

## **Cultural Study Of the Relationship between Mountain and the City**

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### **Abstract**

Mountains are of high importance in Iran due to the particular geography of this land. In addition to being ecologically significant, mountains offer multiple functions for Iranians that makes these natural elements to have different meanings for people to the point that most of the mountains adjoining residential areas have special names. In this regard, this research tries to study Alborz Mountains as the most important historically and ecologically mountains in Iran where Tehran, the most populated city and the capital of Iran, is located. Research in this area shows that the function of Alborz Mountains have changed for the people over time or have declined to a lower status. These mountains do not have their previous position in the minds of the people, and the authors believe that Iranians used to be consider Alborz Mountains as a cultural element with objective and subjective aspects. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate the functions of Alborz Mountains and to study the relationship between mountains and people over time in order to find the meaning of the Alborz Mountains in terms of documentary and historical studies. The results of the research show that based on the conceptual scope of the landscape approach (which is a holistic and objective-minded approach to nature), the city and the mountains in general are not the main reasons for negligence of Alborz Mountains in the minds of people. In addition, the mountains for the people of Tehran, who are the main inhabitants of Alborz Mountains, are no longer a cultural landscape element with objective and subjective aspects. The objective aspects of mountains have been gradually disappeared or decreased considerably due to the loss of their objective functions and these elements have been eventually transformed into subjective elements.

**Keywords:** Tehran, Alborz Mountains, Cultural Element, Landscape Approach

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## 1- Introduction

According to predecessors, the mountain is often considered as the point where the heavens and the earth meet; a place where the center of the earth is crossed and it is usually a sacred place. The Chinese poets believed that mountain peaks are placed above each other and are extended to the clouds and even above the height of the heavens. According to many others, the first mountains emerged after the storms or even the initial chaos. Some of the mountains are considered at the center of a worldview as cosmic mountains, others are considered as places of revelation and intuition, or the divine manifestation (Mei, 1987).

“Most religious ceremonies also took place high above the mountains, since it was believed as the closest place to the sky where the gods reside. Life on the mountain is a sign of the ignoring the materialistic affiliations and worldly interests. In addition, it demonstrates humbleness and modesty toward the creator. (Mohassel & Behnamfar, 2012). The importance of mountains has also been emphasized in Quran several times.

• « وَ الْقِي فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِي اِنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ »<sup>1</sup>

in this verse the mountains are perceived as anchors

• « وَ الْقِي فِي الْاَرْضِ رَوَاسِي اِنْ تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَ اَنْهَارًا وَ سُبُلًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ »<sup>2</sup>

And he cast mountains on the earth, lest it shifts with you; and rivers, and roads, so that you may be guided.

• « اَلَمْ نَجْعَلِ الْاَرْضَ مِهَادًا \* وَ الْجِبَالَ اَوْتَادًا »<sup>3</sup>

Did We not make the earth a cradle? And the mountains pegs?

• « وَ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ اَكْنَانًا »<sup>4</sup>

and He has given you resorts in the mountains

Many regional and international organizations established by the United Nations, the FAO and other organizations aim to support and sustain mountains. Following the international efforts made in 2002 as the international Mountain year, December 11 was recognized as the International Mountain Day since

2003. The mission of the International Mountains year is to support the conservation and sustainable development of mountainous areas to ensure the welfare of mountains and its foothill residents.

This section is a part of the Universal Mountain Charter, Chambery, France 2000, which has been written in line with those efforts: the mountainous regions of the world are the context for the origins of very valuable civilizations. The particular environment inhabited by the peoples of these regions in the course of history gives rise to certain behaviors, situations and relationships between human and nature, underlying all civilizations. The myths created by these civilizations, the values upon which they are based, and their socioeconomic structures have all been greatly influenced by mountainous geographical locations. Mountains constitute one fifth of the Earth's surface, at least one tenth of the world's population, and one third of the world's people depend on the mountains from different aspects (food, electricity, wood and minerals). Moreover, half the people of the world provide their water from mountainous water resources. Mountains provide the life of the plains; they offer the biological foundations to a huge population of the world; and they are the sources where rivers originate and they shape vital stream of human societies (Guide for the preparation of mountainous protected areas, 2009).

