

CHAPTER II.—THE FORMING OF THE OASIS OF ANAU.

KURGANS.

Near the middle of the oasis of Anau two hills with rounded contours rise, one 40, the other 50 feet above the plain; they stand one north of the other and half a mile apart. A mile to the east and nearly equidistant from the two hills stand the ruins of the walled city of Anau. These hills are not natural elevations; they are the time-wasted, wind- and water-carved remnants of long-forgotten cities. Together with the neighboring ruined citadel, they represent an almost continuous series of successive cultures whose local beginnings seem to antedate the pre-dynastic remains of Egypt.

The structure of the North Kurgan was well exposed in a trench that had been made in it 20 years or more ago by General Komorof. When I saw it during a brief visit on the journey of reconnaissance in 1903, its stratified character had been clearly brought to light by the action of the winds on the sides of the trench. The horizontal stratification was especially marked by thin layers of ash and charcoal and burnt earth. Bones of animals and potsherds of hand-made plain and painted ware were visible in all parts of the sides of the trench. There was no doubt in my mind that we had before us the slowly built-up accumulation of the débris of many generations of population. It was this that decided me to begin on this hill the work of excavation in 1904. Our excavations exposed the same stratified structure throughout the South Kurgan.

These hills are town-sites. The inhabitants lived in houses built of air-dried bricks, and the hills are made up of the débris of mud-houses continually wasting under wind and rain, and continually repairing, largely with material brought from without. Remnants of house-walls are present throughout the mass, but being of the same material as the earth-layers they are generally very indistinct, though after a few days' exposure by the spade the outlines of the bricks often become clearly defined. In the trench in the North Kurgan, a continuous layer of red-burnt earth, apparently marking a conflagration, extends almost entirely through the hill, while still higher a well-defined horizon is marked by continuous ash-layers and by a change in the density of the earth from more compact below to a somewhat looser and honeycombed structure above. This horizon marks also a change in culture. On the accompanying sketches (plate 1) by R. W. Pumpelly only some of the more clearly defined ash-layers and walls are accurately platted, the bases and dimensions of the walls having been carefully measured.

In our excavations the structure described above was everywhere evident. Under Dr. Schmidt's plan and direction the work was done by sinking wide pits.