

## نقش زمین‌لرزه و رویدادهای تاریخی در ویرانی شهر شادیاخ

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## The Role of Earthquake and the Historical Events in Devastation of the City of Shadyakh

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### چکیده

شادیاخ که همواره یادآور مرکز فرماندهی شهر نیشابور بوده است، رویدادهای گوناگونی نظیر جنگ، زلزله و دیگر بلایای طبیعی را تحمل کرده است. آنچه که کاوشهای باستان‌شناسی اخیر نمایان کرده است، جایگاه درخشان علمی، فرهنگی و سیاسی این شهر بین قرن ۹ تا ۱۲ می‌باشد، که قریب به یقین تا سال ۱۲۰۵ میلادی ادامه داشته است. با این وجود، در اثر رویدادی غیر مترقبه شهر به طور کامل ویران شد. تاریخچه رویدادهای ویرانگر و نیز مدارک باستان‌شناسی که اخیراً به دست آمده دلالت بر آن دارد که نابودی شادیاخ نتیجه هجوم اقوام مغول بوده است.

**کلید واژه‌ها:** شادیاخ، نیشابور، زمین‌لرزه

### Abstract

Shadyakh, commonly deemed as the headquarters of Neishabour City, has so far endured such various events as war, earthquake, and other natural disasters. What has been revealed through recent archeological excavations convincingly depicts a brilliant scientific, cultural, and political manifestation of this city in a glorious epoch between 9th to 12th centuries, which must have continued till 1205. Notwithstanding, owing to an unanticipated occurrence, the city was thoroughly devastated. The history of devastating events along with archeological evidence discovered recently indicates that the annihilation of Shadyakh has been an upshot of Genghis Khan's holocaust.

**Keywords:** Shadyakh, Neishabour, Earthquake.

### 1. Introduction

Shadyakh used to be a garden nearly adjacent to Neishabour City whose ruins are now resorts for Iranian Cultural Inheritance investigators as well as illegal excavators. Even though treasure-seeking people have turned Neishabour's remaining ruins upside down time and again, it turns out that Shadyakh has so far been impervious to such damages. The recent investigation carried out by Iranian Cultural Inheritance Organization in the region of Shadyakh has shed some light on what occurred before in this ancient

area. During the exploration, in addition to abundant historical discoveries, a number of disorganized skeletons jumbled in the rooms and corridors have been witnessed. The peculiar condition of skeletons signifies that the people were killed while escaping, falling from upstairs, or being hit on the head by some objects. This evidence alongside other existing clues might be a sign of a sudden catastrophe in this historical city.

In this article, it has been attempted to specify the actual



reason for devastation of Shadyakh City by reference to recent unearthing of Shadyakh and the analogy of this evidence with such disasters as earthquake as well as Genghis Khan's invasion.

## 2. Geographical Position of Shadyakh

The historical area of Shadyakh is located 3 kilometers away to the south of Neishabour in northeastern Iran, with the longitude of 58.48 E and the latitude of 36.12 N (Fig. 1). The city of Shadyakh underwent scores of various historical events, and today only some ruins of the city have remained. The recent excavations by the Iranian Cultural Inheritance Organization have led to the discovery of some undetected parts of the buried city (Fig. 2).

## 3. History of Shadyakh

By the early 9th century, Shadyakh used to be a garden in the western side of ancient Neishabour. In 806 A.D., Abdulla ibn Taher declared Neishabour his capital city, and due to the request of residents of Neishabour, mobilized his forces from the city to this garden, and ordered the construction of a residence for the settlement of his troops as well as an edifice for himself (Moayed Sabeti, 1355). Afterward, Shadyakh was renowned as the headquarters of Neishabour, and was of high briskness and credibility by the early 12th Century.

## 4. Architecture in Shadyakh

The latest archeological excavations by Iran's Organization of Cultural Inheritance have exposed a striking perspective of the buried city of Shadyakh. This locality has enjoyed highly harmonious and consolidated architectural structures, and the architectural ornaments along with other objects found indicate the glory and magnificence of this city. During the exploration in the city, some architectural works related to government mansions together with their decorations have so far been detected. These architectural remnants incorporate auditoriums, chambers, corridors, precincts, wells, furnaces, and gates. The elaborate and dazzling plasterwork, the tile work, as well as the eye-catching drawings on the plasters in the auditoriums and chambers are all clear indications of an aristocratic lifestyle in this ancient city. On the other hand, in all the layers unearthed in the city, potteries and metal vessels, including jars, jogs, bowls, dishes and toys, dating back to 9th to 12th centuries have been discovered. The potteries have all been enameled and colored in green, brown, turquoise, and black

with patterns resembling inscriptions. The enameled vessels have likewise been embellished with images of humans and plants (Fig. 3) ([http://iranmiras.ir/Arch\\_report/shadiakh/](http://iranmiras.ir/Arch_report/shadiakh/)). Among these objects is one metal pot on which the date «604 A.H.» (1205 A.D.) has been engraved ([www.iranmania.com](http://www.iranmania.com)), which indicates that this glorious era continued by the year 1205 A.D.

