

AN EXAMINATION OF THE USE OF THE CARAVANSERAI AT CAPPADOCIA ON THE SILK ROAD; SARUHAN CARAVANSERAI

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Abstract

Structures harbor the functions required by the period that they were built in. These functions may change and sometimes may even disappear within historical developments. The structures that harbor these functions remain standing even after losing their functions. The maintainability of the structures is ensured via restoration by giving new functions within the changing and developing life. In this study, the current status of the SARUHAN Caravanserai has been examined which is located in the Cappadocia Region, one of the most important locations of the Silk Road. Saruhan was built within the Cappadocia region of Silk Road on the Aksaray-Kayseri route. Built in 1249, Saruhan is one of the last examples of sultan inns. The structure which was initially used for the accommodation of caravans is now open to touristic and social use. Today, it is a structure in which tourist groups accommodate rather than commercial caravans. It is thought that this study epitomizes the usage and functionality differences of structures over time. It is important that the structure is still in use today.

1. Caravanserai

Caravanserai, which has entered Turkish language from Farsi as Kervansaray or Kervanhanı, is defined as the resting place of caravans on commercial roads [1]. Caravanserais were first built by Seljuq Khans in Central Asia towards the end of the 10th century. They were first thought to serve military defense, however, over time they were extended to cover the increasing commercial and religious needs [1, 2].

In caravanserais people were given food-drink for three days regardless of whether they are locals or foreigners. People of different religion, language and race made use of these places [1, 2]. Caravanserais provided a place for accommodation after a tiring journey. In addition, caravanserais contained places for dorms, eating houses, provision warehouses, storage areas, barns, prayer rooms (masdschid), fountains used for ritual ablutions, hamams, pharmacies, shoemaker and blacksmith and supplied all these services free of charge [1]. Köşk Mosque, which is generally located in the middle of the courtyards over an arched base, is the most important part of a caravanserai. Dorms, warehouses, hamam and toilets are located around the courtyard. Heating in these areas is provided by braziers and tandoors whereas lighting is provided by candles and oil lamps [2]. The dimensions of caravanserais varied in accordance with the commercial volume of the road they were built upon thus on the size of the caravans that were going to stay there along with the power of those who had the caravanserai built [1, 3].

2. Seljuq Caravanserais

The Seljuqs established a caravanserai web built on international commercial roads as charitable institutions with orders from the Sultan or government officials of eminence with social-economic and military functions to meet the accommodation-security-health needs of commercial caravans within the scope of the Iran-Islam and Central Asia-Turk national heritage in order to attract the north-south and east-west international commercial road that stretched from Southern Russia-Syria-Mesopotamia and Central Asia-India-Iran-Europe direction to Anatolian geography by way of establishing transportation contact between the harbors of Sinop and Samsun in the north with the harbors of Alanya and Antalya in the south [1]. The caravanserais in Anatolia stretch up to Turkistan passing through Erzurum-Tebriz by way of Antalya-Konya-Aksaray-Kayseri and up to Iraq from the Black Sea coast by way of Amasya-Tokat-Sivas-Malatya-Diyarbakır [2].

Caravanserais known as sultan inns were built during the Seljuk era enabling the caravans to rest safely at nights on the commercial roads. The distances between the Seljuk caravanserais built on important commercial roads were calculated using a standard of nine hours of camel walk that is about 40 kilometers. The caravanserais protected by the surrounding high walls were used as marketplaces during times of peace and as castles during times of war [1].

The number of caravanserais built increases especially during the reign of Kılıçarslan the 2nd and Alaaddin Keykubat the 1st and the security of the routes were provided by the government. The losses of the merchants that took place during the journey were compensated by the government. So there was a type of insurance system. This, in turn, has enabled the development of both local and international commerce. Thus, Seljuks who were strong economically gained political strength as well [2]. Caravanserais were built as foundations by the Seljuk Sultans and government officials. The legal and monetary mechanisms required to operate a caravanserai were defined by the endowments of the time [1, 3].

Seljuk caravanserais were outfitted with saddlers, rope sellers, blacksmiths, kitchens, hamam, medical aids, tea or coffee houses, bed chambers, a semi-closed area for mount and pack animals and some of them also had prayer rooms [1].

The Seljuk caravanserais were built pursuant to three general types. These were caravanserais with courtyard which were suited for use during summer, closed caravanserais suited for use during winter time and caravanserais which integrated the two [1]. Caravanserais had “open” and “closed” parts [4]. Accordingly, they were classified into three groups as; [1]

- “hall” inns with only closed parts
- Inns which had both open and closed parts
- Inns which only had “open” areas. [1]

In addition to this classification, “confocal” inns consisting of two nested plans were defined as another type [1, 5]. According to a function based typology; caravanserais can be separated into two main groups, mainly inns with only housing places and inns with housing and services [1]. The architect of the Seljuk Caravanserais was Kölük bin Abdullah and Kaluyan El-Konevi who were the most famous architects of the time[1].

