

Iran Engipedia

First Scientific Professional Session, summer 2019

Venue: Rayzan Int'l Conferences Center

Date: Wednesday 18th September 2019

Roundtable title: Engineering Encyclopedias, Similarities and Differences

Roundtable Members: Kazem Mousavi Bojnourdi, Asqar Saed Samiee, Iraj E'tesam, Seied Mohammad Beheshti and Mohammad Mehdi Mahmoudi

At the beginning of the roundtable Mr. Mahmoudi mentioned that the participants had a long years experiences on the fields related to the Engineering encyclopedia that they worked on. Talking about Mr. Bojnourdi, he said that he begun the related activities of various encyclopedias' edition in 1984 with a cultural-identity approach and the consequent question was on the position of Engineering encyclopedia in the entire process of already edited and published encyclopedias in the Islamic Great Encyclopedia Center and considering the engineering essence of the encyclopedia, the edition of such study is really necessary?

Thanking the presents for the participation, Mr. Bojnourdi mentioned that in the Iranian culture and civilization despite its outstanding role, engineering didn't enjoy the due attention. Other spheres like writers, poets and humanistic fields have been largely studied and divulgated, but the field of engineering and engineers that are the main builders of our civilization, have been generally under estimated and relatively ignored. He asserted that physical spaces have an important role and many habits, traditions and rules have experienced growth and influence in base of the development of buildings, structures and engineering related fields. Mr. Bojnourdi explained that at the beginning in the Encyclopedia Center they have edited the Islamic Great Encyclopedia in Farsi in 24, Arabic in 9 and English titled Islamica in 6 volumes. He added that the Center has edited the Iran universal encyclopedia, similar to Larousse; considering the role of folklore in the Iranian national identity, the Center has planned the edition of popular culture encyclopedia in 10 volumes, completing already the initial 6 volumes. Other works that are being edited are the encyclopedia of Great Tehran, the encyclopedia of Iranian books edited from the beginning to the 13th century.

Talking about the engineering encyclopedia, Mr. Bojnourdi mentioned that they have noticed the lack of a comprehensive encyclopedic study on engineering and organizing meeting with Mr. M. M. Mahmoudi that has designed the 30 000 sq./m Islamic Great Encyclopedia Center, the final conclusion was the necessity of edition of an encyclopedia dedicated to the Iranian engineering history and heritage.

Continuing the presentation of the initial idea of editing the engineering encyclopedia, Mr. Bojnourdi explained the general rules and directions that the editors had to follow during the compilation of the informations regarding certain buildings or structures in order to better reflect

the paths of engineering historical development in Iran. He explained that during the edition of the engineering encyclopedia the 35 year experience of the Center will be helpful for the successful completion of the work.

During his speech Mr. Bojnourdi talked also about the various phases of the foundation and activities of the Center, the difficulties that they had to face and the achievements that they gained during the last 35 years. He added that during the first years the Iranian government delivered limited financial aid to the Center, but after for different reasons the aid has been cut and the Center had to find other sources and manners for financial incomes.

Continuing the discussions Mr. Mahmoudi focused on the fact that in the Iranian current reality the role and production of engineers have been somehow ignored, even though they are one of the main builders and creators of the Iranian civilization. He also reminded the capacities and collected books and documents in the Center that are unbelievably higher than for example the library of Fine Arts faculty.

Inviting Mr. Beheshti to participate to the discussion, Mr. Mahmoudi asked him if the edition of Iran Engipedia has a sense for the Center, considering that Mr. Beheshti is an expert researcher in the field of Iranian historical buildings and monuments?

Presenting the former studies regarding the Iranian historical monuments, Mr. Beheshti explained that before the edition of “Ganjnameh” in Shahid Beheshiti university, presenting about 600-700 buildings , about 200 monuments had been studied and presented in a series of thesis entitled “Iran Shahr”, including plans, photographs and a short description of each monument, that obviously was not complete as a comprehensive presentation. Mr. Beheshti continued talking about the duties and responsibilities of organizations like the ministries of Cultural heritage and Education and training, based on official-government rules and decisions. Mr. Beheshti talked also about various activities that involved researchers, universities and scientific centers, for the study and documentation of Iranian architecture and engineering historical production. In few words he expressed the idea that field of studies was extremely vast and expanded. He also talked about the paper based encyclopedias and the difficulties to use them and how modern technologies already permit to use innovative solutions.

Talking about written sources, Mr. Beheshti expressed the idea that when the modern academic system was established, most of the universities began to publish ancient studies and cultural presentation, stressing mostly on the poetic sources, ignoring somehow the studies that presented the engineering heritage, maybe because the actual generation believed that Iranian had not an important and path maker engineering heritage to present to the universal achievements of human society. Mr. Beheshti expressed the idea that one of the main problems in Iran is the lack of written extended sources regarding our history’s different fields and how the existing literature could be useful for the presentation of our historical course. He suggested the persons that intended to edit the Engineering encyclopedia, to visit the main Iranian libraries, in order to have a clear idea of the existing sources and documents. Mr. Beheshti talked also about the characteristics and differences of western and Iranian societies regarding the manners of scientific-research principles and manners.

Mr. Mamoudi continued the speech talking about the recent 20 volumes publication dedicated to the Iranian comprehensive history. Regarding the publications, Mr. E'tesam talked about the three volumes dedicated to the Iranian architecture that unfortunately has not been divulged in the Iranian academic sphere.

When the presents talked about the role of professors and the policy of academic education, Mr. Samiee talked about the negative and catastrophic role that most of the teaching staff has committed during the last decades, mostly because the students have been classified as the principal source for the financial survey of the universities. This policy has caused an enormous vacuum of lack of professional-scientific preparation of the students that is reflected in the reality of the engineering production in Iran. He also compared what is happening today and what happened in the Iranian universities, during the years the older generation made its first steps in the academic world of Iran. Talking about the edition of Iran Engipedia, Mr. Samiee considered the intention as a huge step for the documentation and study of Iranian engineering historical production and how the study and consideration of existing literature could be extremely useful for its edition.

Concluding the roundtable discussion, Mr. Mahmoudi posed a question to Mr. Bojnourdi, asking him about the encyclopedias and studies published by the Islamic Great Encyclopedia Center from the ancient eras until the Qajar era. Mr. Mahmoudi completed his question talking about the believe that Pahlavi era is not still part of the historical eras.

Answering to the question posed Mr. Bojnourdi said that the Center has worked on a project dedicated to the Islamic world, lasted 14 years and involving about 170 local and foreign researchers, but regarding the Pahlavi there are many fonts and arguments that must be studied and analyzed.

As the last consideration Mr. Mahmoudi declared that the Center has supported al the expenses of the session, and the next session would be held in October. Mr. Mahmoudi presented also the studies done by Mr. Tavafoqhi, Mr. Golabchi and Mr. Kyani.