

paring the huge volume of the Helmand in flood with the very limited flow that it carries in the late summer and autumn, a competent judge considers this time-honoured method of creating a temporary main distributary head as that best suited to the hydrographic conditions and the nature of the ground in the delta. If under efficient administration the 'duty' of the water received from the Helmand were raised to the level attained in Egypt and parts of India, works of the Band-i-Sīstān type might well suffice to secure irrigation for all the cultivable soil in the delta.

Haētumant,
ancient
name of
river.

I have thought it desirable briefly to point out here the paramount importance of such weirs on the Helmand for agricultural life in Sīstān, not merely on account of its close bearing upon the historical past of the land, but also because it helps to throw light on the name of the river itself. The ancient form of this name as preserved by the Avesta, *Haētumant*, means literally 'having dams', the word *haētu* showing this meaning in a passage of the Vendidad (xix. 30), just like the Sanskrit *setu*, its phonetic equivalent.⁴ This designation of the river becomes fully significant if considered in relation with the important part which the annual construction of the great weir in the main bed and the maintenance of the multitude of minor canal heads must have played in Sīstān ever since its river was first harnessed to support settled agricultural occupation. This also may help, perhaps, to account better for the application of the name *Haētumant* to the territory of Sīstān in two Avesta passages (Vd. i. 13; xix. 39).

Classical
forms of
name.

With regard to the later forms of the name it is interesting to note that the modern designation *Helmand* corresponds to the phonetic rule of Eastern Iranian which replaces the *d* of Western Iranian (Persian) by *l*. We have seen before that the language areas of Eastern and Western Iranian seem to have met in Sīstān, as proved by the double forms *Zapáγγai* : *Δράγγai*, &c.⁵ The character of Sīstān as a kind of linguistic watershed is curiously brought out also by the varying forms of the name as found in classical texts. By the side of the *Ἐρύμανδρος* of Arrian, IV. vi. 6, *Ἐτοιμάνδρος* of Ptolemy, VI. xvii. 17, *Ethymantus* of Curtius, VIII. ix. 10,⁶ we have the *Ἐρύμανθος* of Polybios, XI. xxxiv. 13, and *Erymandos* of Pliny, *N. H.* VI. 25. In the last two forms we clearly recognize an intermediate stage of the phonetic process which in Eastern Iranian first turned the tenuis between vowels, as usual, into a media, hence *t > d*, and then caused this *d* through *r* to change into *l*.⁷

SECTION III.—THE SITE OF ZĀHIDĀN AND LATER RUINS TO THE NORTH-WEST

Ruins de-
stroyed
through
irrigation.

The physical conditions prevailing within the actually occupied and irrigated portion of the Helmand delta make it clear that ruins of any antiquity can survive there only if the ground on which they stood has since their abandonment remained unaffected by the moisture and heavy accumulation of alluvium which necessarily accompany both regular irrigation and inundation by occasional floods. Great changes in the course of the river branches constituting the northern, i. e. the actually existing portion of the Helmand delta, and in the canal system dependent upon them, have repeatedly taken place during recent times. They are abundantly attested as regards earlier times by the extensive ruined sites to be found in Afghān territory to the east of the present

⁴ This meaning of *Haētumant* is correctly indicated in Bartholomae, *Altiran. Wörterbuch*, p. 1729. The rendering 'furtenreiche', *Grundriss d. iran. Philologie*, ii. p. 393, reflects an earlier interpretation which did not pay adequate regard to the attested meaning of Avestic *haētu* and of Skr. *setu*.

⁵ See above, ii. p. 906, note 1.

⁶ The description which Curtius gives of the Ethymantus

curving in frequent meanders and being used up for irrigation applies so closely to the Helmand that the doubt expressed by M'Crindle (*Invasion of India by Alexander*, p. 184) as to the identity of the river with the Erymanthos of Polybios and the Hetymandros of Arrian was not justified.

⁷ Cf. Darmesteter, *Chants populaires des Afghans*, p. xxv.