In Iran, mountainous areas are very suitable places to reside since Iran is not a water-rich country, and because of the presence of water on the mountain slopes. Water resources, including the river, spring and qanat are all located in mountains. Therefore, it is observed that most of Iran's cities and villages are formed on the mountain slopes. The mountain has played an important role in formation of ancient civilizations and religions, and they have been respected continuously. In addition, this element in Iran is considered significant in terms of geography as well. (Dariush, 2016).

Alborz Mountains are highly accentuated in Iran, and they are regarded as elements beyond their natural features. It is also mentioned in Bundahishn: the

1 A part of Suran Luqman, verse 10

2 An-nahl, verse 15

3 An-naba, verse 7 & 8

4 An-nahl, verse 81

first mountain that was risen was the divine Alborz. From then on, all the mountains (other) were risen in eighteen years. It would take Alborz 800 years overall: 200 years for reaching the stars, 200 years for reaching the moon, 200 years for reaching the sun, and 200 years more for reaching the high sky (Dadegi, 1990).

Tehran, in contrast to Rei city that was formed on the foothills of Bibi Shahrbanou Mountains, was located in central Alborz Mountains, and the main reason for the establishment of the city is mentioned to be its favorable particular climate and the Silk Road. If we imagine the nature of Tehran without its current construction, we will see one of the natural wonders of Iran. (Behzadfar, 1999)



Figure 1: A view of Tehran City, Alborz tower and mountains from the roof of one of the buildings inside the citadel, by Mohammad Khan Malek al-Shoara, 1903

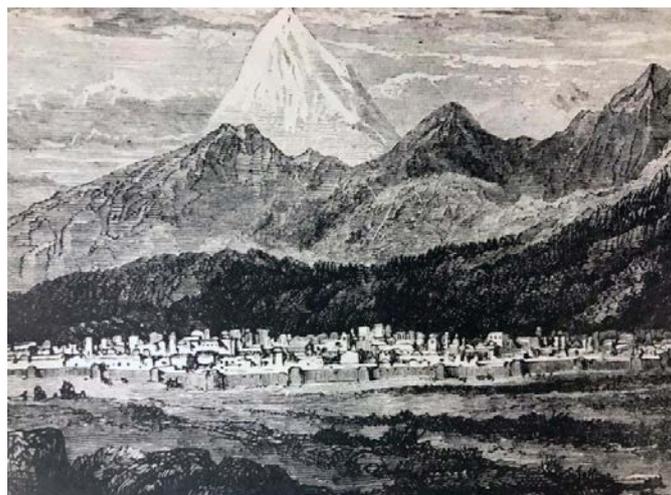


Figure 2: A view of Tehran City, Shah Abbasi Tower and citadel  
Design by Louis Dubo, 1839



Figure3: A view of part of Tehran and Alborz mountains  
The sketch of Eugene Flandring and Pascal Gošt, 1840

### 1-1 Problem Statement

As stated in the introduction, Alborz Mountains are of great importance for Iranians and its inhabitants, and the city of Tehran has been formed due to presence of Alborz Mountains in this area. Currently, these mountains have many advantages for the city of Tehran and its people. In addition to the emphasis of international organization on the significance of mountainous regions, the development plans of Tehran and the research conducted in this area demonstrate that Alborz Mountains have many capacities for the city of Tehran and its inhabitants.

In the first comprehensive plan of Tehran, approved in 1968, the northern mountains of Tehran were perceived equal to Lycabettus Hills in Athens and the Montmartre hill of Paris. It is also emphasized that in future designs and development of Tehran, it is necessary to use this element in its full capacity so that people can understand clear relationship of the city and Alborz Mountains. It is also stated that the mountains of north and east of Tehran are the most powerful elements of the regional image of Tehran, which are considered as a spectacular urban landscape (Victor Gruen CO, 1968). In addition, surveys from the documentary of the current master plan of Tehran, approved in 2007, have emphasized on the necessity of paying attention to Alborz Mountains as a natural sign, an identifying element and one of the

