

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

Held in: Conference hall of Herampey Consulting Engineers

Date: 10.01.2019

Title: Art, Architecture and Urban planning in Japan and Iran; similitudes and differences.

Speakers and panel members: Mr. J.S. Yamamoto, Mrs. K. Kitanaka, Mr. S. Arfaei and Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi

The first speaker of 115th session was Mr. Mahmoudi. He said that during his speech he will try to make comparisons about some items that are common to Iran and Japan, continuing to have a general talk about Japan. First of all Mr. Mahmoudi had a brief presentation of geographical characteristics of the two countries.

Continuing his speech, Mr. Mahmoudi reminded that 2019 is the 100th anniversary of Japan-Iran diplomatic ties instauration. On this regard there is a document dated 1929 and conserved in the archives of Japanese foreign ministry. From the last months of 2018 the cultural attache of Japanese Embassy in Tehran, has organized measures to commemorate this anniversary. The Iranian embassy in Tokyo too, will have programs of commemoration.

Mr. Mahmoudi asserted that even though the official-political relationship has just a century of life, but there are evidences that since the Sassanid era, Iranian presence in Asoka, one of the ancient capitals of the Japanese empire.

Mr. Mahmoud presented the national flags of the two countries, adding that in Japan exist also other official flags, belonging to the royal family and its members.

Talking about the geographical characteristics of the two countries, He explained that almost in all parts of Japan the sunset is seen in a mountainous foreground. The most famous mountain in Japan is Fuji that is similar to mountain Damavand in Iran and Japanese to ease the pronunciation, have called it the Fuji of Tehran. Unfortunately in some pictures people are welcomed to Tehran with the picture of Fuji. Regarding the rivers, in Iran most of the rivers flow in the northern and western sides of the country, meanwhile in Japan the rivers are numerous and present in many cities of the country. Meanwhile the climate in Japan is not variegated, in Iran there is a large variety of climates that go from north to south and from east to west.

Mr. Mahmoudi talked about the gardens in the two countries. Both of the countries have historically famous gardens, for example 9 Iranian gardens have been registered as part of world heritage. In his opinion the approach regarding the gardens is different in Japan and Iran. In Japan the approach has cultural, climatic and religious bases. In the Japanese gardens in relationship with their Buddhistic religious, the Japanese try to live the place and atmosphere as a connection measure for their religious-spiritual believes and sensations. Regarding the trees and flowers the Japanese have a very deep culture that valorize these elements in their everyday life, using them as elements to make the human life nicer and harmonic with the nature.

Japan is five times smaller than Iran and 80 percent of its territory is mountainous and only 20 percent is habitable, at the same time meanwhile Iran has 80 million inhabitants, Japan has a population of 130 million. Mr. Mahmoudi explained that even though the spaces are very limited in Japan, but there is an abundance of urban spaces, with large walkways for people that walk for leisure or people that hurry to work.

Regarding the practice of sport he explained that Japanese stress on the importance of sport practices and in every age they don't forget this healthy habit. In the schools one of the most important and difficult lessons is the physical education. In Japan there are traditional and imported sport practices and it shows that for the Japanese sport is an integrated part of their everyday life.

Talking about Japanese cuisine and confectionery, he presented briefly samples of Japanese ancient and rich culture and heritage, explaining that for the Japanese eating is always a cultural-traditional manifestation and a way to communicate with the people.

As Iranians have many occasions to celebrate feasts and anniversaries, the Japanese don't lose the occasion to celebrate a festivity and make their life nicer and happier. During these celebrations every city shows local habits and traditions and during these manifestations most of the people participate to the ceremony with Japanese traditional garments. This is a manner to maintain local traditions and characteristics. Mr. Mahmoudi said that many Japanese festivities are an occasion to spend time in the nature that for them is an important aspect of their life.

Regarding the demographic situation in Japan as it has happened in Iran, the number of families and their components is decreasing, but still during family gatherings the traditional manners are strictly observed.

Mr. Mahmoudi talked about mourning ceremonies and traditions, explaining the similitudes and differences that exist in the two countries. In the case of Japan, mourning ceremonies are always celebrated avoiding exaggerations and visible manifestations. In this case too, the traditional manners are always observed, so mourning ceremonies become an occasion to renovate the relationship with the legacy that elder generations have transmitted during the centuries.

If in Iran Iranians use carpets to cover the floors and live on them, in Japan the most popular floor cover is the traditional tatami that even though in some cities differ in measure, but usually the size is 80x190 cm. the tatami is used to express the measure of houses and rooms. Regarding the tradition and art of sitting, the Japanese are very traditionalists and scrupulous. Since the childhood the Japanese are taught to learn the right and educated way of sitting. Regarding their religious and spiritual habits and the space that is used in the houses to celebrate such ceremonies, Mr. Mahmoudi explained that in every house there is a room dedicated to this kind of ceremonies and this room is considered the most important space of every house.

Continuing to speak the manners of sitting and functional use of the spaces, Mr. Mahmoudi explained that the Japanese use to sit on the tatami and the use of lowered chairs and tables is combined with their different uses, in different situations and for different purposes. Usually the houses are located in two floors, with the bedrooms in the second floor. The houses and apartments are usually very small, but all necessary spaces and accessories have been provided.

Regarding the traditional garment kimono is the one well known all over. It's a very traditional garment and if it's a real kimono the price can be prohibitive for many. Usually the kimono is passed from a generation to the next. Regarding the everyday garments, in Japan each sphere (like kindergarten, school etc.) they have their particular garment that is some kind of uniform.