## 5. The Skeletons Discovered in Shadyakh

During the recent explorations in the area of Shadyakh, besides the extensive variety of ancient works, several human skeletons have been discovered as well. These skeletons have been jumbled in the rooms and corridors (Fig. 4). The archeological works, the peculiar qualities of the skeletons, together with the existence of some fractures in the skulls display that an unexpected and perplexing event destroyed this ruling center. The way the limbs were separated, the skulls were fractured, and the skeletons were jumbled, as well as the recent discovery of the remains of burned woodwinds and the extensive burning evidence and also the discovery of metal weapons near the skeletons all signify the occurrence of an event beyond earthquake. The remnants of the skeletons, indisputably, belong to people who were killed while escaping, falling from upstairs, or being hit on the head by some objects. Undoubtedly, Genghis Khan's troops completely destroyed Shadyakh after killing all people off and looting precious jewelry. Of course, it appears logical that, before the Mongols invasion, people had hidden most of their precious things under the ground, which have lately been discovered. However little valuable jewelry is witnessed in the ruins of Shadyakh. It ought to be noted that Shadyakh was a ruling center at the time with an aristocratic style of living. It appears that most valuable object, were looted prior to the destruction of building. Furthermore, the existence of skeletons in their original locations can signify that, subsequent to the death of people as well as destruction of the buildings, no rubble was removed in the area (<http://www.iran-newspaper.com/1384/840130/html/iran.htm>).

## 6. The Role of Earthquake in Devastation of Shadyakh

On the whole, the precise date of the earthquakes between the years 1200 to 1280 A.D. in the region of Neishabour is a highly controversial issue. Moreover, there is no archeological evidence to support the occurrence of any earthquakes in this era. Yet, taking all controversies into account, Ambraseys and Melville, 1977; Melville, 1980;

Ambraseys and Melville, 1982 contend that a disastrous earthquake in 1270 A.D. damaged Neishabour.

Even though the discovery of ruins in Shadyakh and the jumbled skeletons on the floors and corridors have made many archeologists assume that the city was ruined by an earthquake in 1270 ([http://iranmiras.ir/fr\\_site/newsf/82801.htm](http://iranmiras.ir/fr_site/newsf/82801.htm)), the archeological evidence, such as the situation of skeletons, the way the walls have collapsed and the position of objects on the floors are incompatible with the form of destruction normally induced by an earthquake. Accordingly, it is likely that Shadyakh had been wiped out from the history of the world years before the 1270 earthquake.

### 7. The Evidence Showing the Maintenance of Aristocratic Life Prior to the Devastation of Shadyakh

In recent excavations carried out in the southern gate of Shadyakh, the remnants of a complete architectural plan pertaining to Seljukian era have been unearthed. This architectural unit includes parts of a grand mansion enjoying protruding plaster paintings, an industrial workshop, a grape-squeezing workshop, a reception hall, a stable, and the accessories of an aristocratic architecture (Fig. 5). In this area, a part of a bathroom with painted walls has been discovered to which water was supplied through baked clay canals (<http://www.kayhannews.ir/830203/other11.htm#other1112>).

In addition, in the cross-shaped, four-porch hall, there are splendid plasterwork and ornaments. In this hall, on one inscription, the word «Al-Molk», which means «belonging to the king» has been inscribed twice with Kufic script (<http://www.iran-newspaper.com/1384/840130/html/iran.htm>). This architectural collection or aristocratic palace where the most striking artistic and architectural manifestations of Iran can be witnessed can't be the result of reconstruction by afflicted people living on the ruins of Shadyakh after the brutal onslaught of the Mongols.

