



The Quarterly Journal of  
*The History of Village and Rural Settlement in  
Iran and Islam*

Online Issn: 3060- 6012

Vol. 2, No. 4, Winter 2025



---

## Moshkuyeh: A Village that Grew, Became a City, But Died

Reza Nouri Shadmahani <sup>1\*</sup>

*1\**- Assistant professor, Department of Archaeology, University of Kashan, Kashan, Iran.  
[noonshad@kashanu.ac.ir](mailto:noonshad@kashanu.ac.ir)

---

### Article Info

**Article type:**  
**Research Article**

**Received:**  
**13/04/2025**  
**Accepted:**  
**03/06/2025**

### ABSTRACT

Until the excavation of 2008 Moshkuyeh was an important place in the historical resources; because most geographers had mentioned this village as a small settlement on Khorasan road. Tabari and Hosseini, historians of the 4th and 6th centuries AH, also referred to the wars that took place near this location. By calculating the distance between Moshkuyeh, Rey and Saveh, we understood, Moshkin Tepe is the same Moshkuyeh. But, the remains of the citadel, and evidence of the pottery industry, did not correspond to the village, that was reflected in texts. Therefore, we realized that it is not possible to get a deep understanding of this site, by analyzing the historical sources. For this purpose, an excavation was carried out to answer questions such as the reason for the quantitative and qualitative development of this settlement, the approach of pottery production on a household or specialized scale, the management method, and the target markets of the pottery workshops. The results, showed that the small village with an economy based on agriculture, had transformed into an industrial city for pottery production in the Seljuk era with state management (iqta'). The pottery products, not only met the needs of its inhabitants but also the needs of the Rey. The economic prosperity of this city did not last long; because it destroyed by the Mongol invasion, and workshops were ruined one after another. After the invasion, people had used architectural elements from the pottery kilns to strengthen the foundations of their homes.

**Keywords:** Moshkuyeh, ancient texts, Moshkin Tepe, archaeology, pottery.

---

DOI: 10.30479/hvri.2025.21907.1067



© The Author(s).

**Publisher:** Imam Khomeini International University

---

## **Introduction**

Until the excavation of 2008 Moshkuyeh was an important place in the historical resources; because most geographers had mentioned this village as a small settlement on Khorasan road. This prominence is primarily due to its position along the Khorasan road, where military movements and battles in its vicinity prompted historians such as Ṭabarī (1967) and Ḥosseini (1989) to reference the site. Additionally, geographers including Ibn Khurdādhbih (RoodgareKiyadara,1997), Qudāmah ibn Ja‘far (1991), Iṣṭakhrī (1989), Jeyhani (1991), Ibn Ḥawqal (1987), and Muqaddasī (1982) described Moshkuyeh as a village. However, Yāqūt al-Ḥamawī (1991), in his early 7th-century geographical dictionary *Mu‘jam al-Buldān*, refers to it as a township under the jurisdiction of Rey. But, the remains of the citadel, and evidence of the pottery industry, did not correspond to the village, that was reflected in texts. Therefore, we realized that it is not possible to get a deep understanding of this site, by analyzing the historical sources. For this purpose, an excavation was carried out to answer questions such as:

- 1.What factors prompted the transformation of the initial settlement into a modest town?
- 2.Does the pottery industry in this community reflect household-level production or evidence of craft specialization.
- 3.Were the potters operating independently, or under the direction of commissioned patrons, and where were their products marketed.

To address these questions, early textual sources were examined in detail but yielded no direct references to pottery production. Consequently, in 2008 archaeological excavations were initiated at Moshkīn Tepe.

## **Materials & Method**

Four trenches were selected for Excavation, each yielding significant evidence for ceramic production:

Trench 1: Within a domestic dwelling, 186 ceramics ‘nails’ were discovered embedded in the mud-brick foundation of one wall—suggesting reuse from kiln furniture.

Trench 2: Located at top of mound of ceramic waste, four burials were uncovered beneath, indicating the former presence of a cemetery. The excavation ceased here to focus on pottery manufacture.

Trench 3: Excavation revealed collapsed mud-brick walls overlaying a large glazed ceramic bowl and two pottery molds—likely the remains of a workshop destroyed, perhaps during the Mongol incursions.

Trench 4: Remains of a pottery kiln were unearthed, although heavily damaged. Comparative reconstruction with known kilns from other Iranian sites was possible.

### **Discussion**

As noted, none of the medieval geographers mentioned pottery production at Moshkuyeh. The archaeological findings, however, provide strong evidence of specialized and standardized ceramic manufacture. Ceramic ‘nails’—typically used as interior kiln supports—appear not only in the kiln locus but also were reused for domestic construction, likely by post-Mongol inhabitants reusing materials in rebuilding. The presence of multiple kilns prior to destruction suggests craft-based, non-domestic scale production.