Mr. Mahmoudi explained the existing alphabets and writing methods that are the Kanchi, Hiragana and katakana. Going to school the children have many years to learn these different kind of scripture, becoming step by step more proficient in their abilities to write and read Japanese characters.

The art of painting and miniature in Japan have many similitudes with the Iranian painting art and it's the reflection of the traditional garments and colors, especially the red. In this case each region and city put their own sign and diversity to distinguish them from other localities. The theatre in Japan is also the reflection of the Japanese culture and tradition, where the story of epic occurrence are presented and the people that frequent theatre presentations, usually wear traditional garments.

The Japanese architecture has two main aspects. The first is the traditional architecture where stone and wood are used to build the houses in order to satisfy social and climatic necessities. The modern architecture is combined with the use of new technologies and building materials. The house, even though they are small, have a separate entrance and the internal entrance. The urban space is very large, especially for the pedestrians. Because of frequent rains in Japan they have worked a lot to collect the rain water, avoiding to create problems for the drivers and pedestrians.

The nightlife in Japan is very active and many people like to spend time in nocturne locals.

Talking about the public transport Mr. Mahmoudi explained how it is efficient and easy to use. You don't realize where you are using the train and when the subway metro. The order in the movements and use of the transport spaces is a characteristic that the Japanese are famous in.

After Mr. Mahmoudi, Mr. Arfaei and Mrs. Kitanaka had a calligraphic presentation and the people that were present had the opportunity to see how so simply artistic works were created. Mr. Arfaei explained about the Koufi writing and its historical characteristics. He explained that calligraphy is an applied art in order to transfer concepts and values from a spiritual state to a material level, enjoying the pleasure of seeing and reading a scripture that contains a message on the paper.

The second speaker was Mr. S. Yamamoto. Beginning his speech he thanked Mr. Mahmoudi that gave him the opportunity to participate to the gathering and know better the Iranian culture in general. Talking about his personal life, he said that he was born in Japan in 1967 to a Japanese family and there are 30 years that he is working living in Iran. Talking about the three generations that he knew, Mr. Yamamoto said that his generation was the one that didn't experience the difficulties that the precedent ones had, so he had a childhood and adolescence without seeing problems that that the elders had experienced. He explained that the generation of his parents experienced many problems and difficulties, because they were born in the years of World war II and when has become victim of American first nuclear attack. The generation of his grandfather was the generation that was born in the Japan that still didn't become the economic power that we know. After he was graduated, he became the employee of Atogi that is a Japanese company

established in 1858. The company sales record during the last year was 52 million \$ and has a branch in Iran in 1954.

Presenting Atogi he said that he is the executive manager of the Iranian branch, the company is involved in businesses that include textile, energy, machineries, food. He said that because of the sanctions the activities are weak and the company is going to stop its activities in Iran, because of the second round of the sanctions. Mr. Yamamoto said that during the first round of the sanctions he was also in Iran and the reason that the Company doesn't want to leave Iran is because they have a long term strategy, and there is no justified reason to leave such a country like Iran. Nowhere else there is such abundance of natural gas resources, oil, mineral material, large population and graduated people. The climate of the country has four seasons and has whatever you can imagine. These are some of the reasons that they don't want to close the branch of Iran and return to Japan, even though they have to collect the pending debts, that the Company is worried about. He said that this kind of problems exist for all the companies that operate in Iran. Mr. Yamamoto said that the problem that they have is that the Japanese banks are not able to fulfill their duties, meanwhile he thanked Iran that has always cooperated with the Company, easing its activities in Iran.

Talking about the first period that he came to Iran, Mr. Yamamoto said that he had difficult times, because of the differences that exist between the two countries. When he was ordered to come to work in Iran in 1991, he thought that he had to go Iraq that was in war with the USA, because he hadn't a clear idea of the countries in the region. He said that at the beginning it was very hard to live in Iran, mainly because of the cultural traditions that exist between the two countries, but because of his happy character he has never gave up and after long 28 years he is still in Iran.

Mr. Yamamoto said that in his opinion the difficulties that Iran faces are not related to the sanctions, the lack of democracy and the management of the political power. In his opinion the problem is the ministry of work and social security that doesn't issue the visa to stay and work in Iran he thinks that people from other countries would say the same thing. He repeated that there is no other rich and with deep market country like Iran. He told that when about 30 years ago he came to Iran and the Company sold goods to Iran, president Rafsanjani said that they didn't have enough money to clear the debt, consequently the Japanese were worry about it. After sometime they received oil in change of the debt, gaining a lot selling the crude oil. This is the reality of Iran and the reason that they are here since 1954 and probably they will be here for the next 35 years.

Talking about the Japanese reality he said that his son is a bank employee. Two years ago he asked Mr. Yamamoto where would be better to be employed in order to spend less working hours He said that he was surprised by this mentality, because for his generation working until night was considered satisfying and funny. He said that his father was almost never home. This is a characteristic of the Japanese (hardworking) that unfortunately is disappearing. Fortunately the Japanese culture has strong bases. He said that Japan is an agricultural country, because there are no other opportunities that the people can use.

Mr. Yamamoto said that for the Japanese keep the order is a must and they are proud of it. In Japan keep the order is important, help and cooperate is important, the humility is important. In his opinion all these characteristics goes back to the agriculture.

When in 2011 the big earthquake occurred in Japan, Mr. Yamamoto said that he was in Iran, following TV broadcastings, seeing what happened to the country and its people that had lost their relatives. He said that when he saw people in the shelters maintaining the order, when he came home, saying that he was proud of such behavior of his compatriots.