most important natural elements of the current spatial organization of Tehran (Boum Sazegan, 2007). Multiple studies on the relationship of Alborz mountains and the city of Tehran have also been conducted which emphasize on the importance of Alborz mountains for the city of Tehran and its inhabitants. Mountains as important natural edges and milestones of the city are of vital importance. The edge remains in the minds of citizens as an indicator and a part of urban area that provide the intervention and design as an identifying element. (Yarahmadi, 2010) Alborz Mountains as the northern edge of the city are considered a natural milestone for the villages and palaces located on its foothills. Northern *yiylaqs* of the city, Darband, Derekah, Farahzad and ..., the natural slopes of Alborz, the valleys of the northern parts of the city, the alleyways of the summer *yiylaq* of the city and the view of the Alborz Mountains shape the historical and memorable milestones of Tehran (Alehashemi, 2014). Furthermore, the capacity of Alborz Mountains as a solution is proposed to be a good solution to face urban problems. Today, the socio-cultural problems of the capital have been considered in two respects: the disappearance of the natural and historic natural landscapes and the lack of a sense of belonging to the city (Alehashemi, 2010). Despite the extensive emphasis on the useful role of mountains for neighboring cities, we sometimes see

that Alborz Mountains are introduced as the cause of a major problem, namely air pollution which have led to death of 4810 people in 2016 (Shahsavani, 2017). It is reported that Alborz Mountains in the north and northeast of the city block the winds blown from the west and cause the pollutants to be accumulated in the city (Safavi & Alijani, 2006). Alborz Mountains limits the velocity of winds in Tehran and act like a barrier against these currents. Accompanied with the presence of severe atmospheric weathering, pollutants accumulate in a thin layer on Tehran. (Naghavi, 2011)

On the other hand, we witness that the city encroach upon mountain foothills so that a word “mountain concurrence” is coined. The head of the Land Affairs Organization announced the formation of a phenomenon called “mountain concurrence” alongside land degradation and pointed out: “This process, if not resolved decisively, will threaten the security of the country’s food and natural resources (Afshar, 2014).” This phenomenon can also be clearly seen in Bibi Shahrbanou Mountains that is deteriorated currently. The demolition process of the cement factory and the transformation of mountain physics have led to the gradual disappearance of the mountain. (Khajehpiri, 2014)

Ann Sgard, on her first visit from the city mentioned that she did not observe the mountains of Tehran on her first two days of visit. She stated that the first observable elements is a large city with trees that are everywhere and commercial centers spread

throughout the city; and just when the mountains are seen we find out how close they are to us, while the mountains existed in the first place and the city approached it. It seems that the city has swallowed the villages around the foothills and the surrounding area (Sgard, 2014). It can be seen that the mountains that were once worshiped and considered the source of blessing and mercy, and Mount Damavad that was once regarded as Iran’s libertarians symbols, is not visible behind the massive buildings.

Paris is beautiful, but not like Tehran, London is not as delightful as Shiraz

Although the Alpine range is evergreen, it is not full of chains like Alborz Mountains

Dr. Khosrow Farshidvar

The basic point is that, despite the emphasis on the importance, advantages and capacities of Alborz Mountains for Tehran, we are faced with the destruction and invasion of the mountains. Sometimes we look at this source of mercy and beauty as the cause of urban problems. Therefore, it seems that the main problem is the negligence of the mountain and its capacities, or in other words the interruption of the objective relationship of the people and these mountains. Therefore, in order to address this issue, it is necessary to examine the relationship of people and the city with Alborz Mountains, and to use the conceptual scope of the landscape approach.



Figure4:Photo by authors



Figure5:Photo by authors

## 2- Research Literature

The majority of previous research show that Alborz Mountains have remarkable capacities and significance for the city of Tehran and they have delineated the advantageous benefit that are ignored in the city. Samaneh Yarahmadi in an article titled “urban edges” has discussed the role of edges in realization of landscape goals in *Manzar* magazine 11 and has argued the significance of urban edges on citizens’ mindset. She has also introduced Alborz Mountains as the most influential and identifying edges of Tehran.

Ayda Alehashemi in her article titled “viewing corridors; the identifying element of landscape” in *Manzar* magazine 28 has identified the strategic landscapes and milestones in Tehran. She has regarded the Mount Damavand as one of the main factors and capacities of Tehran and believes that these natural elements are not planned to be seen in the city.

