

Original Research Article

Chahar Taqi

A Continuity of the Mountain's Sanctity in Rituals, Architecture, and Landscape of Iran*

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Abstract | Chahar Taqi is the most frequent and basic volume in the Iranian Architecture. The structure of Mehr Temple, Anahita Temple, and then the fire temple was among the old functions of this element, which has been used as the main structure of the mosque and shrine after the advent of Islam. Many experts consider Chahar Taqi not only a functional element but also, an element with mythical and sacred aspects. Also, the mountain has been a multidimensional, functional, and sacred element among the Iranian myths. That is why many of the ancient rituals were held in the direct relationship with the mountains and the caves inside the mountains were considered as the first temples in Iran as other civilizations, and we witness that the Iranian have founded their own temples considering the sanctity of the mountain and cave. Sometimes, temples were built on the hillside or the top of the mountain, and sometimes, they were built in the form of the ziggurats and inspired by mountains such as Elamites. Therefore, man-made architecture adopts its sanctity from the mountain. Thus, questions arise on Chahar Taqi as what is the root of its sanctity and whether its mythical and sacred aspects, such as the ziggurat, can be related to the mountain. The current study investigates the common rituals of circumambulation and sacrifice between three elements of mountain, ziggurat (as intermediate) and Chahar Taqi. using qualitative research method, it also examines the relationship of each of these elements with Mehr or Sun through documentary study and exploratory approach. The results show that although ziggurats in Iran have been destroyed, the relationship between mountain and the architecture of the temples of Iran still exists. It can be said that this mythical relationship between Chahar Taqi and mountain has been established and in other terms, Chahar Taqi represents the continuity of the mountain's sanctity in Iranian architecture.

Keywords | *Iranian ancient rituals, Mehr, Mountain, Ziggurat, Chahar Taqi.*

Introduction | Chahar Taqi has been the most frequent element of Iranian space construction and has been the main pillar of space construction in Iranian architecture for a long time. According to the definitions of Chahar Taqi, it has four pillars and columns in four corners of the field and a square base. Both columns are connected

from above by an arch and a crescent and on these pillars and arches, domes and cupolas have been placed (*Loghat-Nama*, 1998, s.v. "Chahar Taqi") First, this element was Mehr and Anahita Temple in Sassanid Era and then, was known as the most prominent architectural style and called Fire Temple of Zoroaster. With the advent of Islam in Iran, it was again used as the main structure of mosques

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and shrines (Ettinghausen & Grabar, 2001; Mansouri & Javadi, 2019). Chahar Taqi as a frequent and original form adopted a symbolic meaning over time and if its structure is not because of the symbolism, it has turned into a symbol with the possibility of holy interpretation due to the repetition; also, it has been in Iranian's mind as a holy, spiritual and beautiful architectural pattern that in the Islamic Era, has formed the main structure of the building as well (Mansouri & Javadi, 2019). According to traditionalism approach, Chahar Taqi is a holy form in which the composition of dome and square signifies the combination of earth and sky and the plan of Chahar Taqi is the most embodied manifestation of the Creator and reminds us of four elements, four directions, four winds, and four seasons and presents aspects of worldly life to the imaginary world (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000, 75).

Also, Chahar Taqi is an advanced element in the structure. The height, centrality, grandeur of the dome, the vastness of the space without columns and its decorations are among the features that Chahar Taqi has provided to enhance the architectural space. Boyce believes that the main and fixed feature in all the Chahar Taqis is their square shape plan with a dome raised by the help of squinches (Boyce, 1975, 9). Ardalan and Bakhtiar considered Chahar Taqi as an excellent symbol of static as well and know it as a mandala-shaped plan (Ardalan & Bakhtiar, 2000, 76).

In general, we can say that Chahar Taqi is not a purely functional form and is a multifaceted element for the following reasons: firstly, such a form has existed in Iranian architecture for a very long time and has not disappeared with the change of worldviews and religions, and secondly, Chahar Taqi architecture was a complex form and considering the knowledge and facilities of that time, such a complex form for a basic function was not required (keeping the ceiling on the wall or columns). Therefore, its frequent and structural complexity show that this element was not a mere physical form.

On the other hand, the mystery of the mountain and its highness for ancestors made it a center of the earth and a way to reach the sky and turn in to a holy element. Also, living in the mountain was a sign of letting go of worldly belongings and being joined to the other world's belongings and was a sign of humility and obedience in front of his creator. For this reason, most ancient rituals were performed in the mountains and the caves inside the mountains are the first type of human temples. "Most of the prophets have revealed their religion to the people from the mountains, and their occult communication has been established in the mountains, which have found an exemplary status" (Mokhtari, 2000).