3. Cappadocia Caravanserai Properties

Different than those in other regions, volcanic origin cut stones were used as construction material in Cappadocia Region caravanserais. Their walls resembled thick city walls for protection. The stonemasonry of the Seljuks can be seen in the entrances named as taç kapı or monumental gateways (portals). Even though they were built with motifs such as dragons, lions and plants, geometrical shapes were preferred more for those in the Cappadocia Region. Their doors which were as strong as castle doors were made of iron [2].

Cappadocia Region is at an intersection of east-west and south-west commercial roads. Hence; Aksaray/Sultanhanı, Aksaray/Ağzıkarahan, Nevşehir/Saruhan and Kayseri/Sultanhanı [2] Caravanserais were built on the Kayseri-Aksaray route.

4. Saruhan

Saruhan is located 5km. south of Nevşehir Avanos region. The inn is located on the East-West connection of Aksaray-Kayseri route. Saruhan, which was built in 1249 during the reign of İzzettin Keykavus the 2nd, covers an area of 2000 m². Tuff stones which are widely found in the Cappadocia region have been used as construction materials for Saruhan [6]. The stones used in Saruhan are good cut stones of yellow, reddish and light brown color. Two colored stones were used for the arches of both the monumental portal and the inner portal for decorative purposes [2, 6]. Geometric decorations were preferred more for the outer portal the upper parts of which have mostly been destroyed [2].

The domed hall prayer room has been built on the monumental portal in contradiction with the other caravanserais. The door of the prayer house opening out to the wide courtyard is decorated with muqarnas squinches. There is a portico with a fountain to the left of the wide courtyard and places for accommodation along with a hamam to the left. The small lines on some of the stones used on the portico are special signs of stonemasons. The skylight dome resting on pendants is quite plain [2].

The caravanserai is in the plan form of classic Sultan inns and is composed of summer and winter parts. There is a prayer room over the entrance iwan, a wide courtyard, a portico with a fountain to the left of the entrance, 6 bedrooms covered with barrel vaults around the courtyard, porticos resting on 5 bases, a closed space for winter months and a panoramic patio [6]. Seljuk Sultans did not order the building of any other sultan inns after Saruhan which is one of the last examples of Sultan Inns [2].

The inn, upper parts of which have partly been destroyed, was restored in 1991 [2, 6]. The restored caravanserai was rented to a private company by the General Directorate for Foundations for a period of 49 years. The building is being operated under the status of "Special Facility" as a conference hall in the supervision of the Ministry of Tourism and Culture [6]. Saruhan is still standing erect due to the decisions that were given to determine its usage. It is important that right decisions are given during the usage stage.

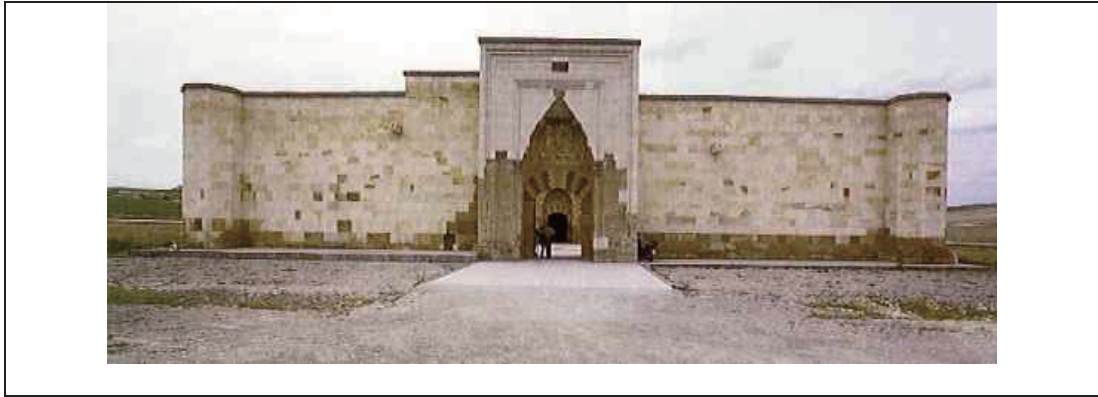


Fig. 1: Saruhan Entrance Portal



Fig. 2: Saruhan Courtyard



Fig. 3: Saruhan Courtyard Lighting

5. RESULT

Saruhan caravanserai is a building which is still being used today for a different purpose. It is important that historical structures are sustained by way of changing their uses suited to the period. Saruhan has been a successful example for the transformation of the structure to touristic use. It is necessary that architects internalize each usage stage of the buildings and transfer this knowledge to the design stage. This will be possible by way of an effective project management. Restoration works are important for structures. However they are not enough by themselves. It is important that the usage stages of structures are analyzed correctly.

References

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