



**Recognition of the Great Khorasan Road in the North of Markazi Province**  
Majid Montazer Zohouri &<sup>1</sup> Esmail Sharahi<sup>2</sup>  
(233-260)

**Abstract**

Undoubtedly, the Great Khorasan Road, known as the Silk Road, has been one of the most important trade routes during the historical periods of Iran. In a comprehensive perspective this route would link China to the Mediterranean coast and would pass through the Great Khorasan throughout cultural Iran and many other neighboring areas. In addition to the commercial function and economic and subsistence impacts of people from different regions, the Great Khorasan Road had profound social impacts on human societies of different eras because of the interaction of cultures. Meanwhile, Markazi province and especially the northern part of the province, has an important role in the current borders of the two counties of Saveh and Zarandieh, from pre-Islamic period to its decline in the Safavid period. Therefore, in the present research, using historical and geographical texts, archeological surveys and excavations, we attempt to determine the direction of this ancient road as well as the important cities, buildings and houses along this road and explain the why and how of the ancient communication routs and the historical existence of this ancient road in this area. The most important achievement was explaining how and why and the geographical and historical perspective of this ancient road based on the correspondence of the location of the identified ancient sites with the location of the stations mentioned in the historical sources and texts and the relative drawing of the Khorasan road in the north of Markazi province, in the meantime, Saveh and Moshkuyeh, as two important stations - which have been repeatedly addressed in the texts and valuable archaeological evidence that shows their high status and credibility - have been explored along the road to Khorasan and monuments related to this ancient route were counted.

**Keywords:** Great Khorasan Road, Saveh, Moshkuyeh, Caravanserai, Islamic period

Received: 6, August, 2019; Accepted: 11, March, 2022

doi  
10.22059/jarcs.2020.286724.142763  
Online ISSN: 2251-9297 Print ISSN: 2676-4288-  
<https://jarcs.ut.ac.ir>

1. Corresponding Author Email: majidzohouri@ut.ac.ir

Assistant Professor Department of Archaeology, University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran.

2. M.A. Archeology, General Directorate of Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism of Markazi Province, Arak, Iran.

**1. Introduction**

The Khorasan Road is a large part of a highway which is known today as the Silk Road (Thubron, 2009: 3). As a significant part of the main Silk Road passed through the Great Khorasan, from Qumes to the other side of Jeyhun, it had been rightfully noted as the great road of Khorasan within the Islamic geography sources, and it appears to have had historical roots. This road consisted of a series of commercial routes. In fact, it can be said that it was mostly a network of trade routes. Along the Great Khorasan Road from East to West Asia, caravans passed through several cities within the borders of ancient cultural Iran. These cities included Merv, Balkh, Samarkhand, Bukhara, Herat, Neishabour, Damghan, Semnan, Ray, Qazvin, Saveh, Sarab, Marand, Khooy, Hamedan, Ctesiphon and Antioch, along with many other cities that were on this road. Prior to archaeological surveys, our knowledge of the Great Khorasan Road and its significance and also of the stations along its route was limited to the historical sources and texts, references to geographers, itineraries and historians. Nowadays, with an initial knowledge that has been obtained through geographical sources, steps towards a more complete and comprehensive study of Khorasan and its stations have been taken by examination of the findings from the archaeological survey. It should be noted that the role of archaeological studies and surveys in gaining an understanding of this commercial and historical route is currently of great importance and can complement our information.

Undoubtedly, the Great Khorasan Road has been one of the most important trade routes during the historical periods of Iran. In a comprehensive perspective this route would link China to the Mediterranean coast and would pass through the Great Khorasan throughout cultural Iran and many other neighboring areas. In addition to the commercial function and economic and subsistence impacts of people from different regions, the Great Khorasan Road had profound social impacts on human societies of different eras because of the interaction of cultures. Meanwhile, Markazi province and especially the northern part of the province, has an important role in the current borders of the two counties of Saveh and Zarandieh, from pre-Islamic period to its decline in the Safavid period. Therefore, in the present research, using historical and geographical texts, archeological surveys and excavations, we attempt to determine the direction of this ancient road as well as the important cities, buildings and houses along this road and explain the why and how of the ancient communication routs and the historical existence of this ancient road in this area. In the northern part of Markazi province in the region of Saveh and Zarandieh counties, Saveh and Moshkuyeh were considered as two big cities in the middle of the Great Khorasan Road from east to west, that in previous decades we have known about their importance on the great Khorasan road and the distance from Rey to Hamedan, with the help of useful contents of travel writers, geographers, and historians of the Islamic period (Moghaddasi, 1982: 575; Istakhri, A. 1994: 201). According to the historical texts of the first centuries of the Islamic period (or early Islamic period), the city of Saveh had a special place in the middle of Khorasan road for traders and travelers. By mentioning the distances, stages and amount of miles between the two stations, these writings provide the possibility of more detailed study of the stations and their relative boundaries and location in regard to Saveh city. It allows archaeologists to identify these sites better by the remnants of the archeological sites with an initial understanding. Some of these sources also provide detailed information on the landscape of the area and provide more information, allowing a more reliable and accurate study of the location of some stations. A detailed review of texts, along with archaeological surveys and comparative evaluation and reading of these two components, provided us with documentary and convincing evidence. The first achievement of this research was the recognition and historical confirmation and accuracy of the existence of the great

Khorasan Road in this area in the pre-Islam centuries and its prosperity in the region at least until the Ilkhanid period. The second was explaining how and why and the geographical and historical perspective of this ancient road based on the correspondence of the location of the identified ancient sites with the location of the stations mentioned in the historical sources and texts and the relative drawing of the Khorasan road in the north of Markazi province, in the meantime, Saveh and Moshkuyeh, as two important stations- which have been repeatedly addressed in the texts and valuable archaeological evidence that shows their high status and credibility - have been explored along the road to Khorasan and monuments related to this ancient route were counted. Recognition of remnants and historical monuments leftover from this important route such as Karvansara (inns), Mills (towers), Chapar Khaneh (postal service system), and archeological sites is the most important part of the archaeological surveys and activities (Kleiss, 1984; Sharahi, 2007) (Fig. 1-9). Now, with the information obtained based on historical and geographical sources and texts, and archaeological field studies, it is possible to draw the length of the Khorasan Road and the relative locations of the stations and Karavansaras located on this road and provided an overview of how and what it is from a geographical and historical point of view. It is also possible to provide a better understanding and more complete and comprehensive study of this and other routes that have affected the Markazi province and Saveh region economically, socially, and politically from prehistoric to the late Islamic period.