Mountains had many benefits for ancient Iranian. In Minooye Kherad Book, wise asks minooye kherad about

the reason of creating mountains and he is answered as follows: in the world, some of these mountains create wind and some prevent it, some are the place for rain clouds and some are beaters of the evil and are the protectors and life-givers of the creators of the Ahuramazda, the creator (Afifi, 1995, 597). In the thought of the Iranian, the earth had been always flat and intact and no movement was among the earth, and moon, and stars; but, due to the first attack of a demon, the earth was suddenly changed and in which, the dynamism happened, and the mountains were created and the rivers flowed and then started rotating (Hinnells, 2007, 22). Furthermore, Ferdowsi considers mountain as the coronation and living place of Qumars in Shahnameh, Qumars Story:

became the chief of the world/ He built his place inside the mountain

(Ferdowsi, 2010, 38)

On the Persian's praying in the Achaemenid era, Herodotus states that praying happened not in the big temples but in an open space and on the mountains (Ghorashi, 2010). Also, the symbolic nature of the mountain and its decisive role in the protection of crops and life has continued throughout the history of Iranian architecture and has sometimes appeared as special symbols and sometimes in more precise forms (Marzban, 1994). Therefore, the mountain has been a multifaceted functional and mythical element with great sanctity and inspiration for Iranians.

Frazer (2005, 375) believes that the civilizations of Mesopotamia, the Iranian plateau, the Mediterranean coasts, Egypt, China, and America, which were predominantly nomadic, transformed as the population of early societies increased and human societies migrated to other parts of the world. Despite the change in their residents, their rituals had not changed much. Therefore, they constructed huge buildings and temples and made many vows and sacrifices for the gods. In fact, huge buildings of Ziggurats, the pyramids, tombs, and tower-like buildings, domes, and high multi-floor temples were a symbol of mountain and sky in everywhere. There are many provable semantic and formal relationships between ziggurat temples and mountains, which have been studied and confirmed in many studies (Hall, 2001, 145; Eliade, 2006; Eliade, 2008, 107; Van der Sluijs, 2011, 53). In addition to constructing magnificent temples for the Gods, constructing mountain-like buildings in multi floors consisting of platforms on top of each other (ziggurats) was also common among the residents of Mesopotamia. Because the Sumerians and Babylonians did not have an important mountain, they built their ziggurats and places of worship "mountain-like". They originally built the ziggurats as a platform next to the temple of the patron god of the city. The Elamites also

started building ziggurats as large square buildings with raw clay. This prestigious building must have long been associated with the temples of other gods built next to it, but after a while, the temples became towers with stairs. The study of Iranian ziggurats also shows that the reason for constructing these ziggurats has the same philosophy as Mesopotamian ziggurats, i.e. a symbol of the holy mountain, the place of the gods and a way to reach God (Mousavi Haji & Keikhaei, 2008).

Elamite temples are formed in the connection with mountains and water. Bahar (1997, 545) believes that in the Elamite civilization, there is a God who is the god of mountains and creates water. This God is in a sitting position while huge water rises in front of him to the sky. Majidzadeh believes that the Elamite temples are built next to the river shores (Majidzadeh, 1991).

There was no important mountain in the land of the Sumerians, but the ziggurats that reach the mountains in the Elamite civilization have been destroyed due to the existence of the mountain and have become temples on top of the mountain. "there were mountainous lands in Elamite also, but ziggurats as mountain-like temples were not built on the mountains anymore. For instance, the Elamite temple of Kurangon in Fars was built on the mountaintop close to a river. Therefore, the temple of ziggurats is formed in the mountain regions and on the mountaintop, and there is no more ziggurat but the mountain itself (Mousavi Haji & Keikhaei, 2008).

Therefore, we see that the ancestors construct their temples in the connection with the mountain and its caves. Sometimes, the temples are built on the hillside or top of a mountain, or sometimes, they are built in the form of mountains such as ziggurats and the pyramids. Thus, the architecture used the holiness of the mountain to the sanctifying its own body.

