produces wheat and barley, melons, and perhaps a few vegetables and oil seeds. Beyond the Chakhansúr limits, southward or up to the Helmand, there is probably no cultivation save that obtained on the river bank, and ordinarily illustrated by patches of wheat and barley with melon beds. On the opposite side of the river, in addition to the cultivated portions of the bank, there is a large tract extending from above *(i.e.,* south of) Kohak, or the Sistán dam *(band),* to the gravelly soil below the mountain ranges which separate Sistán from Baluchistan and Narmashir. The distance from north to south of this plain may be computed at 40 miles, and from east to west at 80 or 90 miles. Lands north of the Náïzár not belong­ing to the Afghan district of Lash Juwain may also be included in Outer Sistán ; but it is unnecessary to make any distinction of the kind for the tract marked “ Hámún ” on the west, where it merges into the Persian frontier. Bellew states there are 1200 houses in Chakhansúr. This can hardly apply to the fort in which the sardar lives, and the comparatively few houses outside, bearing that name, and noticed by Major Lovett on his visit in 1872. Nor did there then appear to be any other centres of population in the district, excepting perhaps Kadah on the eastern limit. The inhabitants are Sistánis or Parsi­wans, Baluch nomads, and Afghans. Between the Kohak *band* and Rudbár they are mainly Baluch. Most of the less nomad tribesmen are Sanjuráni and Toki, the sardars jealously claiming the former appellation.

The most remarkable geographical feature of Sistán generally, in the modern acceptation of the term, is the Hámún, or expanse, which stretches far and wide on the north, west, and south, but is for a great part of the year dry or a mere swamp. In the early spring, at which period the present writer was in the locality, the existence of a lake could only be certified by pools or hollows of water formed at the mouths of the principal feeders, such as the Khash Rúd on the north-east, the Farah Rud on the north-west, and the Helmand, where its old bed terminates at no great distance from the Khash Rúd. Bellew describes the aspect of that portion of Sistán limited to the actual basin of the Helmand as indicating the former existence of a lake which covered with its waters a considerable area. On the north this tract has been raised to a higher level than the remainder by the deposit at the mouths of rivers of the solid matter brought down. It is still, however, from 200 to 500 feet below the level of the desert cliffs that bound it, and which at some former period formed the shores of the lake ; and it is from 50 or 60 to 200 feet above the level of the beds of the rivers now flowing into the existing Hámún. The tract thus raised by depositions in the bed of the former lake, writes the same authority, is now the inhabited district of Sistán, and contains the Hámún, a great sedge-grown swamp, the last relic of the lake itself. To the south of the Hámún and inhabited tract of Sistán is the Zarah hollow. It extends for about 100 miles to the Sarhad Mountains. Called by the natives God-i- Zarah, or the hollow of Zarah, it is described as a wide and circular depression sloping gently up to the bounding hills and desert cliffs. It receives the drainage of these in its central and deepest hollow, which, except in seasons of drought, is more or less marshy. It is connected along the western border of the area with the existing Hámún by the Sar-shila, a great drainage gully through which runs the superfluous flood of the Hámún.

The water-supply of Sistan is about as uncertain as that of Sind, though the general inclination to one bank, the left, is more marked in the Helmand than in the Indus. Therefore the boundary lines given must be received with slight reservation. It is easy to see that a good year of inundation extends the borders of the so-called lake to within the Náïzár ; and there are well-defined beds of dry canals intersecting the country, which prove the existence formerly of an extensive water-system no longer prevailing. The main canal of Sistán, confounded by some writers with the parent river, bears the waters of the Helmand westward into the heart of the country. They are diverted by means of a large *band* or dam, known indifferently as the “ Amir’s,” the “ Sistân,” or the “ Kohak ” *band.* It is constructed of horizon­tally laid tamarisk branches, earth, and perpendicular stakes, and protected from damage by a fort on the left and a tower on the right bank of the river. Although this diversion of the stream may be an artificial development of a natural channel, and undoubtedly dates from a period long prior to recent Persian occupation, it appears that the later arrangements have been more maturely and better organized than those carried on by the pre­

decessors of the amir of Káian. The towns of Deshtak, Chelling, Burj-i-'Alam Khan, Bahramabad, Kimmak, and others of less note are actually on the banks of this main canal. Moreover, it is the indirect means of supplying water to almost every town and village in Sistán Proper, feeding as it does a network of minor canals, by which a system of profuse irrigation is put in force, which, with an industrious and a contented population, should be productive of most extensive grain cultivation. To consider the main canal as the river itself is a theory which a brief inspec­tion of the locality seems quite to disprove. On the one hand we have a comparatively narrow passage abruptly turning to the westward, on the other a broad and well-defined river-bed pro­longed in the old direction, into which the waters would at all times flow unrestrained but for an artificial embankment. What­ever arguments, however, may be used on this head, the larger bed is assumed to be the original Helmand for purposes of territorial limitation.

