2. Outer Seistan, the country on the right bank of the Helmund, and east of its embouchure in the Hamun, extends more than 100 m. in length, or from a point between the Charboli and Khuspas rivers north to Rudbar south. In breadth the district of Chakhansur, measuring from the old bed of the Helmund, inclusive of Nad Ali, to Kadah, may be estimated at some 30 m. It produces wheat and barley, melons, and perhaps a few vege- tables and oil seeds. Beyond the Chakhansur limits, southward or up to the Helmund, 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 south of Kuhak, or the Seistan dam (*band),* to the gravelly soil below the mountain ranges which separate Seistan from Baluchistan and Narmashir. The distance from north to south of this plain may be computed at 40 m., and from east to west at 80 or 90 m. Lands north of the Naizar not belonging to the Afghan district of Lash Juwain may also be included in Outer Seistan; but it is unnecessary to make any distinction of the kind for the tract marked Hamun on the west, where it merges into the Persian frontier. The inhabitants are Seistanis or Parsiwans, Baluch nomads and Afghans. Between the Kuhak *band* and Rudbar they are mainly Baluch. Most of the less nomad tribesmen are Sanjurani and Toki, the sardars jealously claiming the former appellation.

The most remarkable geographical feature of Seistan generally, in the modern acceptation of the term, is the Hamun, 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. It is a curious feature in the physical conformation of northern and western Afghanistan that none of the rivers flow to the sea, but that the Helmund and all the other rivers of western Afghanistan empty themselves into these lagoons, which spread over thousands of square miles. A noteworthy feature of the Seistan lagoon is that in times of excessive flood it overspreads a vast area of country, both to the north and south, shutting off the capital of Seistan (Nusretabad) from surrounding districts, and spreading through a channel southwards, known as Shelag, to another great depression, called the Gaud-i-Zirreh. This great salt swamp is about 1000 ft. lower in elevation and is situated so close to the Helmund as to leave but a few miles of broken ridge between. By that ridge all communication with Seistan must pass in time of flood. Seistan becomes a promontory connected with the desert south of the Helmund by that isthmus alone. In the early spring 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 Rud on the north-east, the Farah Rud on the north-west, and the Helmund, where its old bed terminates at no great distance from the Khash Rud. Bellew describes the aspect of that portion of Seistan limited to the actual basin of the Helmund 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 ft below the level of the desert cliffs that bound it, and at some former period formed the shores of the lake; and it is from 50 or 60 to 200 ft. above the level of the beds of the rivers now flowing into the existing Hamun.

The water-supply of Seistan is about as uncertain as that of Sind, though the general inclination to one bank, the left, is more marked in the Helmund 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 Naizar; 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 Seistan, confounded by some writers with the parent river, bears the waters of the Helmund 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 “Seistan” or the “ Kuhak ” *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 pre­decessors of the amir of Kaian. 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 Seistan Proper, feeding as it does a network of minor canals, by which a system of profuse irrigation is put in force. The yearly rainfall is only 2 to 3 in. The Seistan depression receives the drainage of a tract of country over 125,000 sq. m. in area.

Provisions in Seistan 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 population is about 205,000, but the country, even with the lazy methods of the present day, furnishes a very large amount of grain and food-supplies in excess of local requirements, and it could, of course, be made to furnish very much more. Under improved government Seistan could with but little trouble be made into a second Egypt.

The inhabitants of Seistan are mainly composed of Kaianis, 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 “ Seistanis 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. The dense reed-beds (Naizar) skirting the Hamun, often several miles in width and composed of reeds 10 ft. or more in height, look impenetrable, but narrow winding lanes exist in them, known only to the Sayāds (Arab. for “ hunter ”), a strange aboriginal race of Seistan, who live by netting fish and water-fowl. These people live all the year round at the water’s edge, in huts made of reeds, and change their abodes as the waters advance or recede. They have a language of their own, and are an unsociable people, suspicious of strangers, ever ready to decamp if they think a tax-collector is near.

*History.—*The ancient Drangiana (Zaraya, Darañka, “lake land ”) received the name of “ land of the Sacae ” after this country was permanently occupied by the “ Scythians ” or Sacae, who overran Iran in 128 B.C. It was included in the Sassanian empire, and then in the empire of the caliphs. About A.D. 860, when it had undergone many\* changes of government under lieutenants of the Bagdad caliphs, or bold adventurers acting on their own account, Yakub b. Laith al-Saffar made it the seat of his power. In 901 it fell under the power of the Samanids, and a century later into that of the Ghaznevids. An invasion of Jagatais and the irruption of Timur are salient points in the history of Seistan prior to the Sefavid conquest (1508). Up to 1722 Seistan remained more or less a Persian dependency. At the time of the Afghan invasion of Mir Mahmud (1722), Malik Mahommed Kaiani was the resident ruler in Seistan, and by league with the invader or other intrigue he secured for himself that particular principality and a great part of Khorasan also. He was slain by Nadir Kuli Khan, the general of Shah Tahmasp, who afterwards, as Nadir Shah, became possessor of Seistan as part of his Persian dominions. Shortly after the death of Nadir (1751) Seistan 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 Helmund and some- thing 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 “ Seistan 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 Helmund from the dam of Kuhak to its elbow west of Rudbar. A part of the work of General Sir Frederic J. Goldsmid, K.C.S.I., who conducted the first Seistan demarcation commission in 1872, was left undone and completed only in 1903-1905 by Col Sir Henry McMahon, K.C.I.E.

See *Eastern Persia,* vol. i. ; Bellew’s “ Record of Seistan Mission,” *Journal of R. Geοg. Society,* vol. xliii. (1873); Col. Sir H. McMahon’s paper in *Geographical Journal* (September to October, 1906); also Persia. (F. J. G.; A. H.-S.)