In trench 2, the finding of graves beneath pottery debris confirms a bi-phasic occupation — an initial village phase and a later industrial township — rather than inappropriate reuse of gravesites. In trench 3, the discovery of glazed bowls, molds, clay reserves, misfired and broken ceramics, and clay cores in place of tripod supports strongly indicates workshop-scale output. Morphometric and technological analysis of materials from trench 3 reveals dominance of medium-sized fritware bowls with turquoise glaze — evidence of large-scale, standardized production.

### **Results and Conclusion**

Moshkuyeh began as a modest agricultural and orchard-based village. But the results of archaeological excavation, showed that the small village with an economy based on agriculture, had transformed into an industrial city for pottery production in the Seljuk era with state management (iqta'). The direct archaeological evidence — workshops, kiln remains, specialized ceramic waste, and standardized products — demonstrates how local inhabitants adapted to a challenging, semi-arid environment on the desert fringe by shifting to industrial production. The pottery products, not only met the needs of its inhabitants but also the needs of the Rey. The economic prosperity of this city did not last long; because it destroyed by the Mongol invasion, and

workshops were ruined one after another. After the invasion, people had used architectural elements from the pottery kilns to strengthen the foundations of their homes.

## References

### Persian Sources:

#### Books

- Abrahamian, Ervand (2008). *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. Translated by Ahmad Golmohammadi and Mohammad Ebrahim Fattahi. Thirteenth Edition. Tehran: Ney.
- Abu Ali Miskawayh Razi (2010). *The Experiences of Nations (Tajarib al-Umam)*. Translated and Annotated by Abolghasem Emami. Two Volumes, First Volume. Tehran: Soroush.
- Al-Idrisi, Sharif (1992). *The Book of Pleasant Journeys into Faraway Lands (Nuzhat al-Mushtaq fi Ikhtiraq al-Afaq)*. Edited by Fuat Sezgin. Frankfurt: Institute for the History of Arabic-Islamic Science.
- Ambraseys, N.N. and Melville, Charles P. (1991). *A History of Persian Earthquakes*. Translated by Abolhasan Radda. Tehran: Agah Publications.
- Azadikhah, Mohammad Ali, et al. (2017). *History of Education in Sirjan County*. Kerman: General Department of Education of Kerman Province.
- Baghdadi, Safi al-Din Abd al-Mu'min bin Abd al-Haqq (1955). *Observatories for Knowing the Names of Places and Locations (Marasid al-Ittila' ala Asma' al-Amkinah wa al-Biqā')*. Edited by Ali Muhammad al-Bajawi. Part Three. Beirut: Dar Ihya al-Kutub al-Arabiya.
- Estakhri, Abu Ishaq Ibrahim (1989). *The Routes and Realms (Al-Masalik wa al-Mamalik)*. Edited by Iraj Afshar. Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications.
- Hosseini, Sadr al-Din Abolhasan Ali bin Naser (1989). *The Cream of Histories: News of the Seljuk Commanders and Kings (Zubdat al-Tawarikh: Akhbar al-Umara wa al-Muluk al-Saljuqiyya)*. Translated by Ramadanali Ruhollahi. Tehran: Il-e Shahsavan Baghdadi.
- Ibn Hawqal (1987). *The Travel Book of Ibn Hawqal*. Translated and Explained by Jafar Shoar. Tehran: Amir Kabir.
- Ibn Rusta (2001). *The Precious Book of Connections (Al-A'laq al-Nafisa)*. Translated by Hossein Qarachanlu. Tehran: Amir Kabir.

- Jayhani, Abu al-Qasim ibn Ahmad (1989). *Forms of the World (Ashkal al-'Alam)*. Translated by Ali bin Abd al-Salam Katib. Introduction and Notes by Pirouz Mansouri. Mashhad: Astan Quds Razavi.
- Kashani, Abu al-Qasim Abdallah ibn Ali (2007). *Brides of Jewels and Rare Excellences ('Ara'is al-Jawahir wa Nafa'is al-Atayib)*. Edited by Iraj Afshar. Tehran: Al-Ma'i.
- Lambton, Ann (2003). *Continuity and Change in Medieval Persia*. Translated by Ya'qub Azhand. Tehran: Nashr-e Ney.
- Muqaddasi, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ahmad (1982). *The Best Divisions for Knowledge of the Regions (Ahsan al-Taqa'im fi Ma'rifat al-Aqalim)*. Translated by Alinaqi Monzavi. Tehran: Authors and Translators of Iran.
- Qudama ibn Ja'far (1991). *The Land Tax (Al-Kharaj)*. Translated by Hossein Qarachanlu. Tehran: Alborz.
- Rodgar Kiadara, Iraj (1997). *A Review of the History of Post in Iran*. Tehran: Neggin.
- Sarzanash Geographic Organization of the Armed Forces (2011). *Atlas Guide of the Provinces of Iran*. Tehran: Geographic Organization of the Armed Forces.
- Tabari, Muhammad ibn Jarir (1967). *The History of the Prophets and Kings (Tarikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk)*. Edited by Muhammad Abu al-Fadl Ibrahim. Beirut: Dar al-Turath.
- Yaqut al-Hamawi (1991). *Dictionary of Countries (Mu'jam al-Buldan)*. Beirut: Dar Sader.