Mahdieh Khajepiri in a research entitled “the landscape capacities of Bibi Shahrbanou Mountain”, which was published in *Manzar* magazine 28, indicates that these mountains have been of high significance and value to residents of Rei city in terms of geographic, historic and human (identity) aspects; however, these elements have lost their functions and they are detached from the city.

Rahmat Mohammadzadeh in an article entitled “the role of nature in modernity and facing challenges emphasizing on the city of Terhan” indicates that population growth and the advent of modernity in Iranian cities declined the role of nature to economic, subjective and superficial aspects.

The comprehensive plan of Tehran, approved in

1968, emphasized on the presence and existence of Alborz Mountains, especially Mount Damavand as an identifying element of Tehran.

The current comprehensive plan, approved in 2006, has highly accentuated the view and landscape of Alborz Mountains and Mount Damavand and suggested some strategies.

In previous research, Alborz Mountains have been considered as a beneficial capacity for Tehran that has been neglected. This negligence has been questioned and in order to scrutinize the reason for this act and this research aims at redefining the meaning of mountain according to its function in people’s mindset.

## 3- The conceptual view of landscape approach to nature:

Today, a holistic approach known as the landscape approach is defined to interpret the relation of man, nature and the environment in which nature is not considered as a mere ecological element. This approach can be considered as a concept in the study of the relation of the city and the mountain. Although this concept originates in West, studies show that Iranians view to the nature in the past was also a multi-objective view. Therefore, this concept can be effective in investigating the relation of man and nature in Iran. For instance, the meaning of Mount Damavand or Alborz Mountains for Iranians is very different from that of non-Iranians. Iranians who have lived in the cultural realm of these mountains have a common mentality about these mountains based on poems, stories, myths, proverbs and paintings of these mountains, a multi-objective mentality that is

observed among these people.

The look to the nature and natural elements with a holistic approach called landscape approach at current time where the look to the nature in people's mindsets has changed can be extremely effective. Landscape is another kind of place. Landscape is the product of humans and environment interaction in the exterior space. Landscape is a substantial human space for living in the environment and it is not emerged spontaneously. Humans interact with nature with all their mental complexities, they take inspiration from the nature and they affect the nature (Mansouri, 2010). The European Landscape Convention, in its broad definition, regards the landscape as a regional concept understood by the people, a region characterized by interactions between human and natural components and nature, urban, rural, and urban suburbs (CEO 2000). The holistic approach or landscape approach, which is nowadays considered as benchmark definitions in the scientific and professional landscape conferences, regards the human-landscape relationship as a complex and inseparable relationship, in which landscape is considered as a whole. In this sense, landscape has a physical body and meaning; it is objective and subjective at the same time, and these two features are inseparable. In other words, landscape is an objective-subjective phenomenon and it should be researched in both fields of science and art. In this approach, the aesthetic emphasis of landscape is on the mindsets and landscape is interpreted from the observer's point of view and influenced by spatial and temporal components. (Mahan & Mansouri, 2017).

#### **4- Investigating the relationship of Alborz Mountains and the mountain habitats and their foothill inhabitants**

##### **4-1- Ecological relationship of the mountains and the city**

The mountains as the water resource of the city /  
The mountains as the reason for presence of a micro-climate and its contribution to a favorable climates  
The land of Iran is generally mountainous and

semi-arid with an average height of more than 1200 meters above the sea level. In a land like Iran, if there were no mountains, the rainfall would decrease substantially with no water runoff in summers. Thus, it can be said that mountains act like a barrier to store a "controlled" flow of water in their slopes, foothills, and plains throughout the year (Study on the role and significance of mountains in the world, 2009).

Due to their altitude, the mountains moderate the dry and warm climate of the Iranian plateau and provide better living conditions for their inhabitants (ibid). Alborz Mountains also provide an ideal air condition by creating a micro-climate.