Therefore, we observe there was a relationship between the mountain and Chahar Taqis (as temples that emerged after ziggurats) in Iran, and it must be mentioned that the shaping process of Chahar Taqi in relation to the mountain has started through a common meaning, that is the holiness of both places. The temples, which used to be located in the form of caves in the heart of the mountains, were gradually created in the form of Chahar Taqi independently and in the form of Anahita temples in the mountains (Qala-e Dokhtar), and then were turned into the Chahar Taqis that were the signs in the mountain roads (Taq-e Gara, Qasr-e Shirin), holy places inside the mountains (Niasar and Nashlaj), and fire temples on the top of the mountains. In the next stage, Chahar Taqi in the form of the fire temples emerged inside the city as a holy place (Natanz). Then, this form became the main part of the mosque in the dome mosques (Chahar Taqi of Yazd Khast), and after that, transformed into the main

Shabestan of the mosque with porches sticking to it. Finally, it forms the main space of the tombs (Shrines), palaces, houses, and schools.

Pope believes that the permanent task of the Iranian architecture is to fill the amazing gap between two worldly and heavenly worlds in two natural and symbolic ways (Pope, 1977). As there are provable semantic and formal relationships between the ziggurat temples and mountain, the temples appeared in the form Chahar Taqi form after ziggurat temples in Iran, this question arises that what is the relationship between the mountain and Chahar Taqi?

The research question is to find the traces of the mountain's sanctity in the Iranian temples after the ziggurats. Indeed, Chahar Taqi is the reconstruction of the natural or man-made caves of the mountains and there is a direct relationship between Chahar Taqi and the mountain; however, since by demolishing of the ziggurats in Iran, Chahar Taqis (that were Iranian Temples in both Mithraism and Zoroastrian religions as Mithraeum, Mehr and Anahita Temples, and Fire Temple) become the single main form of the temple's architecture in Iran, other aspects of the relationship between mountain and Chahar Taqi must be investigated.

Therefore, in the current study, Ziggurat was considered as an intermediate element between the mountain and Chahar Taqi to explain the physical and semantic relationship between the mountain and Chahar Taqi. First, the opinions on the research subject and question are reviewed, and then, the common rituals and relationships between three elements of mountain, ziggurat, and Chahar Taqi are investigated. Circumambulation and sacrifice rituals are common rituals among these three elements. Also, since these elements have extensive relationships with the Mehr Myth, this relationship is studied in all three samples. Since no study has been done on this subject and there is no research background, and the relationship between Chahar Taqi and the mountain has been mentioned in some reference, therefore, the research method is qualitative using the documentary study with an exploratory approach. Also, it must be mentioned that due to the following reasons, the Kaaba has been studied: its construction in Mithraism era, being affected by Mediterranean architecture of that era, the relationship with Mehr or Sun (Moradi Ghias Abadi, 2008), and the existence of sacrifice and circumambulation rituals.

Theoretical foundations

There are theories on the holy and mythical aspects of Chahar Taqis: Seyyed Hassan Nasr relates the Chahar Taqi form to the cosmic mysteries (Nasr, 2015, 84). It associates the centrality in the combination of four-

opening religious bundling's architecture with the dome house in the center in the Sassanid era. In the plan of Chahar Taqis, the holy fire is burning in the center and under the dome house and its open arches makes it possible to see through in four directions especially at the night time (Joudaki, Azizi, Mousavi Haji & Mehr Afarin, 2015). Experts such as Falamaki and Bastani Parizi, by depending on the historical documents, consider the Chahar Taqi a religious space and the transformed shape of the ancient religions' temples and relate it to the old Iranian religion, i.e. Mithraism (Falamaki, 1992; Bastani Parizi, 2001).

Furthermore, there are different ideas on the relation between temples and the mountain: Chevalier and Garbaran believe that there is a sacred mountain in the center of the world the sky and the earth are intersected and all the temples, stories, and holy cities or the Kingdome are likened to a holy mountain and they are promoted to the center. On the other hand, the temple or the sacred city is a place the cosmos's pillar crosses whereof (Chevalier & Gheerbrant, 1982, 317). Elide believes that the reason for the creation of fire temples in the mountains is the sanctity of the mountains in ancient rituals. He believes that because the mountain was the closest point to the sky, in addition to its functional position, it had symbolic meanings. He considers the sacred buildings such as altars and fire temples as "reconstruction of the cosmic mountain" and a symbol of the center of the universe and believes that cities and sacred buildings have always been in a perpetual combination with the mountains (Eliade, 2006). Mansouri and Javadi argue that the combination of Chahar Taqi and dome signifies mountain and it might be possible that the dome form of the Chahar Taqi be an adaptation from the form of the mountain. Some believe that dome on a Chahar Taqi is the remainder of Mithraism and the form of Mithraeum built in caves and the rift of the mountains (Mansouri & Javadi, 2019). Bemanian and Sivayeh state that the ascent and movement from plurality to the unity clearly represent the centrality that is visible in mountains and domes (Bemanian & Silvayeh, 2013, 26).

