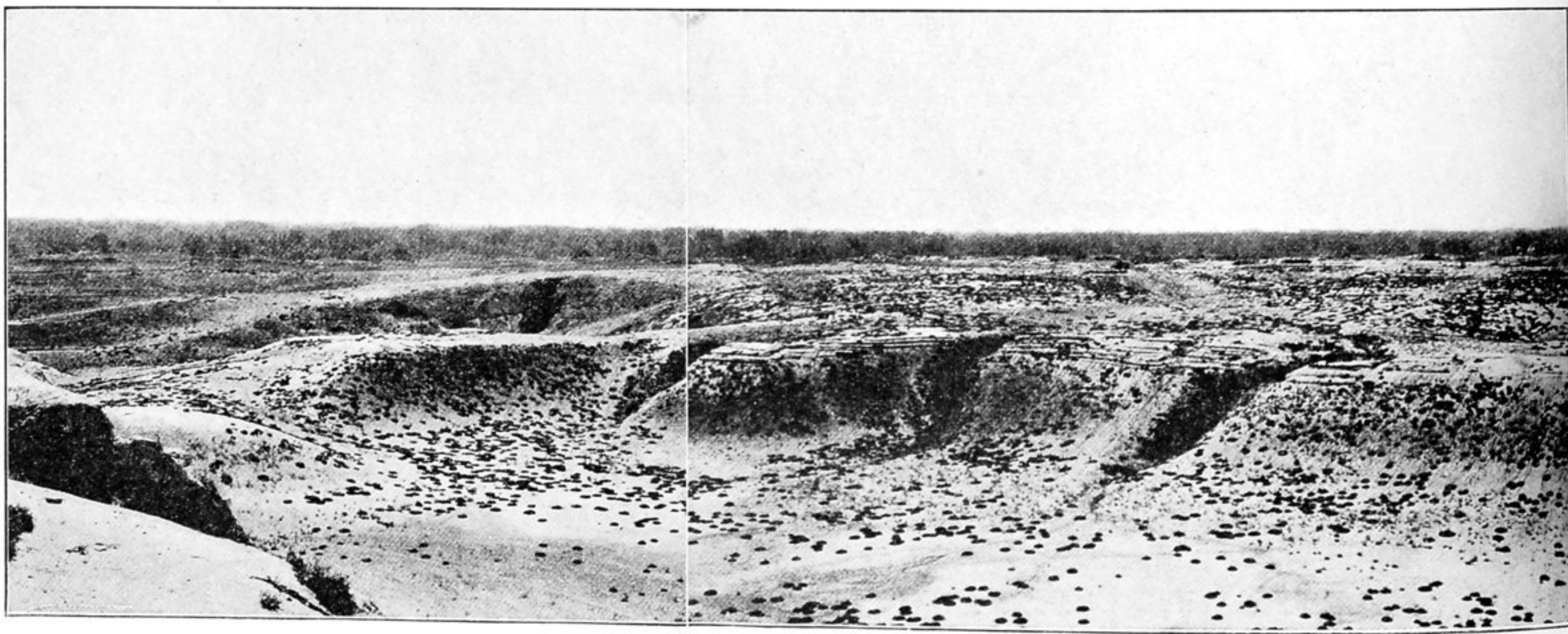


Fig. 9.—Water Pool System in the Culture