the strong fortifications of the town withstood a long siege by an army of 60,000 men. The women of Soest are said to have distin­guished themselves in this contest (*Soest er Fehde).* Papal interven­tion ended the strife and Soest was permitted to remain under the protection of the dukes of Cleves. The prosperity of the town waned in more modern times: in 1763 its population was only 3800 ; in1816 it was 6687.

SOFÁLA, a seaport town on the east coast of Africa, at the mouth of a river of the same name to the south of 20° S. lat., the seat of a Portuguese commandant. It is now a wretched place of about 1000 inhabitants, with not more than twenty European residents, and, as its port is ob­structed with sandbanks, there is only a small coasting trade with Chiluan and Inhambane. But Sofála was formerly a town of considerable importance, with a harbour capable of holding a hundred large vessels. Previous to its conquest by the Portuguese in 1505 it was the chief and populous centre of a wealthy Mohammedan state ; and the first governors of the Portuguese East African posses­sions were entitled captains-general of Sofála. The identi­fication of Sofála with Solomon’s Ophir, to which Milton alludes (*Par. Lost,* xi. 399-401), is untenable.

See *Bull. Geogr. Soc. Mozambique* (1882) for an account of the Sofála mines ; and, generally, Edrísí, *Climate* i., 8th section ; Dapper ; Baines, *The Gold Regions of Smith Africa* (1877) ; and Burton’s notes to his edition of Camoens.

SOFIA, since 1878 the capital of Bulgaria, though previously only a district town of the Tuna (Danube) vilayet of Turkey, is situated 1755 feet above the sea, in the midst of a dreary plain between the Stara Planina or main range of the Western Balkans and the bare but im­posing granite mass of the Vitosh Mountains (3400 feet). It stands at the meeting of five great routes from Nish and Belgrade, Lorn and Vidin, Plevna and Rustchuk, Philip­popolis and Constantinople, and Köstendil and Salonica. At present (1887) it is two days’ journey from the nearest railway station (Tatar-bazarjik), and as the seat of govern­ment is inconveniently near the south-west extremity of the kingdom ; but it lies on the prospective great railway route between Constantinople and Belgrade, and was in the eyes of those who selected it the prospective capital of a much more extensive territory. The climate of Sofia is subject to severe seasonal and diurnal changes : in January the thermometer sinks 4° below zero and in August ap­proaches 100°, and the daily range is frequently 27 or 28 degrees. Minarets and gardens give a certain beauty to the aspect of the town itself, but the outskirts are pain­fully destitute of foliage. In an eastern suburb stands the royal palace, a vast building which cost more than 4,000,000 francs ; and in that neighbourhood, on the site of an abandoned Turkish quarter, quite a new “ European ” town has sprung up. The rest of Sofia retains its Turkish character, with tortuous streets and mean wooden houses. The modern cathedral and the archbishop’s palace are both large edifices of no special note. Of the many mosques the most striking is the Buyuk-Jami, with its nine metal cupolas ; but more historical interest attaches to the Sophia mosque, occupying the highest point in the town to which it gave its name. It is now completely in ruins (the result of an earthquake), but tradition, which in this case is con­firmed by the architecture of the building, asserts that it was a Christian church erected by a certain Byzantine princess Sophia. Kanitz in 1871 still observed remains of old Byzantine frescos in the narthex. The public baths occupy a very extensive building, with separate suites of apartments for different nationalities or rather religions. The water as it issues from the springs has a temperature of 117°. Sofia exports hides and skins to Vienna, &c., and especially goat-skins to Marseilles ; its principal imports are Indian corn, wheat, and alcoholic liquors—the last a very large item. Formerly the popu­lation was 50,000. In 1870 Kanitz found 19,000—a

liberal estimate—8000 being Bulgarians, 5000 Turks, 5000 Jews (a colony dating from the expulsion from Spain), 900 Gipsies. At present (1887) the total is 20,000. Close to the north of the town are extensive remains of strong Roman fortifications.

