



# Pathology of the Art of Mesgari in Kerman Bazaar

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**Abstract:** *Kerman Mesgari is the most prominent art industry that has deep roots in the culture and history of this land; and has a wide range of diversities. Mesgari bazaar in Kerman was an important element in the production and meeting the needs of people's lives in the past; but due to different reasons, it has changed in different periods. Today, a few number of people are actively working in this field while the number of them is decreasing day by day because hard work, insufficient income and tolerance of hardship relating to this kind of art has been forced them to work less or leave their work; however, there are some people among them who are still working with love and continuous effort. In this regard, a research has been done studying this art from a pathological point of view, the challenges that coppersmiths are facing with, the determination of current needs for further developing of this art as well as recognizing elder artists in this field and presenting some solutions for solving these problems.*

**Keywords:** *Mesgari, Kerman Mesgari, Kerman Bazaar, Copper, Handicrafts.*

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to evaluate and understand the status of Mesgari, its position in the market in Kerman, its problems and current limitations as well as its future prospects. Also, according to the role of Mesgari in promoting and enriching the local culture and creating employment, qualitative and quantitative ways are provided to develop the industry in bazaar in Kerman. Recognizing alive elder artists who are about 80 years old and whose number reaches no more than 10 persons is also dealt with. In a qualitative study of the status of Mesgari among people doing it, applying improper production methods by artists due to the high price of raw materials and insufficient income in order to facilitate the work was also determined. Therefore, productions, due to non-traditional methods, have gotten ignoble and disproportionate nature of these common forms of art so that the continuity of this trend may cause a decline in the quality and quantity of this art.

This research is studied in 18 months by applying field methods (questionnaire, interview and observation). The results are available in the form of documentaries (film and writing).

### **Different periods of Mesgari in Kerman**

According to existing evidence, Mesgari dates back to 7000 B.C. A period when people were considered as the first metalworkers; and copper, as a discovered metal by man, was recorded in the history of human civilization. After realizing some defects in the metal, man sought dispelling them by combining the metal with tin. This artifact was the origin of metalworking in Iran's copper products. In this regard, Kerman Province was considered the main center of copper productions; particularly, copper dishes due to the location of large copper mines in Sarcheshmeh, Bardsir, Shahre-e Babak counties and many other local mines around Kerman from past to present. Mesgari has embraced its special construction methods and design features in

any period as well as enjoying some ups and downs according to the period of time (Ehsani, 2007, 6) (Table 1 & Figure 1).

**Table 1:** Mesgari historical periods in Kerman (Writer, 2015)

Period	Characteristics and evolution of Mesgari
Copper	Hammering copper without melting
5000 years B.C	Development of techniques of the last period and gaining mastery in smelting copper and making objects
3000 years B.C	Development of techniques of the last period and gaining mastery in smelting copper and making objects
2000 years B.C	Development of techniques of the last period and gaining mastery in smelting copper and introducing casting techniques
1500 years B.C	Development of techniques of the last period and the art industry of Mesgari and introducing casting techniques
Ancient era	Development of techniques of the last period and the art industry of Mesgari
Achaemenian	Development of metalworking, casting, cold hammering, soldering and riveting, tendency to realism with high accuracy
Safavid	Development of techniques of the last period, making innovative approaches and the era of metalworking enrichment and golden era of art
Qajar	falling of the art industry of Mesgari
Afshari, Zandi	The methods of earlier eras like Qajar era
Pahlavi	Uniformity and the mere imitation of Seljuk and Safavid styles since early Pahlavi era to the 60s and mostly for selling in the market
Contemporary	Routine and uniform styles like previous era until 60s, since then loss of its prosperity
2015	Rare handmade containers, machine-made containers in abundance



**Image 3:** Plate 3000 B.C, National Museum of Iran (the report of eight chapters of exploration in Shahdad, 2006, 18)



**Image 2:** Plate 3000 B.C, National Museum of Iran (the report of eight chapters of exploration in Shahdad, 2006, 18)



**Image 1:** Flag 5000 years B.C, National Museum of Iran (the report of eight chapters of exploration in Shahdad, 2006, 18)