### 8. Mongol Onslaught on Neishabour

In 1219 A.D., Togha Jar Nobin, Genghis Khan's son-in-law, was killed due to his serious injuries while plundering and looting Neishabour. After learning of this event, Genghis Khan ordered his son, Tolikhan, to totally ruin Neishabour and Shadyakh, and exterminate all the residents of the city. Therefore, the Mongols murderous and savage troops invaded the city and massacred the people and then flattened fences,

palaces and houses and flowed water over it for seven days in a row. Afterward, they planted barley over the ruins and remained there until it started to grow (Esfezari, Moein al Din, 1959). After the Mongols invasion, the city of Neishabour and the surrounding villages were deserted for years.

Near the end of the reign of Mongols, Ghazan Khan (1295—1304) and his Iranian vizir, Rashid ad Din, promoted the economic conditions by increasing security, reducing taxes, reconstructing and improving irrigation systems, and inspiring farmers and artisans to start to work (<http://www.parstimes.com/history/historicalsetting.html#Mongols>). Besides, since the city of Neishabour had entirely been destroyed, the new city was built in the northwest of the old city. The improvement of economic conditions paved the way for the emergence of novel artistic styles in painting and architecture in Iran. Nevertheless, the old Neishabour, which was a prominent Islamic center with so many outstanding and distinguished figures, was devastated and couldn't ever resume its original status (Esfezari, Moein al Din, 1959). It was undoubtedly impossible to rebuild Shadyakh having been damaged by the Mongols again with an aristocratic architecture. In other words, when the earthquake occurred in 1270 A.D., Shadyakh had been deserted and had lost its living potentials.

Considering the discovery of a metal bowl in Shadyakh on which the year 604 A.H. (1205 A.D.) was inscribed, this city had undoubtedly enjoyed a glorious period by 1205 A.D. Afterwards, the leading event resulting in total destruction of the city of Shadyakh was Mongol assault. After the Mongol invasion till 1258, due to the fall of the central government as well as the predominance of primitive tribes, Iranian people underwent a catastrophic era (<http://www.parstimes.com/history/Historicalsetting.html#Mongols>). Moreover, after the Mongol invasion, Neishabour was deserted for years, and there were no agricultural activities. In such a disrupted economic situation and lack of security, it was really unlikely to reconstruct Shadyakh with the architectural features similar to the ones in the newly discovered city. Also, the condition of discovered skeletons, the fractures on the skulls, together with the nonexistence of any expensive objects indicate that this aristocratic region was destroyed in a bloody battle and all its valuable objects were plundered. After the plunder, the houses were reduced to rubble and have not been uncovered until recently. Consequently, the ruins of Shadyakh can be an indication of holocaust perpetrated by Genghis Khan's forces.

### 9. Conclusion

The recent archeological explorations in Shadyakh indicate that the magnificent era in this aristocratic region was brought to an end owing to an unexpected incident. Considering the existence of a bowl with the date 604 A.H. (1205 A.D.) inscribed on it, the city had survived till 1205 A.D. However, the momentous event following this time bringing about the total destruction of Neishabour and Shadyakh was definitely the invasion of Mongol's bloodthirsty troops.

During this attack, after massacring the residents of this region, the fences, palaces, as well as the houses in this city were destroyed. Then, following Genghis Khan order, the soldiers thoroughly flattened the city in a way that no track of the city remained. Therefore, the remnants of the buried city of Shadyakh are the last and the only sign of this city, which is a reminder of Mongol troops invasion.