As can be seen, some researchers imply the relationship between the architecture of the Chahar Taqi and the mountain in the past, however, this subject has been studied cautiously and briefly and no research has been done on this relationship specifically to prove it.

• Mountain

- Mountain as Temple

Elide believes that the peak of the cosmic mountain is not only the highest point on the earth but also its navel. That means, it is the point or the root from which creation has started. He considers the encryption of the world's center to include the symbols of the three correlated and

complementary sets as follows: first, in the center of the world, there is "Sacred Mountain" and this is where the earth and sky join. Second, every temple or palace, and to a large extent every holy city and royal residence has been likened to a "holy mountain" and has thus been elevated to the status of a center. After all, because temples or holy cities are places through which the axis of the world passes, then in turn, they are considered the connection point of heaven and earth and the underworld (Eliade, 2006, 351). In another place, Elide states that the joint point of the earth and sky had been the mountain and as a result, it enjoys a dual sanctity: It is both the symbol of a lofty and superior atmosphere and the emergence of atmospheric works such as rain, and in this respect, it is the place of the gods (Eliade, 2008, 106-107). According to Mei, some mountains as cosmic mountains, are places in the center of the worldview, and some others are considered places for Intuition and revelation or the place of divinity (Mei, 1987).

Construction of the cave temples inside the mountains represents a kind of relationship between the temples and sacred mountains. "such an approach is seen in the temples of the religions such as Mithraism and Buddhism, and the initial temples of Hindus and the followers of Jainism and some of the ancient Egypt temples. In Mithraism, the incidence of killing a cow by Mithra occurs inside a cave, and the religious ceremonies were held in the cavelike (Mithraeum) (Cumont, 2001, 47, 138). In Zoroastrianism (Ancient Iranian's religion), the mountain was also sacred and was admired and worshiped. In the Avesta, the book of Zoroastrians is written: "O Hum! I praise the clouds and the rain that carry your body to the top of the mountain. We praise the ridge of the mountain on which you grew (Doostkhah, 1991,144) On the Persians' praying in the Achaemenid era, Herodotus also writes that "praying was held not in the large temples but in an open space and on the mountains" (Ghorashi, 2010, 131). Mohammad Moghaddam also believes that "one could not find a natural cave in the cities, the followers of Mehr turned their temple into a cavelike through constructing vaults and arcades and they built these vaults or supports wherever they could, under the ground to become more like a cave and be dark (Moghadam, 1964, 50).

The sanctity of the mountain and its sanctity in Ferdowsi's Shahnameh is reflected in such a way that a worshiper named Hom of Fereydoun race says:

*The one whose temple has always been a mountain/ He rejoices far and away from the herd
That artist's name was Hum / he was a worshiper, away from home*

(Ferdowsi, 2010, 891)

Therefore, it can be said that Chahar Taqi was the reconstruction

of the natural or man-made temple-caves and through this, a direct relationship between Chahar Taqi and the mountain has been established.

• Mountain, Mehr House, and Origin of Fire

According to Iranian, Mehr or sun was born in Mountain and lives there. "since they said that Mehr was born in the mountain and dies there, therefore, everywhere that there is a cave or mountain in which, water flows, they would call it Mehr Temple or Nahid, and they would go there to worship these two sacred things, and ask for their wish to become true, such as Tagh Bostan in Kermanshah, Pir-e Chak in Yazd, and BiBi Shahrbanoo, in Tehran (Javadi, 2007, 14). According to Mehryasht, every day, Mehr rises from its white ritual mountain of Alborz on its golden wheel, and it crosses the sky and looks at the Aryan women so that no one will go astray and break the covenant. Thus, Mehr monitors vows and to do better this task, has the feature of the ever-wakening god, and it never sleeps. In later days, Mehr has joined the sun which is also a golden sky wanderer and became one (Mousavi, 2009, 115).