Mountains have had many benefits to ancient Iranians. In "Minooye Kherad", the wise man asks about the creation of the mountains, and he is answered that "These mountains are stimulants for some and deterrents for other phenomena; they stimulate rain, dispose evil, and preserve the creatures of Omarzad God" (Afifi, 1995). The interconnected mountains in the north that act as a natural barrier against southern warmth and wet flows, not only create rainfall in the northern part of the city, but also cause the natural circulation of the air in the northern half from the north to the southeast. (Safamanesh, 2014)

##### **4-2- The mythic relationship of the mountains and people**

The mountains as a place for feeling in the center /  
The mountains as a place of mythological stories /  
The mountains as a place to consider the souls of the dead

In ancient Iranian beliefs, the world was completely smooth and untouched, and there was no movement between the earth and the moon and the stars; but after the first reappearance of the devil, the earth suddenly changed by which dynamism arose and the mountains were created and the rivers flowed and the moon and the stars started spinning (Hinnells, 2007). Bundahishn considers the Tirg Mountain that is the Peak of Alborz Mountain, to be the center of the world (Razi, 1967).

According to Mehrisht, the Mehr showed the golden

side and came out of the ritual Alborz Mountains, sweeping the sky and looking at the Aryan homes with thousands of eyes, so that nobody will be able to break the covenants. Therefore, Mehr monitors the covenants, and to perform better in such a duty, he is always awake and never sleeps. In the days that followed, Mehr is blended with the sun, which is also golden (Mousavi, 2009).

Alborz is considered the place for the wise in Iranian mythology. The noble Simorgh resides in Alborz. It is the birthplace of Zal, and its height is a sign of connection to the sky (the position of the wise powers of the heavens). Zal is brought up in Alborz Mountains so that his wisdom is not infected with the human thoughts. However, he is bound to return to the community by “descending” from this mythical mountain. (Mousavi & Khosrawi, 2008).

The story of Kioomars who was the first king of the earth and lived in the mountains is narrated in Shah-nameh.

Kioomars became the king of the world; he began to build a place in the mountains.

The mount “Tireh”, which is the peak of Alborz, is located in the middle of the earth, and the Chiot Bridge spans from this mountain to the eternity, through which the souls pass to approach Paradise or Hell. The grateful grace on the edge of Alborz Mountain is the gates of Hell, where the Divans interact. (Mousavi, 2009)

#### **4-3- The mountains as a barrier against the invasion of the enemy and a stable fortress encompassing the city**

One of the main reasons for the location of cities and villages in the mountains is the issue of security (Fateh & Dariush, 2014). In low security conditions, the high mountains prevented the possibility of enemy invasions and attacks to the city. One can also refer to the refuges built in the mountains. Aside from the history of the city of Tehran, this city was previously considered a Zaidi Shi'i refuge in Alborz Mountains.

#### **4-4- Visual relationship of the mountains and the city**

##### **The mountains as a natural identifying element, as an urban sign and milestone**

The edge remains in the minds of citizens as an indicator and a part of urban area that provide the intervention and design as an identifying element. (Yarahmadi, 2010).

Alborz Mountains are considered as the natural milestone and as the northern edge of the city; and the surrounding villages and palaces are considered as the milestones of the city. The northern yiylaqs of Darband, Derekah, Farahzad, etc. can be regarded a social milestone of the city and the northern valleys, the alleyways of the summer cottages can be included as the historical and memorable milestones of Tehran (Alehashemi, 2014).

Regarding the mutual interaction of nature and culture, the ecological sign (mountain) is considered as a part of cultural semiotics. It seeks to study the behavior and relations of man and his natural environment based on the perception and interpretation of signs in order to identify the public landscape through the potential ecological identifying elements. (Soltani, 2009)

Natural components such as mountains, rivers, muds, hills, plains, etc. are among the constituent elements of a city's character (Noufel et al, 2009). From the social point of view, increase of productivity requires the presence of a coherent identity in the structure of the city from the inhabitants' point of view. This increase requires a deep interconnection of the natural and historical elements in a complex context (Hamaida, 1997). Although it is true that Tehran, unlike Isfahan, is not located along Zayandehrood River, it is situated near Alborz Mountains that offer the city a noble identity. Few cities are located in mountain foothills where you can easily find the direction when you are lost in the city. (Etetemad, Giti, 2015).

#### **4-5- Natural relationship of the mountains and the city**

##### **The mountains as the main manifestations of nature**

The mountains have a set of the most beautiful natural effects. The elevation, height, valleys, waterfalls, flowers, etc. offer viewpoints that makes mountains unique natural museums.

In terms of natural components, Tehran is one of the most exceptional cities due to being located in foothills of Alborz. The runoff water routes in Tehran and the moderate slopes of this city is an exceptional natural phenomenon.

