



## FERDOWS

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**FERDOWS**, *šahrestān* in Khorasan consisting of three administrative districts: the city of Ferdows and its immediate suburbs, Bošrūya and Sarāyān. It is located in southern Khorasan between the Kalāt mountains to the north and northeast and the Kavīr-e Namak and Dašt-e Lūt to the west and northwest. The climate in this part of Khorasan is one of the driest in the entire country; annual precipitation is only 66 mm (Ašraf, pp. 1-2). Irrigation by means of springs and *qanats* (underground aqueducts), supplemented since the years just preceding the Islamic Revolution in Persia (1357 Š./1979) by artesian wells, permits cultivation of cereals, sugarbeets, cotton, and saffron, as well as grapes, pistachios, and citrus fruits. The most important artisanal activity is carpet weaving (Parham, pp. 98-107).

According to the most recent estimates of the surface area (18,588 km<sup>2</sup>) and population (76,286) of the *šahrestān* (made in 1991 by the Urban Planning and Architecture Research Center of Iran, Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, November 1993) the population density (4.1 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup>) had almost doubled during the previous twenty-five years (Zanjanī, pp. 89-90).

The city of Ferdows was known as Tūn before the period of Reżā Shah (1304-20 Š./1925-41; Parham, p. 108). A ruined citadel in the center of town attests that it was founded at least as early as the 9th century, during the reign of the Saffarids in Sīstān (Parham, p. 114). In the Middle Ages Tūn and Qā'en were the principal urban centers of southern Kūhestān, leading Marco Polo to call it "the Tunocain kingdom" (Le Strange, pp. 352-53).



Because of its altitude (1,297 m) the city, though near the desert, has a fairly comfortable climate. On the other hand, the soil is mainly clay, and the well water is brackish (Parham, p. 109). The rapid growth of Ferdows under Reżā Shah and in the first decades of his son's reign (4.7 percent between the censuses of 1335 Š./1956 and 1365 Š./1986; Zanjānī, p. 202) was brought to an abrupt halt by the earthquake of 10 Šahrivar 1347 Š./1 September 1968. The city was completely leveled, and 3 percent of its population was killed. To add to these losses, a substantial segment of the surviving population moved to Eslāmīya, 5 km farther north near their lands and orchards, refusing the plan for reconstruction of the city proposed by the government (Parham, pp. 188-95). In 1370 Š./1991 the city of Ferdows had 18,512 inhabitants, Eslāmīya 4,965.

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