The story of the emergence of fire and the founding of the celebration of Sadeh, which is related to the mountain, is also mentioned in the Shahnameh as Houshang was passing through the mountain with some of his relatives when a black snake appeared. Houshang picked up a large stone and threw it at the snake. The rock hit the mountain and the fire rose from the rocks (Mehr, 2004, 190). According to Ferdowsi:

Two stones crashed / the bigger stone fell on the smaller one

The heart of the stone became yellow/ a light came out of both stones

He then worshiped the god and admired him / the king in front of the creator

He then made that fire the Qibla/ and worshiped god for this gift

He named the celebration as Sadeh/ people celebrated that and drank

(Ferdowsi, 2010, 42)

• Circumambulation Ritual (Tawaf) around the Mountain

Sun (Khorshid), the great Aryan god who was common between Indians and Iranians, has many similarities in two cultures, the reason for which should be considered in having the same race and common history of the two nations, and the differences should be searched in being the millennia away of these two nations from each other and the geographic determinism of a different environment and its effect on beliefs (Javadi & Nikoei, 2016). The function of the circle in the myths, dreams, mandalas, rituals of worshiping the sun, and in the old maps of the cities represent the attention to the whole

as the most important and critical aspect of human's life (Jung, 1999, 379). Based on the thousands of years old tradition, thousands of people visit Mount Kailash in India every year. Pilgrims of different religions in India believe that the circumambulation of Mount Kailash on foot will be good for their destiny. Of course, the direction of walking around the mountain is different between Buddhists and Hindus. The Tawaf route is 52 km long and some pilgrims believe that this route should be completed in one day (Wise & Thurman, 1999). S'ayee between Safa and Marwa seven times between Safa and Marwa mountains as one of the obligatory acts of Muslims in Hajj is also a kind of Tawaf or circumambulate the mountains.

In Iranian Literature, the circumambulation of Qaf Mountain by Simurgh was mentioned in first book of Masnavi-ye-Ma'navi:

His shadow on the ground is like Qaf Mountain/ and his soul is like Simurgh, so excellent in Tawaf

(Rumi, 2010, 138)

Also, Attar Neyshaburi says in "Johar al-Zat", the first book:

Search that they circumambulate (tawaf) the Soul's Kaaba/ like all Simurghs in Qaf Mountain

(Attar Neyshaburi, 2006, 86)

• Sacrifice Ritual in Mountain

One of the most important religious rituals that have a deep link with the mountain is the sacrifice ritual that was noteworthy in myths and legends and had been considered among the main rituals in the divine religions and was usually held on the top of the mountains or by the springs. In the narrations of the religions' history, the first sacrifice was the sacrifice story of Abel and Cain on the mountain. In Mithraism, the first sacrifice was done by Mehr and Mehr founded this world on killing and sacrificing the first cow. "Mehr the one who has the vast plains and its birthplace is the hillside and inside the cave, born by the lightning of two stones in Alborz and scarifying the sacred cow inside the cave (Javadi, 2007, 15). According to Vermaseren, Cow is the first Mehr that by killing itself, gives the blessing to the world (Vermaseren, 2011). David Ulansey (2001) also believes that however it is justified, the fact that is considered by the followers of Mithraism is the achievement of salvation through sacrificing and benefitting from the eternal blood and being equal with God in the eternity. In the Zoroastrian religion, Persians also climbs on the crest of the mountains and donates for Ahuramazda. They also sacrifice for the sun, moon, earth, fire, water, and wind in the mountain. The peak of Holy Mountain was a place for the elderly to hold the sacrifice ceremony and worship the gods (Razi, 1967). Currently, in some points of Iran such as Esfanjan village, people sacrifice

on the 36th day of the year, and on the top of a sacred mountain near the village (Miri Khosroshahi & Farid Aghaei, 2014).

• **Ziggurat**

- **Sanctification of the mountain to the ziggurat**

The Sumerian word for Ziggurat is U-Nir (mountain) that Jastorm defines it as visible from distance (Eliade, 2006, 107). Believing in the life of the gods in the center of Mount Mero has also shaped many important Hindu and Buddhist temples in the form of the Holy Mountain (Mabbett, 1983). In 1890, Peter Jensen, stated that according to Babylonian, ziggurats were related to the concept of cosmic mountain symbolically (Van der Sluijs, 2011, 53). Eliade also believes that the Babylonian ziggurat was an exaggeration of the cosmic mountains, which offered seven floors of the seven astronomical skies tower, through which the clergyman reached the summit of the universe (Eliade, 2008). Hall (2001, 145) also states that Ziggurat is the symbol of the holy mountain that connects the sky and the earth.