Provisions in Sistán are, as a rule, sufficient, though sheep and oxen are somewhat poor. Bread is cheap and good, being pro­curable to natives at less than a halfpenny the pound. Vegetables are scarce, and rice is chiefly obtained from Herat. The inundated lands abound with water-fowl. Partridges and sand-grouse are occasionally seen. River fish are plentiful enough, but confined to one species, the barbel.

The inhabitants of Sistán are mainly composed of Kaiyánis, descendants of the ancient rulers of the land ; Sarbandis and Shahrakis, tribes supposed to have consisted originally of immigrants from western Persia ; and Baluchis of the Nharui and Sanjurani (Toki) clans. Bellew separates the “Sistânis”; but it is a question whether this term is not in a large measure applied to fixed inhabitants of the country, whatever their descent and nationality. For instance, an old Shahraki guide to the Sistán Mission of 1872 persisted in being a “ Sistâni”; and, if his defini­tion be accepted, the outside element must be confined to Baluchis and modern settlers only.

*History.—*The ancient Drangiana (Zaraya, Darañka, “lake land”) received the name of “land of the Sacæ” after this country was permanently occupied by the “ Scythians ” or Sacæ, who over­ran Iran in 128 b.c. (see Persia, vol. xviii. pp. 594 *sq*.). It was included in the Sásánian empire, and then in the empire of the caliphs. About 860 a.d., when it had undergone many changes of government under lieutenants of the Baghdad caliphs, or bold adventurers acting on their own account, Ya'kúb b. Láith made it the seat of his power. In 901 it fell under the power of the Sámánids, and a century later into that of the Ghaznavids. An invasion of Jaghatais and the irruption into its richer lands by Timúr are salient points in the history of Sistán prior to the Safawid conquest (1508). Under this dynasty for more than two centuries, or up to 1722, Sistan remained more or less a Persian dependency. At the time of the Afghan invasion of Mir Mahmud (1722), Malik Muhammad Kaiyáni was the resident ruler in Sistán, and by league with the invader or other intrigue he secured for himself that particular principality and a great part of Khurasan also. He was slain by Nadir Kuli Khan, the general of Shah Tahmasp, who afterwards, as Nadir Shah, became possessor of Sistán as part of his Persian dominions. Shortly after the death of Nadir (1751) Sistán passed, together with other provinces, into the hands of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the first sovereign in a united Afghanistan. On the death of Ahmad Shah in 1773 the country became a recognized bone of contention, not so much between Persians and Afghans as between Herat and Kandahar ; but eventually the internal dissensions of Afghanistan gave Persia the desired opportunity ; and by a steady course of intrigue and encroachment she managed to get within her grasp the better lands on the left bank of the lower Helmand and something on the right bank besides. When the British arbitrator appeared on the scene in the beginning of 1872, though compelled to admit the shah’s possession of what has been called “ Sistán Proper,” he could in fairness insist on the evacuation of Nad Ali, Kala Fath, and all places occupied on the right bank by Persian troops ; and furthermore he left to the Afghans both sides of the river Helmand from the dam of Kohak to its elbow west of Rudbár. For the precise boundary see Persia, vol. xviii. p. 619.

See *Eastern Persia,* vol. i.; Bellew’s *Record of Sistan Mission ; Journal of R. Geog. Society,* vol. xliii. (1873). (F∙ J∙ G∙)

SISTOVA, a town of Bulgaria, at the head of a district of its own name (40,893 inhabitants in 1881), is situated on the right bank of the Danube, about 40 miles above Rustchuk, and has rather a picturesque appearance on the slopes of the Kadbair and the Chuka. On the latter hill there stood till the fire of 1810 a mediæval fortress, and previous to the 15th century it contained a Latin church of traditional celebrity. The lower town along the river consists of modern houses, mostly erected since 1870, and is the scene of busy commercial life, especially during the