**Image 6:** Basin 3000 B.C, Kerman Harandi Garden Museum (Writer, 2015)



**Image 5:** Tass (bath bowl), Safavi, Saeid Godarzi personal collection (Writer, 2015)



**Image 4:** Plate, Pahlavi, Saeid Godarzi personal collection (Writer, 2015)



Image 9: Factory-made Teapot, made in 2015, Kerman Bazaar (Writer, 2015)



Image 8: Machine-made Tray, made in 2015, Kerman Bazaar (Writer, 2015)



Image 7: Machine-made Dish, made in 2015, Kerman Bazaar (Writer, 2015)

**Figure 1:** Historical Backgrounds of Kerman City

### Mesgari Bazaar of Kerman

Kerman bazaar is one of the large historical beautiful bazaars in Iran and in the Middle East. Different factors have made this bazaar into a business and Islamic – Eastern lifestyle environment such as architecture style, the form of shops, the large number of Timchehs, caravanserais, corridors, rows and variety of professions and skills as well as the large number of historical schools and mosques. Throughout the history, this bazaar has been considered by businessmen and tourists from all over the world. Ganjali Khan Complex was built over old shops and houses of the city, between the old city and the modern region of the city, in 11<sup>th</sup> century (Pourahmad, 1997, 159). Ganjali Khan Complex and Kerman bazaar starts from Arg square and ends in Moshtaghieh square. Every part of bazaar was built at the time of one of the rulers and due to its special features: it is a unique place in Iran and has global reputation. This bazaar is the longest row of bazaar in Iran. Mesgari bazaar includes the west Mesgari bazaar and the east Mesgari bazaar. Ganjali Khan Chaharsoogh and Mesgari Chaharsoogh are located in the south and in the north of the west Mesgari bazaar, respectively. The northern Mesgari bazaar is located in the north of Ghanjali Khan square and Chaharsoogh Mesgari is located in the west side of it.

Today, by recognizing copper potential such as high electrical and thermal conductivity, high pressure resistance, strength and other properties, copper, whether pure or gross copper (brass- nickel-bronze), has a lot of industrial applications. In the current era, Mesgari has gotten specific characteristics and the trend of rapid industrialization in Iran in recent decades has a huge impact on this profession. The impact of industrialization is represented mostly first on production methods and ultimately on design ideas. Mesgari has a high status in Kerman for many years and it is one of the well-known handicraft products in Kerman Province. Today, by the advent of technology and new sciences, Kerman Mesgari has lost its right status to a large extent and is forgotten in some cases. Samples of Mesgari productions until 60s indicate the activity which was running in the profession. At that time, the voice of hammers beating on copper dishes by calloused hands of Kerman artists was heard in the crowded Mesgari bazaar which attracted the notice of every passenger. In 1350, the number of coppersmith shops reached from 75 to 95 shops which were occupied by Mesgari artists, located in bazaar and in Ghanjali Khan square. Until 60s, Kerman Mesgari bazaar was a unique bazaar throughout the country which was well-known for its coppersmiths and Mesgari artifacts. After those years, other shops changed into shops retailing copper, nickel, gold, etc. but due to some reasons, which would be mentioned later, the activity declines in this area. This kind of art is among original and native arts of this region and the remaining works of art show the originality and magnificence of this art. The study of the remaining forms, designs and patterns as well as the existing equipment simply indicates the elegance of the art and the tact of artists (interview with Saeid Godarzi, Spring 1394).

Today, those indigenous and original forms are going to be forgotten and their restoration is necessary because these days, making hand-made goods is a symbol of every country's culture and civilization. It is, not

only in third world countries but also in developed countries, greatly considered. Countries which are cradle of handicrafts, in particular, are trying to help developing the export of handicrafts, as one of the important export items, by adopting supportive measures and incentive policies.

### **A summary about Mesgari in Kerman**

As mentioned, Mesgari has been a prominent and well-known art in Kerman region since old years and Mesgari works of art has been used in home decorations and other sections of daily life.

