



## JEBĀL

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**JEBĀL**, in Arabic, the plural of *jabal* “mountain,” a geographical term used in early Islamic times for the western part of Persia, roughly corresponding to ancient Media (Ar. *māh*, see below).

It received its name from its mountain and upland plateau topography, embracing as it did the central part of the Zāgros mountain chain, including the regions of Kurdistan and Lorestān, between the Safidrud River and the Alborz chain in the north and the lowland region of Kuzestān in the south, whilst its western limits were the region where the Zāgros chain meets the Mesopotamian plain and its eastern ones the fringes of the central Great Desert (Dašt-e Kavir; see [DESERT](#)). In the administrative geography of the early Islamic period, its borders were somewhat ill-defined and fluctuating, but it was often linked with the city of Ray at its northeastern extremity, marking a point roughly half-way along the great Iraq-Khorasan highway which entered Jebāl at Ḥolvān (q.v.) at its western end. At this time, Jebāl contained six important urban centres, Dinavar; Qarmisin, Qarmāsin (the later Kermānšāh); Hamadān; Qazvin; Isfahan; and Ray (qq.v.).

The Arabs pushed into Jebāl soon after they had overrun Iraq, so that the conquest of the region fell essentially in the latter part of the caliphate of ‘Omar b. al-Ḳaṭṭāb and the early years of ‘Oṭmān’s caliphate: Dinavar in 642; Qarmisin, after the capture of Ḥolvān in 640; Hamadān in 639 or 641, then definitively in 644-45; Isfahan, in 642 or 644; Qazvin, in 644-45; and Ray, at a date variously given as between 639 and 645 (Balāḍori, pp. 301-2, 309, 312, 319, 321-25; Ṭabari, I, pp. 2637-50, 2653-55, tr. pp. 6-13, 20-21, 24-26).



The towns of Dinavar and Nehāvand, both occupied by the Arabs soon after their victory at Nehāvand in 642, had a particular importance in this expansionary period of the Arab conquest of western Persia. They eventually became known as Māh al-Kufa and Māh al-Baṣra respectively, with the their revenues assigned to the upkeep of the Arab warriors (*moqātelā*) for campaigning northwards towards the Caucasus and across the Persian plateau to Khorasan (see Morony, on the complexities of this process; the term ‘Māh’ probably stems from a toponym Māda, i.e., Media). The conquered towns acquired Arab garrisons, so that Arabs became a permanent population element there, and Arab chiefs acquired rural estates; thus the family of the 9th century Arab poet and paladin, Abu Dolaf Qāsem b. ‘Isā ‘Ejli (d. between 840 and 843), possessed large states at Karaj to the east of Nehāvand, so that the place became known as Karaj Abi Dolaf (Le Strange, pp. 197-98).

By the early 11th century, the age of the Ghaznavids and Saljuqs, the older term ‘Jebāl’ was being replaced by that of ‘Erāq-e ‘Ajam (q.v.) “Iraq of the Persians” in distinction from ‘Erāq-e ‘Arab “Iraq of the Arabs,” that is, Mesopotamia; the Ghaznavid historian Abu’l-Faḏl Bayhaqi (q.v.) always uses ‘Erāq [-e ‘Ajam] for western Persia (see, e.g., index, p. 1015). Šehāb-al-Din Yāqut Ḥamawi has a brief entry “Jebāl” (II, p. 99), but after the Mongol invasions, Jebāl dropped out of use; thus the geographer Ḥamd Allāh Mostawfi (mid-14th century) nowhere uses it (Le Strange, pp. 185-86). The term ‘Erāq-e ‘Ajam is now completely obsolete in modern Persia, but the alternative name for the town of Solṭānābād, the present-day Arāk, stems from the medieval ‘Erāq (-e ‘Ajam) (see ARĀK i; Bosworth, p. 859).

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