

**Professional scientific sessions for art, architecture and urban planning Thursday evenings**

**Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers**

**Date: 19.10.2017**

**Title: Silk Road's Caravanserais.**

**Speakers and panel members: Mr. S. Ayvazian and Mrs. E. Androudi.**

The first speaker was Mr. Ayvazian. He explained that caravanserai is composed by the word caravan that means a group of persons that travel together and "serai" that means house. Both of them belong to ancient Iranian Pahlavi language.

Mr. Ayvazian told about the project commissioned by UNESCO based in France, to study the Silk Road route and the caravanserais that existed in Iran. Mr. Ayvazian explained the routes that existed between Iran, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. In these routes were built many caravanserais from Sassanid era to 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Mr. Ayvazian explained that during the first phase they had to study an area beginning from eastern borders of Iran to Sharerey (a city that today has become part of the Iranian capital Tehran).

Mr. Ayvazian talked about the caravanserai of Mian Dasht that has been renovated about 12 years ago by the Iranian Heritage Organization. In the same area there are also two other caravanserais, belonging to Safavid and Qajar eras. The Mian Dasht caravanserai was so large that around the area could host 20.000 travelers, that shows its capacity to attract travellers in ancient times and tourist in our days.

Mr. Ayvazian talked about the water provision systems for the caravanserais. Some of them were provisioned by underground man built water channels (qanat) that transferred from long distances to where water was needed, another system was the use of wells or water keeping sites.

Presenting different and interesting types of caravanserais Mr. Ayvazian explained how every building was a unique structure, differing from the other similar constructions and this testifies the Iranian ability to find always new architectural solutions for a construction that could be considered as of secondary importance.

Talking about the problems that the potential visitors must face is that most of the caravanserais are difficult to reach, because of the internal roads. This is a problem that the authorities must consider seriously if they want these places to become really touristic attractions.

Mr. Ayvazian concluded his speech explaining that some of the caravanserais have 2, 4 or without defensive towers, depending on the geographical position and the role that in that are the caravanserai had to play.

The second speaker was Mrs. E. Androudi. She spoke about the Miami caravanserai as a successful model that served the needs of the caravans. Talking about the map designed by

UNESCO she reported what they believe in. After UNESCO the Silk Road is the road of dialogue that connects civilizations, countries and economies from East to Istanbul and Baghdad. She explained that there were also marine routes that connected the East to the West. Today the Japanese are working on a project called Digital Silk Road, that beside terrestrial and marine route, is the new form of old Silk Road.

Mrs. Andaroudi stressed on the impact that the Silk Road had and still have on the cultural and economic relationship between countries and civilizations. Talking about the project of UNESCO Mrs. Andaroudi said that in this project about three thousand caravanserais have been identified from 600 B.C. The project included more than 50 countries that in different eras have acted in the activities of the Silk Road.

Showing the map of the caravanserais in Iran during the Safavid era, Mrs. Andaroudi explained the route of its extension. She said that during the Safavid era about thousand caravanserais were built, showing the importance that the political cast of the country gave to this matter. In this project, different main routes in Iran were included, creating the conditions for the development of the local and international trade.

Continuing her speech Mrs. Andaroudi presented the different types of caravanserais according the use and their geographical position. In this context she presented, through plans and photographs, interesting types and models of caravanserais, built especially in the Safavid era, because it is in this era that the model and form of the caravanserais experience a great evolution, giving the possibility to the Iranian architectural spirit to express its capabilities.

Mrs. Andaroudi presented the gradual transformation of the caravanserais in the centuries, following the transformations of the technologies and the requests of the market.

Concluding her speech Mrs. Andaroudi talked also about the caravanserais and their characteristics that functioned in neighbor countries like Iraq, Turkey, Syria.... Comparing the caravanserais made in Iran and in other neighbor countries, in her opinion the experience and results achieved by the Iranian part is more successful.