



## IDEH

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**IDEH** (also Iza, Iḏaj, Ayḏaj, Māl-(e) Amir, Malāmir, Māl-e Mir-Jānaki), a town and county in the northeast of the Khuzestan Province, in 31°50' north latitude and 49°52' east longitude. Iḏa is located 20 km east of the Kārun River, in a small oval shaped valley, flanked by the mountains of Mongašt, Murdāfel, and Āsmāri, part of the Zāgros range (Emām Šuštari, p. 209). There are two small lakes within the plain of Iḏa but no major permanent streams. Agriculture is based on dry farming, and the rich pastureland is in danger of rapid degradation due to overgrazing (Sa'idi; Digard et.al.). Archeological discovery in the plain show that settlement in the area dates at least as early as the [Elamite period](#) (Amiet, 1966; Behnām; Carter and Stolper; Hansman, 2005; Matheson; de Wael; Stein; Vanden Burghe; Wright), but its history is marred by long periods of discontinuity, since it disappears almost completely from historical records (de Miroschedji, 1990; idem, 2003).

According to the most recent census in 1996, the district had a population of 172,027, and the city 81,288 (Markaz-e moṭāla'āt, pp. 171, 205). The economy of the county is based on agriculture, animal husbandry, and handicrafts (Sa'idi, p. 497). Iḏa continues to be the principle summer market town for the remaining [Baḳtiāri pastoral nomads](#), although the vast majority of the rural population has settled in permanent villages. Since 1956, when census records began to be collected on a regular basis, the city of Iḏa has had the highest rate of urban growth (8.5%) within the province (Markaz-e moṭāla'āt, p. 205), primarily due to the influx of rural populations from the surrounding region (Eršād and Āqā'i). The official language is Persian, but the population is



comprised almost entirely of Baḳtiāri and Bahma'i Lorsi, and the predominant spoken language is lori.

Iḏa is located at an altitude of 760m, on the geographic borderline between the lowlands of the Khuzestan plains and the highlands of the Zagros range, which forms a >formidable geographic barrier between the Persian Gulf and the Mesopotamian plains in the south and the west, and the Iranian plateau to the east. The small upland plain of Iḏa dominates one of the few principle natural passages through Zāgros (Briant, 1977, pp. 84-87; idem, tr., 2002, p. 727; Eqbāl, p. 443; Digard, 1979, pp.132-34; Sepehr, pp. 30-53; Najm-al-Molk, pp. 153-59; Karimi, p. 247-51; Champain, pp. 144-53; Layard, 1887, I, pp. 345-63; Moqaddasi, tr., pp. 360, 454).

Thanks to its relatively inaccessible location and the control of a major trade route, Iḏa has been the site of a series of minor, semi-independent local states (Strek, p. 183). Recent archeological surveys show a succession of significant demographic cycles from the 5th millennium BCE to the 14th century CE, associated with the near complete demise of urban and settled life and a concomitant rise of pastoral nomadism in the highlands (Wright, pp. 33, 43, 54, 59, 92, 96, 102, 116, 124-27; de Miroschedji, 2003). In the early first millennium BCE, the region was part of a local state called Aapir (Carter and Stolper, p. 187) or Aīpir (Amiet, 1966, p. 549), which was subjugated to the Elamite empire. The territory's resurgence during the Parthians and Seleucids era is accompanied by the establishment of another strong, semi-autonomous local state called *Elymais* (Tarn; Briant, 1977, pp. 62-64, 84-87; Carter and Stolper, pp. 57-59; Hansman, 2005; Girshman, pp. 269-70). At the time of the Arab conquest in the 7th century, the territory was called Iḏa (Iḏaj). It peacefully submitted to the invading Arabs in 17/638, but it had to be reconquered in 22/642 after the battle of Nehāvand (Ṭabari, I/V, pp. 2553, 2672-73, tr. XIII, p. 133, XIV, pp. 43-44; Balāḏori, pp. 382, 383, tr. pp. 138, 139). In 270/884, the governor (*āmel*) Aḥmad b. Dinār joined the caliph's army at the head of a large force of cavalry and infantry against the Zanj rebellion (Ṭabari, III/IV, p. 2085, tr. XXXVII, p. 129).