Sofia is the *Serdica* or *Sardica* of the Romans and Greeks (so called after the Serds or Sards), the *Triaditza* of the Byzantine writers, and the *Sredec* of the Slavs. “ Sardica is my Rome,” said Constantine before he thought of his new capital on the Bosphorus. It had already been made the capital of Dacia Ripensis by Aurelian, and about 343 it became famous as the seat of a church council. The town was plundered by Attila ; and in 809 it was captured by the Bulgarians, who held it until the Turks got possession of it by stratagem in 1378, or more probably 1382. In 1443 Sofia was for a brief period occupied by the Hungarian John Hunyady (Corvinus), and on the defeat of his enterprise was laid waste by the retreating army. In 1829 it was the headquarters of Mustapha Pasha of Scutari, whose ravages have made the name of Albanian a word of terror to the children in Sofia even now. The Russians entered Sofia on 4th January 1878, after Gourko's passage of the Balkans.

See Kanitz, Donau Bulgarien, 1877 ; Laveleye, La Péninsule des Balkans, 1886.

SOGDIANA, or Sogdiane, in Old Persian *Sughuda,* a province of the Achæmenian empire, the eighteenth in the list in the Behistun inscription of Darius (i. 16), corresponded to the modern districts of Samarkand and Bokhara ; that is, it lay north of Bactriana between the Oxus and the Jaxartes and embraced the fertile valley of the Polytimetus or Zarafshan. Under the Greeks Sogdiana was united in one satrapy with Bactria, and subsequently it formed part of the Bactrian Greek kingdom till the “ Scythians ” (the Yue-chi) occupied it in the middle of the 2d century b.c. (comp. vol. xviii. pp. 586 *sq.,* 592 *sqj).* The valley of the Zarafshan about Samarkand retained even in the Middle Ages the name of the Soghd of Samarkand. Arabic geographers reckon it as one of the four fairest spots in the world.

ṠOḤÁR, the second port of ‘Omán, Arabia, situated on the Gulf of ‘Omán in 24° 22' N. lat. and 56° 45' E. long. It is a place of considerable trade and industry, well built, fortified with walls and a castle, and inhabited by a hospitable and far from bigoted population of the Íbádí sect. The anchorage is good, sheltered between two promontories, and the surrounding country is populous and fertile. Indeed the coast-land of ‘Omán is naturally the most favoured part of Arabia.

The town of Ṡoḥár is older than Islam, and its cloths are men­tioned in the life of Mohammed (Ibn Hisham, p. 1019). Before the Moslem conquest it was in the hands of the Persians, and the Persian name Mazūn is not uncommonly applied to it by older Arabic writers. Under Islam it became the capital of Oman, and it is sometimes called Oman, from which fact it has sometimes, but very precariously, been identified with the Omana of classical writers. In the earlier Middle Ages Ṡoḥár was one of the first commercial cities of Islam on the Indian Ocean and had an active part in the China trade. This prosperity was unabated when Mokaddasi wrote of it (p. 92) towards the close of the 10th century; in the 12th century, when Edrísí wrote, the China trade was a thing of the past ; and about 1230 Ibn Mojáwir describes it as a ruin in­habited by the demons of the desert. Its decay appears to be connected with the rise of other ports—Ralliât on the Arabian and Ormuz on the Persian side of the Persian Gulf—but more especially with the political convulsions of Om'án. This district, which has always had an isolated position in Eastern history, early became a stronghold of the Khawárij (Ib'áḍíya) and paid very in­termittent obedience to the caliphs till it was reduced by Mo'ta'ḍid about the year 900. Even after this conquest the native imáms held their ground in the mountainous inland country at Nazwa (Iṡṭakhrí, p. 26), and renewed the struggle for independence with the Buwaihid and Seljuk sovereigns of Fars, who succeeded in these regions to the power of the caliphate. Ibn Mojáwir connects the destruction of Ṡoḥár with these struggles, and, though he seems to imply a later date, it is possible that his statement is to be com­bined with what Ibn al-Athír (ix. 387) tells of the rising of Al-Rásliid billáh about 1050. After this event there is a period of obscurity in the annals of ''Omán ; the independence of the country was ultimately secured under the native (Azdite) princes of Nazwa, but Ṣoḥár never recovered its importance. It is mentioned, however, by Marco Polo, under the name of Soer, as trading in horses with Malabar, and also by Ibn Batuta, and must therefore have been resettled soon after the time of Ibn Mojáwir. Ṡoḥâr was seized by