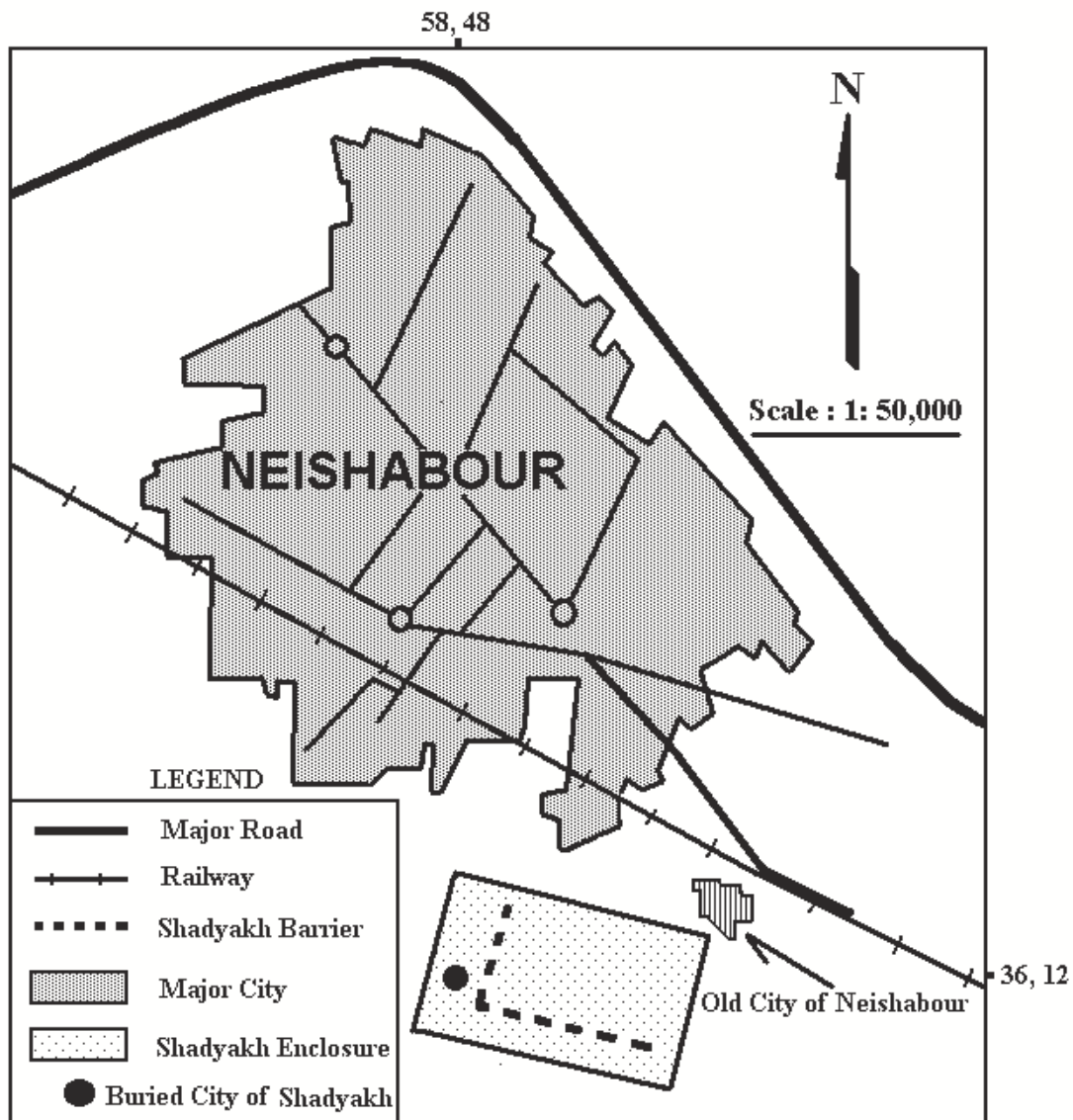


Fig. 1- Map of the geographical position of Shadyakh.



Fig. 2- A view of the buried city of Shadyakh discovered during the recent explorations.  
([http://iranmiras.ir/Arch\\_report/shadiakh/](http://iranmiras.ir/Arch_report/shadiakh/))



Fig. 3- An earthenware inscription with images of humans and animals unearthed in the ruins of Shadyakh  
([http://iranmiras.ir/Arch\\_report/shadiakh/](http://iranmiras.ir/Arch_report/shadiakh/))