- **Ziggurat's relationship with Mehr and Fire**

Ziggurats have been connected with Mehr in two ways; a symbolic relationship and a functional relationship. A symbolic relationship with Mehr is through the golden color of the last floor of Ziggurats. The color of the different floors of Ziggurats is as follows from bottom to top: White-black (a symbol of the invisible underworld)-Red (earthly world), blue (symbol of the sky), Dome or the room above the ziggurat as gold (a symbol of sun or gods) (Varjavand, 2006, 29). A functional relationship is also directly connected to the sunlight. For example, in a Bronze replica related to two Ziggurats extracted from Susa, we witness a special ceremony that the temple priests held near the two temples at the time of sunrise. This monument is another manifestation of the relationship between religious ceremonies and the constellation (Potts, 2018, 347).

- **Circumambulation (Tawaf) of Ziggurat**

The diagonal and spiral shape of the ziggurat stairs caused the pilgrims to go around the ziggurat towards the sublimity. Of course, there are different theories about the diagonal of the entrances, the stairs, and the spiraling of the temples. Some believe that this is due to the belief that the place of gods is out of reach. In order to respect and avoid insults to their gods and holy spirits, which were located at the highest part of the temple, they built all the paths with many twists and turns that required the pilgrims to go around it completely and constructed stairs with different heights and diagonal entrances (Shemshadi & Hosseini Dastjerdi, 2017). Ahmadzadeh also believes that there are four stairs in four sides of Choghazanbil Ziggurat ; visitors and pilgrims who wanted to go to the fifth and the highest floor of the temple to pilgrimage,

which was gifted to the Inshushinak God, follow the path in the state of Tawaf; that is to say, the stairs were built such that the person had to circumambulate or Tawaf (Ahmadzadeh Shohani, 2006).

- **Sacrifice ritual in Ziggurat**

In Mithraism, sacrificing a cow is the focal point of the religious ceremonies and the manifestation of the victory over the animal instinct of humans and living because of death. Sacrificing the animals is a deeply symbolic ritual and is seen in the works formed based on Mehri beliefs (Afzaltousi & Hassanpour, 2012). Eliade believes that sacrifice in Mithraism causes the priests to ascend to the cosmic world. "In the ascension of the shamans with the help of a ladder, the stepped cosmic tree, the seven-step ladder from which the mystic in the Mithraism religion ascends, and the ladder which makes the secret of the sacrificial rites to reach the cosmic world, all represent the transcendence of the material world by attaining the exaltation of the universe and reaching the highest point of perfection that is equal to the center of the universe (Eliade, 1983, 118).

Studies on Chogha Zanbil as the largest and most important preserved ziggurat show that the main and important gate known as the King's Gate is located southeast of the ziggurat. After the gate near the ziggurat, there are 14 sacrifice entrances (Niroumand, Zain & Jamil, 2012). Furthermore, Shamshadi and Dastjerdi believe that the square structure form with circular platforms in Choghazanbil was built for holding sacrifice and religious ceremonies (Shemshadi & Hosseini Dastjerdi, 2017).

• **Chahar Taqi**

- **Sanctification of the mountain to Chahar Taqi**

Selecting mountain to build a Chahar Taqi probably has its roots in the cryptography of the mountain in the ancient religions of the Middle East. In these religions, the sky has been the symbol of the place of light and the source of existence and the source of precipitation. Because of being close to the sky, the mountain has also mysterious meanings in addition to its functional position. Experts such as Falamaki and Bastani Parizi, with an emphasis on historical documentation, consider Chahar Taqi as a religious and transformed form of ancient religions' temples and even relate it to the ancient Iranian religion of Mithraism. Bastani Parizi considers Azargoshnasb Fire Temple as Anahita temple; he also recognizes the Baku fire temple which belongs to the former kings of Armenia who were not Christians, as the place of Gods of Mehr and Nahid (Falamaki, 1992; Bastani Parizi, 2001). In the Zoroastrian era, due to the increase in the establishment of fire temples, the ancient Iranian built their fire temples on the top of the mountains and where there was no mountain, the fire temples were built on the hillside. "Bastani Parizi considers the

protection against the attacks and loots as the reason for building the Iranian temples on the mountains and high and protected summits (Bastani Parizi, 2001). Some assume the first Anahita shrines, like the Mehr Temples, to be caves with running water (Shahrzadi, 1996). Anahita and Mehr Temples were usually built near each other and by the rivers (Bahar, 1997). Based on the different sources, there were three big fire temples in Iran before Islam, all of which were built on the mountains. Farnbagh Fire Temple, which was the fire of the class of elites, leaders and teachers, and according to sources, was located in Farahmand Mountain; Azarbarzin fire temple, which was considered the fire of farmers and sowers and was located on top of Rivand mountain; Azargashab fire temple, which was the fire of kings and nobles and was located in the mountains of Azerbaijan (Sabalan or Sahand mountains in different sources) (Jafari Kamangir & Modaberi, 2003).