Mesgari, as a kind of art, makes magnificent works of art by using copper sheets, hammer and other different tools. Copper dishes which were used by some families are destroying in warehouses. But today, by selling the majority of old Mesgari works of art to second hand dealers or copper companies, they would be turn into copper sheets after melting. However, some very beautiful works of art are survived.

Kerman coppersmiths are very skillful in making coppers goods since old times and they have made unique productions such as bowls, saucepans, trays, jewelries, chandeliers, candlesticks, etc. for daily consumption of households over the years. In the past, the process of their work was as follows, the fire workers, after melting copper stone or copper metal, poured melted copper into round molds or "Richeh". After cooling, copper was detached from molds before being heated repeatedly to be spread as much as the desired size. Today, this method is completely terminated and copper sheets are made in different thicknesses by Shahid Bahonar Copper Industries Company and are sold to consumers (interview with Naghmeh Resa, Summer 1394).

Mesgari is done by three groups, surface construction workers, coppersmiths and casters. Surface construction workers make dishes requires low-level of working such as bowl, plate, spoon, tray, etc. which are made by a copper sheet without using furnaces. Coppersmiths, after providing copper sheet, by considering the type of work while using specific tools and different hammers and anvils related to the type of work, start beating on copper sheet as much as to turn the copper sheet into the desired object. Coppersmiths make complex dishes, as well as constructing surfaces, such as saucepan, tankard tub and etc. which requires hammer, anvil and furnaces. For making dishes such as saucepan made by two pieces or tankard tub made by 13 pieces, pieces are first cut and made into the desired form by hammers. After that, two pieces are jagged by machine and attached together. Then, they are silver soldered and beaten by hammers as much as they become smooth and even. Sometimes, for forming copper dishes, furnaces are required. Copper sheets resist changing their forms while coppersmiths are hammering; in this stage, coppersmith uses furnaces to heat the sheet before starting hammering once again. Finally, they started decorating the edges of the dishes by lining machine and attaching handle and other parts by using copper drills and nails (Table 2).

Besides Mesgari, additional professions such as casting and bleaching are working. In copper casting, after melting copper, it is poured in specific molds to be used after cooling. The mold can be a statue, a handle of a pot or other equipments for copper utensils.

If needed, copper utensils are given to "Saffar", people doing bleaching, to spread a layer of tin over copper dishes, after washing and removing greases over heat by Ammonium chloride. Dishes used for cooking have to be bleached by tin; otherwise, they are unusable.

In Kerman, dishes are decorated by three methods. In the first method, called simple method, dishes are decorated simply by beating hammers on them. The second method called row working in which coppersmiths, after separating copper sheets, beat hammers, designed by ready motifs like moon, paisley patterns, eyebrow, flower and etc., on copper sheets and decorate them this way. In the third method which is usually done after Mesgari is completed, molten bitumen is poured over or inside copper utensils. After cooling, beautiful designs are created on copper sheets and dishes by using hammers and pens with different tips (Figure 2 & 3).