In addition to being located at foothills of Alborz, Tehran benefits from seven river valleys that originate from the mountains that divides the city into seven parts. This is one of the positive features of Tehran nature.

If we imagine the nature of Tehran without its construction, we will see one of the natural wonders. (Behzadfar, 1999)

#### **4-6-The relationship of the mountains and livelihood of people**

##### **The mountains as the source for living of residents offering agriculture, animal husbandry and hunting**

Alborz Mountains benefit from a diverse environment where water and food is provided for its inhabitants. As stated in Bundahishn “these mountains have been created to provide food for to the Atorbans, Artashtarans, and Astariooshan” (pourdavwoud, 1933).

It can be noted that the environmental features of Tehran plain have allowed the rural livelihoods to be based on agriculture and livestock farming in plains and animal husbandry in nomadic lifestyle (Valipour, 2008).

#### **4-7- The mountains, a place for worship and worthy of worship**

##### **The mountains as a place for worship and**

##### **privacy**

In Zoroastrian tradition (the religion of ancient Iranians), the mountains were considered holy places so that they were worshiped. In Avesta, the holy book of Zoroastrians, it is stated: “O Hoom!” I praise the clouds and the rain that makes your body on the peak of mountains. I praise the peak of mountains upon which you have grown (Doustkhah, 1991).

Herodotus writes about Persian prayers during Achaemenid period: “Worshipping was not conducted in grand temples, but in the open air above the mountains. The Persians climbed the tallest peak of the mountains and they give away in the name of Ahuramazda. They consider all the dome of the sky as Ahuramazda. They also praised the sun and the moon, and the earth, fire, water, and wind in the mountains (Gharashi, 2010).

The cherishing of the mountain and its holy place in Ferdowsi’s Shahnameh is also reflected by describing a pious man called Hoom from the Fereydoun tribe:

His worshipplace was always the mountains. He was away from rejoice and the tribe

The name of this pious man was Hoom, this worshiper was far away from everyone and from life Alborz Mountains was the main place of Mehr (Goddess of Sun) and Anahita (Goddess of Water), the two vital elements of life. I was the place of worship and often worshiped by Iranians (Javadi, 2007).

#### **4-8- Mountains as a place for recreation and sports**

##### **The mountains as a place for leisure and a place different from the city spaces**

In some poems of Ferdowsi, the nature of the mountain and its recreational function is cited:

Now you should drink the delicate wine, since pleasant odors come from the mountains.

The air is filled with roars, and the earth is full of stress, the one who keeps himself happy with drinking is delighted (Ferdowsi, 1966)

These poems indicate that the mountain was a place for recreation. Currently, this relationship exists

more intensely between the city and the mountains. Today, an important part of human leisure time is devoted to strolling in nature and exercising in natural settings. Walking in the mountains, as well as mountain climbing are important recreational and sport activities. Tehran Mountaineering Committee has reported: "On average, on every Thursdays and Fridays, more than 500,000 climbers and tourists go to northern heights of Tehran" (Ministry of Sports and Youth news, 2012).

### 5-Summery

In documentary and historical research, 8 functions of the mountains and the relation of mountains and people over time were deeply scrutinized:

1- Ecological relationship of the mountains and city: the mountains as the water resource of the city / The mountains as the reason for presence of a micro-climate and its contribution to a favorable climates, 2- The mythic relationship of the mountains and people: the mountain as a place for feeling in the center / The mountains as a place of mythological stories / The mountains as a place to consider the souls of the dead, 3- The mountains as a barrier against the invasion of the enemy and a stable fortress encompassing the city, 4- Visual relationship of the mountains and the city: the mountains as a natural identifying element, as an urban sign and milestone, 5- Natural relationship of the mountains and the city: the mountains as the main manifestations of nature, 6-The relationship of the mountains and livelihood of people: the mountains as the source for living of residents offering agriculture, animal husbandry and hunting, 7- The mountains, a place for worship and worthy of worship: the mountains as a place for worship and privacy, 8- Mountains as a place for recreation and sports: the mountain as a place for leisure and as a place different from the city spaces.