Javadi relates the sacred springs on the mountains to the story of an arrow that Mithra threw in the heart of the cliff and from which, the spring flew and considers this as the reason for the sanctity of the mountain and building many of these Chahar Taqis and allocation of sacred places on the top of the mountain and especially, the sanctity of the Alborz Mountain for Iranian. He also believes that according to the belief of other nations, the temples built in the form of a mountain or on the top of the mountain were the sanctity of the mountains and were considered as the Gods' place (Javadi, 2007, 14).

One of the ways of connection between the temple and the holy mountain, or in other words, sanctifying the temple through the holy mountain, is the use of sacred mountain stones in the construction of the temple. According to religious sources, the Kaaba was built of five sacred mountains. As soon as Adam arrived in Mecca, he built a house of stones of five mountains, ... and brought its foundations from Mount Hara ... The house of the Kaaba remained like this until God drowned the people of Noah, and this was then that the Kaaba was destroyed and its only foundation remained until God placed Abraham in that land (Ibn al-Athir, 1992). Abu Qubays Mountain, the holy mountain overlooking the Masjid-Al-Haram, is one of the five mountains that the Kaaba is built with its stones, In the virtue of this mountain, it is said that when the Black Stone descended from heaven, it was deposited in this mountain. This mountain the first and highest mountain on the earth. In some narrations, the Black Stone is considered to be the same stone that Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) brought from Mount Abu Qubays and placed it on the wall of the Kaaba (Ibn Sa'd, 1995).

- Chahar Taqi and Mehr

Many of the Mithraeums, whether in Asia or Europe, are

called Nahid to cherish the mother of Mehr (Moghadam, 1964, 71). John Boyer Noss considers fire as an allegory of sun and the holy light in temples that were used in the Zoroastrian temple, Hindus as well as ancient Greece (Noss, 2008). Zoroastrians also call the temple and fire temple "Door of Mehr", which is reminiscent of prehistoric traditions in Iran and the religion of Mehr or Mithraism. Fire Place means the house of fire and it refers literally to a place where Zoroastrians kept the holy fire. In Avesta, there is no exact word for fire temple, however, in Pahlavi language, the fire means fire place. Zoroastrians of Iran and India call fire place as fire keeper and door of Mehr. In the view of Zoroaster, God should be sought in light, so every Zoroastrian turns to light when she/he prays. Since Zoroastrians consider the God of Mehr in charge of human actions, they call fireplaces the Door of Mehr (Boyce, 1975, 9; Oushidari, 2000).

The relationship between the Mehr or fire and the Chahar Taqi is also seen in the Chahar Taqi of the Kaaba. Some have the semantic relationship between Abu Qubays and "Qabas" (a piece of fire) that Prophet Adam (PBUH) took fire from this mountain. Some have considered the name of Abu Qubays as a diminutive of Qabas al-Nar because it has been said that two flaming sticks descended from the sky on this mountain, and Adam (PBUH) took them, as fire appeared from the collision of the two sticks (Yaqt al-Hamawi, 2001).

- Sacrifice ritual in Chahar Taqi

In the second volume of the book "Chogha Zanbil", Xenophon explains about the religious ceremony of transferring the sacred fire in a group and performing the ritual of sacrifice from the time of Cyrus. In the following, Ghirshman believes that in the Sassanid era, considering the intellectual backgrounds of the Elamite and Mazdaee era of the Achaemenid era, in some of the religious festivals and celebrations in which, many people of the city or village were present, a religious ceremony of transferring the holy fire from the fire temple of a town or a city to a place out of the city was held and its temporary sovereign was done under Chahar Taqi; he also continues that after the end of the religious festival, the fire was taken from Chahar Taqi and brought back to the fire temple of the city of the village again (Ghirshman, 1966). The ritual of sacrificing cow in Niasar is held every year after holding the Eid al-adha praying with the presence of many people. Based on their affordability, every family pays to help this ritual and after touring the cow in Niasar Neighborhoods, they sacrifice it by the spring near to the historical monument of Chahar Taqi (Mansouri, 2015).