Image 13: Tray made by surfacing



Image 12: Surfacing, hammering on copper sheet



Image 11: Surfacing, cutting copper sheet



Image 10: Surfacing, measuring on copper sheet



Image 17: Mesgari, hammering the base of the dish



Image 16: Mesgari, heating



Image 15: Mesgari, measuring on copper sheet



Image 14: Mesgari, measuring on copper sheet



Image 21: Mesgari, lining



Image 20: Mesgari, inserting the base and the edge



Image 19: Mesgari, jaggging copper sheet



Image 18: Mesgari, hammering the edges of the dish



Image 25: casting, making statue



Image 24: casting workshop



Image 23: Mesgari, making saucepan



Image 22: Mesgari, attaching the handle to the edge



Image 29: Bleaching, the bleached dish



Image 28: Bleaching, tin spreading



Image 27: Bleaching, degreasing



Image 26: Mending

**Figure 2: Mesgari in Kerman**

**Table 2: Mesgari stages (Writer, 2015)**

No.	stage	Type of work
1	Blasting	For making copper sheet from ore, copper ingots were made in furnaces and turn them into copper sheet in the past. It was done in Bazaar.
2	Lamination	Making copper sheets
3	Instrumentation	Mesgari stages require a tool made by toolmakers, coppersmiths or blacksmiths
4	Surfacing	Shallow containers are made by coppersmith artisans
5	Mesgari	Sophisticated containers are made by skillful coppersmiths
6	Casting	For making handles, lids, statues, etc.
7	Mending	Repairing damaged containers is done by a group of artisans.
8	Whitening	This is the last stage of Mesgari. If required, the dishes would be bleached.



Image 32: Metal engraving (Ghلام Zani by Afra, Treasury of Contemporary Art (Afra, 2011, 45)



Image 31: Dishes made by row working, Kerman bazaar (Writer, 2015)



Image 30: A simple dish, Kerman bazaar (Writer, 2015)

**Figure 3: Ghلام Zani in Kerman**

### Documentation of ancient and noble forms of Mesgari in Kerman

Mesgari patterns and forms in Kerman are among noble and ancient designs of this kind of art which is different from modern machine-made designs. But today, due to different reasons including difficult and costly stages of production, their quality has declined; so that young coppersmiths in Kerman are not able to create old patterns and designs. Regardless of a few forms created only by old coppersmiths, others are unable to implement old forms. By doing field study, only 10 elder craftsmen were identified who are active in this field by relying on old principles and despite all hardship: Seyed Mohammad Mohammadi Zadeh, Mohammad Hossein Asadi, Ali Yazdan Panah, Mohammad Ali Ashrafi, Ata Haddad Zadeh, Mosa Ashraf Zadeh, Hasan Ashraf, Ali Akbar Zadeh, Mohammad Hasan Saffari and Gholam Hazrat Azimy (Figure 4).



Image 37: Ata Haddad Zadeh



Image 36: Mohammad Ali Ashrafi



Image 35: Ali Yazdan Panah



Image 34: Mohammad Hossein Asadi



Image 33: Seyed Mohammad Mohammadi Zadeh



Image 42: Gholam Hazrat Azimy



Image 41: Mohammad Hasan Saffari



Image 40: Ali Akbar Zadeh



Image 39: Mosa Ashraf Zadeh



Image 38: Hasan Ashraf

**Figure 4:** Craftsmen present in Kerman

By the help of these craftsmen, antique sellers and a few numbers of families, the old Mesgari forms and designs gathered and developed in order to be used later as a full resource of old patterns by Mesgari artists and others.

#### **Methods and Materials:**

Mesgari is the original and indigenous art in Kerman region which had once widespread prosperity and a lot of purchasers. At the present time, its prosperity is declined. Difficult stages of work, costly stages and insufficient income cause artists working in this field to cut down on the quality of works or quit their profession and start selling copper goods or find another job. As we all know, if this trend continues, this form of art would be forgotten.

Through field study by using questionnaire, observation and interview, some persons employed in this profession were identified. Among them, only 10 persons know the traditional and original principles of this kind of art that remain still faithful to these principles by just repairing. A few numbers of them who stays at home are as much as old that are unable to work because they are about eighty years old. The main problem is that without these 10 persons, this indigenous art will be forgotten and die out. Needless to say, some young people are engaged in this profession doing surface construction.

#### **Findings**

##### **Pathology of the art of Mesgari in Kerman bazaar**

Once upon a time, the familiar and yet beautiful repeated voice of coppersmith hammers on copper utensils was a symbol of Bazaar in Kerman, as the largest row of indoor bazaar in Iran. After 60s, a small number of active and caring artisans in Kerman Mesgari industry tried to prevent the industry from obsolescence despite the economic problems they were facing with.

- Copper sheets in different thickness ranging from 100 kg. produced in Shahid Bahonar Co. would be sold in cash to those who have economic code from Tax office because wholesale is impossible for all coppersmiths.