In the following, we now examine the following functions to find out the current types of relationship between mountains and people:

Regarding the ecological function of the mountain as a water resource, the reason for presence of a micro-

climate and its contribution to a favorable climates, it should be stated that the high mountain rivers were the main water resources for Tehran. However, after the transfer of Karaj water to Tehran during Pahlavi era, the springs and qanats of the mountains lost their importance and the significance of mountain water declined. With the arrival of water supply network, the planting of non-productive and shady trees was possible in every part of the city and we could raise the quality of air anywhere in the city. Furthermore, with the help of electrical and mechanical facilities in buildings and the city it possible to increase the air quality of the environment, and therefore the importance of the mountain function as an ecological element in the creation of a variety of favorable condition has been reduced. Regarding the mythic function of the mountain, it should also be said that those mythological stories which indicate the holiness and high standing of the mountain, have disappeared away from the memory of the people with the advent of science and technology and the increase of modern concerns. At the first stages with the arrival of religion to Iran, some parts of these beliefs were rejected. In the next stage, the arrival of technology enabled the recognition and access to the mountains and caused Alborz to lose its place.

The security and defense function of the mountain has also been eliminated after the formation of a united army in the country that increased security in the cities.

In addition, the arrival of high-rise building technology and ignorance of the initial concepts of the comprehensive urban plans to free up the viewing corridors and streets facing the mountains failed us in making the mountain as a sign and element of identity. The function of the mountain as a natural element is reduced by the introduction of the water supply and water distribution system in all streets of the city and the mountain is not included in the natural green space per capita of the city. The livelihood of the mountain has changed with the change in lifestyle and livelihood of people, and the mountain and its foothills are no longer the source of livelihood for

many people; even the villages in and around Tehran have also changed in terms of livelihood.

Regarding the function of the mountain as a temple, it can be said that with the arrival of religion, the temples were built inside the settlements, and the mountains lost their position. However, the presence of Imams and mosques in the mountains reemphasizes the noble position of mountains for the people. Regarding the last function of the mountain, which is being a place for sports and recreational activity, we observe huge presence of people in the mountains at the weekend, who sometimes end up damaging the mountain environment. Any additional function, at the highest point of the city suburbs, will abolish the survival of the mountainous environments located adjacent to this polluted metropolis. (The statement of the Mountain Climbers Association 2014)

## 6- Conclusion

Despite the emphasis on the importance, advantages and capacities of Alborz Mountains, not only are these capacities disregarded, but also they are destroyed and invaded since these sources of mercy and beauty are sometimes considered as the cause of the problems. Therefore, the main problem is the ignorance of the mountains and their capacities, or in other words the reduced objective and mental relation of people to these mountains. To address this issue, we examined the mental relationship of the people and Alborz Mountains by scrutinizing mountain functions for people with a conceptual scope of the landscape approach. This research has been conducted for the first time to find out why Alborz Mountains are neglected despite the great emphasis on the capacities and benefits of these natural elements. The results of the research show that mountain functions have changed for people over time, and mountains no longer have their past meaning for people. It is also observed that most of the historical mountain functions are lost or neglected now. Another point is the loss of mental function of the mountain for the people. This does not mean that mountains do not have any meaning for people today and the purpose

of this research is not to find the current meanings of the mountains in people's minds. However, ignoring the mountains indicates that the new meanings of the mountain are not that strong in people's mindsets so that people ignore condemning the destruction of the mountains and condemning the negligence of the regional governments in implementing the comprehensive urban plans.

Nevertheless, according to landscape approach, it can be stated that the problem of one-dimensional view to the mountains and disregarding the city as a whole can cause this level of ignorance and reduce the significance of the mountains. Based on the concept of landscape approach to nature, which was mentioned earlier, the mountain should be regarded as a whole and, as it was said, the mountain did not and does not have a single function, especially for Iranians. Alborz Mountains have essentially been the basis for the formation of the city of Tehran on their foothills. The inhabitants and the body of the city of Tehran is not separate from Alborz Mountains; in other words, the city of Tehran has been formed in the context of Alborz Mountains and cannot be separated from it. Moreover, according to the landscape approach, the mountain has been a cultural element in the past with objective and subjective dimensions, but it has lost its mental aspects over time and is no longer a cultural element of landscape, and this may be the answer to why mountain capacities are neglected.

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