There is a story of sacrifice for the wind by Ahura Mazda, who sacrificed himself on a golden throne under a golden canopy on pillars, which looks like a Chahar Taqi (Etemad Moghadam, 1975).

- Circumambulation (Tawaf) Ritual in Chahar Taqi

Circumambulation around the fire was among Old Mehri and Zoroastrian customs. In Bukhara, for example, it is customary for the groom to move the bride around fire three times before entering the house. The ritual of around the fire in Uzbekistan is also considered to be influenced by Zoroastrian customs. In the villages of Armenia as well as parts of India, Tawaf or going around the fire is common during weddings. Some of the villages of Fars Province and Kohkiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad Province have this custom as well (Shahmardan, 1981; Qare Bayef, 2005, 229). In his observations of the construction of a CharTaqi in "Khair" in the city of Estahban, Fars, Garousi stated that there is a CharTaqi building there, which according to their ancestors was called "the tomb of Ardeshir's mother, which was respected by the locals and long ago, everyone who was passing through that area, according to his vows and needs, circumambulated it barefoot (Garousi, 1976).

Around some of the Chahar Taqis, there were round corridors for circumambulating the center and were also effective in controlling the drift of the dome. Perhaps, the custom of circumambulating around the fire was common in the passageway (Gholam Gardesh) of the Sassanid Chahar Taqis as well, a space which was in the Chahar Taqi ha and made it possible to circumambulate, Chahar Taqis such as Kenar Siah in Fars, Siah Gol in Ivan, Tel Jangi and Kahnaro in Firoozabad, Azargashab in Azerbaijan, and Chahar Taqi Gonbad in Farashband (Shirazi, 1935; Kazemi, 2014).

Conclusion

The complexity of the form and the frequency of Chahar Taqi in Iranian architecture indicate that this structure is not a one-dimensional and purely physical element. The study of theories about mythological aspects and the sanctity of this element is also proof of this. On the other hand, the mountain is a multifaceted (functional and mythical) natural element that inspires Iranians, and as a sacred element has a special place in sanctifying Iranian architecture. This can be seen in the case of ziggurats, which are the first type of passages in Iran. There are provable semantic and formal relationships

between the ziggurat temples and the mountain, which shows that the mountain inspires the ziggurats and the sanctity of the ziggurat is related to the mountain. With the disappearance of ziggurats in Iran, the Chahar Taqis (which were Iranian temples both in Mithraism and Zoroastrian religions with the titles of Mithraeum, Mehr and Anahita temples, and fire temples) became the only major form of the architecture of the temple in Iran. Findings of the research show that the sanctity of the mountain in Iranian architecture did not end with the disappearance of the ziggurats, but it continuously appeared in the temples after the ziggurats, called Chahar Taqi inspired by the cave and its connection with the mountain.

The first reason is that the Chahar Taqis were erected the heights of mountains and on hills or near holy waters. This direct relationship also started to exist after the arrival of the Zoroastrian religion (where the Chahar Taqis became fire temples) and new fire temples were built in direct connection with the mountain. Another reason is the continuity of the common rituals of Tawaf and the sacrifice of mountains and ziggurats in the Chahar Taqi element. The commonality of these rituals in all three elements (mountain, ziggurat, and Chahar Taqi) and in fact the continuity of these rituals in Chahar Taqi shows that there is a semantic relationship between Chahar Taqi and the mountain and it can be said that this semantic relationship has been transferred to temples Chahar Taqi with the disappearance of ziggurats. Another important issue is the relationship the three mentioned elements of the mountain, ziggurat, and Chahar Taqi with the myth of Mehr. The research findings also show that the mehr (sun or fire) has an important and influential place in every element of the mountain, ziggurat and Chahar Taqi - the mountain is the house of the mehr and the fire temple is the door of Mehr - this relationship has also existed in the ziggurats. Finally, it must be mentioned that in the current study, the direct relationship between the Chahar Taqi element and Ziggurat is not found and ziggurat, as one of the initial forms of the architecture of the temples connecting to the mountain, is investigated as an intermediate element between the Chahar Taqi and mountain.

Endnote

*This paper is taken from a part of Babak Dariush's Doctoral thesis entitled "Landscape approach in mountain interaction with city, investigating the relationship between Alborz Mountains and Tehran city" under supervision of Dr. Anne Sgard in University of Geneva and NAZAR Research Center.

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