Some scanty references to Iḏa can be found in the works of the 10th century Muslim geographers (Eṣṭakri, pp. 89, 90, 96; Ebn Ḥawqal, pp. 252, 253, 259; Abu Dolaf, pp. 60-61; Moqaddasi/Maqdesi, pp. 407, 414, 420, tr., pp. 368, 454, map; *Hodud al-ālam*, p. 139, tr. pp. 130-31). >A stone bridge, referred to by Yāqut as

one of the wonders of the world, crossed the Kārun River near Iḏa, carrying the road that linked Isfahan and Šuštār (Yāqut, tr., p. 62; Emām Šuštārī, pp. 210-12; Abu Dolaf, p. 60, commentary, p.117; Le Strange, p. 245; Eqtedāri, pp. 63-64). A major earthquake devastated the region in 444/1052 (Ebn al-Atīr, IX, p. 591, tr., p. 88).

Under the Saljuqs and Il-khans another semi-autonomous local dynasty, emerged in Iḏa, which came to be known as Mal-i Amir. The dynasty, known as Hazaraspids, was founded by a Kurdish clan from Syria, whose eponymous founder was a chieftain called Fazluluya (hence the dynasty's alternate designation Fazlawi). They displaced the local Šul tribes and ruled the greater Lorestān under the name of the Atābakān-e Lorestān, or the Atābakān-e Fazlawi, from 550/1155 until 827/1424 (Spuler, p. 337; Eqbāl; Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfi, 1960, pp. 54-42; Naṭanzi, pp. 40-41; Ebn Baṭṭuṭa, tr., pp. 184-89; Kātibī; Minorsky, p. 46). The Atābaks improved trans-Zāgros caravan movement by hewing an impressive paved road through the mountains, known as Atābak's road (*Jādda-ye Atābak*) and King's road (*Rāh-e soltān*; Streck, p. 185; Champain, p. 149), the remains of which can still be seen today.

Following the demise of the Atābaks at the hand of the Timurid Šāhroḡ, Malāmīr was gradually deserted, and the fortress of Mongašt fell into ruin. During the Safavid era the plain of Iḏa became part of the territory of the Baḡtiāri confederacy with a few permanent settlements, but no trace of urban life remained there until the 20th century (Sepehr, pp. 184-89). Instead, like prior periods of population decline, migratory pastoral nomadism came to dominate social life in the region (Adamec, pp. 529-30; Layard, I, p. 411; Sepehr, p. 53). In 1897, a combination of British and Baḡtiāri Khans' strategic and commercial interests led to the construction of a new trade route, called the Baḡtiāri Road or the Lynch Road (called so after the British company that built the two metal bridges across the Kārun, along with segments of the mule track linking Šuštār and Isfahan (Curzon, pp. 523-24; Sepehr, pp. 138-39; Shahnavaḡ, pp. 112-16). The use of this road for trade purposes was practically ceased after the opening of the Ḳorramšahr-Lorestān-Tehran motor road and the construction of the trans-Iranian railway (Stein, p. 125).

The name of Mālamīr was officially changed to Iḏa in 1935 (Mo'in, V, p. 406). The establishment of a strong central state in the 20th century and the emergence of an integrated national market-based economy have led to the increasing settlement of the population in towns and permanent rural centers at the expense of migratory pastoralism (Eršād and Āqā'i; Digard et al., pp.



109-44). After the 1979 Revolution of 1978-79, a major motor way linking Iḏa and Isfahan was laid, whose negative environmental impact on the fragile Zagros ecology is of great concern (Sa'idi). Moreover, the construction of a major hydro-electric dam near Iḏa on the Kārun River has displaced a large number of highland rural villages and seriously threatens important archeological, historical, and cultural sites with inundation.

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