- Mesgari requires basic tools such as copper sheets, hammer, anvil and some other tools relating to forging, woodturning and bleaching.
- The importation of factory-made copper dishes into Mesgari market
- The importation of luxury Chinese, Pakistani, Teflon, cast iron, zinc and so on into the market.
- Loss of coppersmiths. Old coppersmiths become disabled and the new generation does not care about this old profession.
- Coppersmiths' children are not interested in Mesgari and there are not students to be trained by old coppersmiths.
- Shortage of students and trainees
- High price of rental shops and taxes in Ganjali Khan Complex.
- Coppersmiths' insurance problems and problems related to Kerman Cultural Heritage Organization and Municipality
- Lack of domestic and foreign advertising and marketing
- Lack of sufficient funds
- Lack of easy access to raw materials and copper sheets
- Hearing impairment and physical damage

➤ **Consumer Problems**

- The new generation are not interested in learning Mesgari
- Lack of new generation's awareness of Kerman Mesgari industry
- People do not distinguish well between hand-made copper dishes and factory-made ones
- Lack of awareness of how to use copper dishes
- Not having enough money to start Mesgari as a business among new generation
- There is not a specific discipline among fields of technical-vocational organization
- Changing people's attitudes from traditional life towards luxurious life (Table 4)

**Table 4:** Summary of results obtained from problems in Kerman Mesgari industry (Writer, 2015)

<b>Problems</b>	<b>Description of problems</b>
<b>Raw materials</b>	Preparing copper sheets
	High price of raw materials
<b>Artisans</b>	The importation of factory-made copper dishes into Mesgari market
	The importation of luxury Chinese, Pakistani, Teflon, cast iron, zinc and so on into the market
	Loss of coppersmiths and old coppersmiths become disabled
	Coppersmiths' children are not interested in Mesgari
	Shortage of students and trainees
	High price of rental shops and taxes
	Problems related to Kerman Cultural Heritage Organization
	Problems related to Kerman Municipality
	Coppersmiths' insurance problems
	Underestimating coppersmiths
Lack of domestic and foreign advertising and marketing	
<b>Injuries at work</b>	Hearing impairment
	Physical damage
<b>Consumers</b>	High price of hand-made copper dishes
	The new generation are not interested in learning Mesgari
	People do not distinguish well between hand-made copper dishes and factory-made ones
	Lack of awareness of how to use copper dishes



	Changing people's attitudes from traditional life towards luxurious life
	Low level of creativity and innovation in hand-made copper dishes
	Lack of new generation's awareness of Kerman Mesgari industry
	People do not have enough information about Mesgari Bazaar
	Families are not familiar with the benefits of cooking meals in hand-made copper dishes
	Not having enough money to start Mesgari as a business among new generation
	There is not a specific discipline among fields of technical-vocational and skill education (Kar-danesh) schools

### Quality and quantity improvement solutions in Kerman Bazaar

- Easy access to inexpensive copper sheets and coppersmith raw materials
- Restricting the entry and sale of any non-handicraft goods and factory-made copper items in Kerman Mesgari Bazaar
- Making coppersmiths familiar with innovations and fostering their creativity while offering new plans based on the needs of coppersmiths
- Offering brochures while selling copper goods
- Holding occasional live programs from Kerman Mesgari Bazaar by IRIB to encourage coppersmiths, interview with coppersmiths for promotion, making related documentaries to introduce traditional arts and indigenous coppersmith handicrafts by protecting and promoting the Islamic Iranian culture and identity while protecting public opinion against cultural invasion
- Holding specialized meetings attended by professors and experts to introduce indigenous coppersmith handicrafts
- Holding cultural meetings attended by young people and provincial elites related to coppersmith handicrafts to create hope, joy and national assertiveness in different sections of society, especially in youth.
- Holding radio and television competitions to introduce indigenous coppersmith handicrafts and artistic figures of this art
- Holding conferences celebrating the glories of the field in cooperation with organizations and institutions by inviting these figures in permanent and seasonal crafts exhibitions
- Identifying coppersmith target markets and its marketing
- Exempting coppersmiths from paying taxation
- Insuring coppersmiths
- Creating a special site for coppersmiths and providing sample productions
- Transferring shops against the main square and empty shops located in Mirza Hossein Khan caravanserai to young interested coppersmiths
- Training young artisans by masters
- Following safety rules including the use of phones and special glasses, clothing and safety shoes during operation
- Making coppersmith production centers for the new generation in a safe environment
- Making the new generation aware of Coppersmith market and the rest of the market
- Creating tourist attractions in Coppersmith market
- Creating an independent discipline in schools and universities related to Coppersmith
- Publishing books to introduce Mesgari and biographies of native figures of the industry and making documentaries in the field (Table 5).

