



## FARĀVA

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**FARĀVA** (Parau), a small medieval town in eastern Persia, lying east of the Caspian Sea and just beyond the northern edge of the Kopet-Dag range facing the Kara Kum desert. In the early Islamic period it was one of a string of strongly defended fortresses (*rebātás*), also including Abīvard, Nasā, and Dehestān (qq.v.), along the northern frontiers of Khorasan, meant to hold back the Oğuz and other Turkic peoples of the Asian steppes. Administratively it seems to have lain on the frontier between Khorasan and Gorgān, having been included by the geographers in either province.

In the 10th century the *rebātá* at Farāva (ascribed by some authorities to the governor of Khorasan ‘Abd-Allāh b. Ṭāher) was manned by a small but bellicose garrison of *morābeṭūn* (fighters for the faith), taking turns at spells of duty. The population was less than a thousand, though there was a mosque with a spring running through its center, which supplied drinking water; no market is mentioned, and the absence of agricultural lands at that time meant that grain had to be imported from Dehestān and Nasā. Later in the 10th century Farāva passed into the political control of the Ma’mūnid *k̄vārazmshahs* of Gorgānj, and in the early 11th century it became part of the expanding military empire of Maḥmūd of Ghazna (388-421/998-1030). As pressure from the Oğuz Turks increased, Mas’ūd b. Maḥmūd (421-32/1030-41) was forced, in 426/1035, to cede it to their Saljuq leaders Ṭoğrel, Čağrı, and Yabǵu. With the gradual Islamization of the Central Asian Turks, Farāva lost its *raison d’être* as a frontier bastion, however. By the 14th century, according to Ḥamd-Allāh Mostawfī, it was prosperous, with cultivation of cereals and



fruit (*Nozhat al-qolūb*, ed. Le Strange, I, p. 151; II, p. 150), but thereafter it faded from historical mention. The site is now marked by Kizyl-Arvat (Red Ribat; 39° N, 56° 23' E), a town that has sprung up in present-day Turkmenistan as a station on the Transcaspian Railway from Krasnovodsk to Marv and beyond.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

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