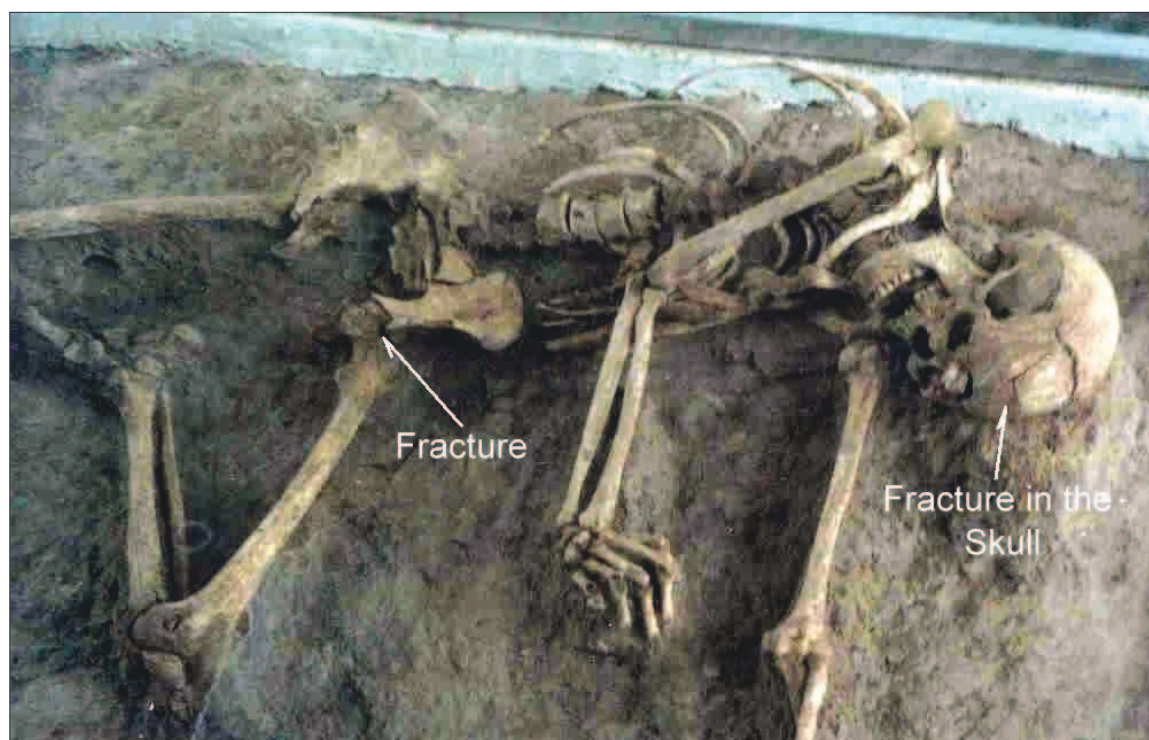
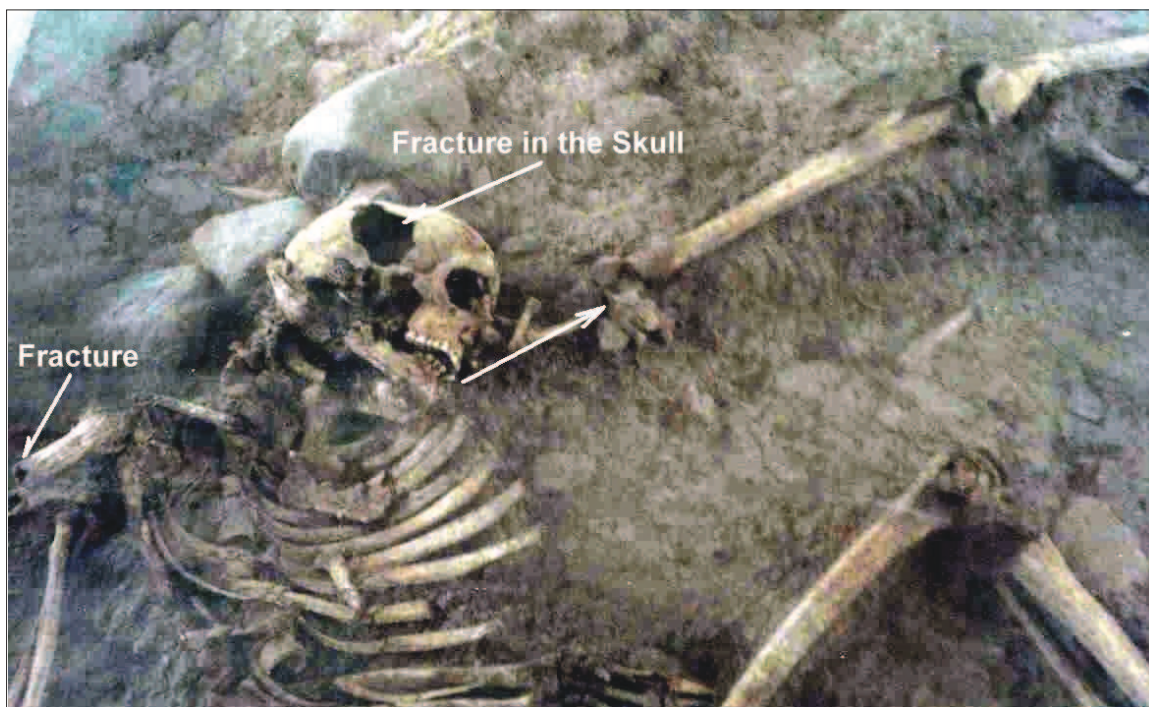


Fig. 4- Abnormal position of skeletons in rooms and corridors of the buried city of Shadyakh.



Fig. 5- The plasterwork found in the southern gate of Shadyakh.  
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