**Table 5:** Solutions for the problems of Kerman Mesgari Bazaar (Writer, 2015)

Solutions	Description of solutions
<b>Raw material</b>	Easy preparation of copper sheets
	Providing cheap raw materials
<b>Mesgari artisans</b>	Prohibiting the importation of any non-handicraft goods into Kerman Mesgari Bazaar
	Familiarizing coppersmiths with innovations and fostering their creativity
	Organizing live events in Mesgari Bazaar by media
	Celebrating good examples of coppersmiths and assigning a day for them in the official calendar
	Designing a special website for coppersmiths
	Dedicating shops against the main square in Bazaar to young coppersmiths for doing Mesgari
	Restoration of one of the caravanserais in Bazaar for doing Mesgari
	Training students by coppersmiths
	Encouraging and supporting Mesgari artisans by the government and people
	Holding permanent and seasonal exhibitions
	Supporting old coppersmiths
	Domestic and foreign marketing by the government or investors
	Offering brochures while selling copper goods attached by copper containers' usage and storage instructions
	Familiarizing coppersmiths with innovations and fostering their creativity
	Reducing the importation of factory-made copper dishes to the market
	Making credit and welfare infrastructure
Preventing from the destruction of Mesgari Bazaar and copper furnaces as a legacy of the past in the city of Kerman	
<b>Work injuries</b>	Wearing silencer earplugs at work by coppersmiths
	Wearing fireproof gloves while working with fire, lava and acid
	Having a first aid kit and fire extinguisher
<b>Consumers</b>	Introducing the benefits of cooking meals in hand-made copper dishes
	Inspiring young generations and transferring the art of Mesgari to new generation
	Introducing manufacturing centers of hand-made handicrafts
	Creating good atmosphere in the Bazaar and training centers
	Separating machine-made copper containers from hand-made ones
	Informing the new generation by inviting people from schools, universities and organizations to visit Ganjali Khan Complex and Bazaar with the company of an expert
	Establishing Mesgari training workshops
	Creating tourist attractions
	Creating independent discipline in art schools and professional universities
	Revival of outdated productions
	Supporting students learning the art of Mesgari for establishing Mesgari workshops by the government
	Asking the public and governmental agencies to donate gifts of hand-made copper dishes
Giving discount vouchers for buying hand-made copper dishes to civil servants	

### Conclusion

Mesgari is the original and indigenous art in Kerman but its importance has declined due to some reasons these days. By studying current problems and presenting proper solutions, we are able to restore it. The solutions are as follows:

- Providing cheap copper sheets for coppersmiths
- Doing manufacturing and producing stages of making copper dishes precisely with the preservation of this art and avoidance of any fraud or cheating.

- Gathering and documenting this art and its restoration and marketing of traditional forms and patterns
- Combining Mesgari with other arts in order to diversify productions and better competition with foreign products
- Full support of relevant organizations in order to revive the growth and promotion of this art.
- Restricting the importation and sale of any factory-made copper utensils, luxurious and non-handicraft goods into Kerman Mesgari bazaar
- Appreciating the elder artists and providing facilities to continue their work as well as using their experiences in publishing and promoting this art.
- Using the experience of prominent artists for proper training to young students
- Establishing shopping and exhibition complexes to provide better works of art and selling them with respect to necessary and sufficient standards as well as destroying factors such as market dealers
- Establishing workshops to work better and eliminating the problem of providing tools for art trainees.
- Creating a specific website for coppersmiths.

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