**Articles:**

- Emami, Abolghasem (1994). "Abu Ali Miskawayh." *The Great Islamic Encyclopedia*. Volume 6. Tehran: Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia, pp. 56-62.
- Khatibi, Abolfazl (2001). "Inanj." *The Great Islamic Encyclopedia*. Volume 10. Tehran: Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia, pp. 417-418.
- Mokhtari Taleghani, Eskandar (1997). "Statistical Analysis of Archaeological Surveys in the Saveh Region." In *Memorial Volume of the Susa Archaeological Conference*. Tehran: Cultural Heritage Organization of Iran, pp. 353-393.
- Nouri Shadmahani, Reza (2017). "The Newly Found City of Miskawayh: From Text Reading to Contextual Fields." In the *Conference of Historical Geography*. Tehran: Institute of Islamic History, pp. 673-690.

- Nouri Shadmahani, Reza (2010). Explaining the Position of Miskawayh (Moshkin Tepe) in Iranian Pottery Industry Before the Mongols. University of Tehran, Faculty of Literature and Humanities, Department of Archaeology, Unpublished.
- Nouri Shadmahani, Reza (2019). "Explaining the Structure, Function, and Chronology of the Miskawayh (Moshkin Tepe) Pottery Kiln." *Archaeological Studies*. Volume 11, No. 2, Autumn and Winter, pp. 261-271.
- Reza, Enayatollah (1989). "Ibn Khordadbeh." *The Great Islamic Encyclopedia*. Volume 3. Tehran: Center for the Great Islamic Encyclopedia, pp. 409-415.
- Salehi Kakheki, Ahmad, et al. (2013). "Investigating the Production Process of Blue and White Pottery in Iran During Different Islamic Periods." *Bi-annual Journal of Art Research*. Year 3, No. 5, pp. 1-13.

#### **Archaeological Report**

- Nemati, Mohammad Reza (2007). Report on Test Excavation and Determination of the Boundary of the Ancient Site of Moshkin Tepe, Zarandieh County, Parandak City. Tehran: Archaeological Research Institute, Unpublished.

#### Latin Sources:

##### **Books**

- Alchian, A., & W. Allen (1969), *Exchange and Production Theory in Use*, Wadsworth Publishing, Belmont, California.
- Mason, Robert (2004), *Shine Like the Sun: Luster Painted Associated Pottery from the Medieval Middle East*, Ontario: Mazda Publishers.
- Treptow, Tania (2007), *Daily Life Ornamented: The Medieval Persian City of Rey*, Chicago: The Oriental Institute Museum of the University of Chicago.

##### **Articles**

- Clark, J. E., & W. J. Parry (1991), "Craft Specialization and Cultural Complexity", *Research in Economic Anthropology*, 12: 289-346.
- Costin, C. L. (1991), "Craft Specialization: Issues in Defining, Documenting and Explaining the Organization of Production", in *An Archaeological Method and Theory*, ed. M. B. Schiffer, University of Arizona Press, Tucson, Vol. 3: 1-56.
- Elbabour, M. (1980), "An Alternative Approach to Medieval Islamic Urbanism", in *Systems of Cities: An Alternative Approach to Middle*

*Eastern Urbanism*, Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, Louisville, Kentucky, pp. 1-26.

- Kotsonas, Antonis (2014), "Standardization, Variation, and the Study of Ceramics in the Mediterranean and Beyond", in *Understanding Standardization and Variation in Mediterranean Ceramics*, ed. Antonis Kotsonas, Paris: Peeters, pp. 7-24.
- Okhravi, R., & Morteza Djamali (2003), "The Missing Ancient Lake of Saveh: A Historical Review", *Iranica Antiqua*, Vol. XXXII: 327-344.
- Soustiel, L., & J. Allan (1995), "The Problem of Seljuk Monochrome Wares", *Islamic Art in the Ashmolean Museum*, Part Two, Berlin: Oxford University Press, pp. 85–116.
- Tosi, M. (1984), "The Notion of Craft Specialization and its Representation in the Archaeological Record of Early States in the Turanian Basin", in *Marxist Perspectives in Archaeology*, ed. M. Spriggs, Cambridge University Press, pp. 22-52.