



## INVESTIGATION AND EMERGENCE OF THE INTERTEMPORAL RELATIONSHIP OF THE HUMANS WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT, THE MOUNTAINS AND THE MOUNTAINEERING

**Kaimakamis Dimitrios**

Department of Physical Education and Sport Science, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Greece.

### ABSTRACT

The ancient Greek world, but also several other ancient nations with culture knew that their lives and their well-being was interwoven with the natural environment, that is why the deities, who represented and protected it, held a dominant position in their religious conscience. The value and offer of the environment is recognized and by the modern man, that is why one of his greatest aims and desires is to escape to the countryside and mainly to the mountains for climbing, skiing or a simply stay, since the psychosomatic benefits of these activities are various and numerous. Besides, all the mountains and forests are significant life-giving elements for humans and all living beings in general, since from there rivers stream, underground tanks are filled with water, the forests produce oxygen for the atmosphere and offer lumber as well as a lot of other things. The aim of this work was to investigate and to emergence the man's relationship with the natural environment and especially with the mountains and mountaineering through the ages.

**KEYWORDS** : natural environment, mountain, mountaineering, psychophysical offer, life-giving

### Methodology

This work is a literature review study, while the method used is that of the research field. Originally, there was the collection of the data that was classified on the basis of the chronological and historical value. The selected material was based on written primary but also on secondary sources of reliable writers. The study has historical, ecological and educational value, since it is about the natural environment and especially the mountains and mountaineering that are sources of life, prosperity, continuity, progress, sporting and recreation for human beings.

### A brief reference to the relationship of the ancient nations with the natural environment.

The man from the very early years knew that his life, prosperity and continuity was intertwined and interlinked with the natural environment. He felt that he was an important link in the chain of the ecological balance, so he looked after it, loved and protected the natural environment and connected it with the divine, the high power that ruled the world and stated the course of his life, according to his beliefs. All these had to do with the fertility and the good harvest, something that was linked directly with his survival (Athenaeus, 13.609 e, Pausanias, 2.14.1., Ventris, 1959). Therefore, it was not a coincidence that the deities, who represented and protected the natural environment, possessed a dominant position in the religious consciousness of all ancient nations (Mouratidis, 2008).

For example, the King of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar II, who had already, in the 6th century BC, built the famous "hanging gardens" of Babylon (one of the seven wonders of the ancient world), believed that such an environment made both people and gods happy. The Egyptians, Indians, Greeks and other nations had similar beliefs, but they also established laws for the protection of plants, animals, birds, springs, mountains and rivers (Diodorus, 2, 10, Josephus, 1, 19, 140-141, Klynne, Klynne, 2003).

### The aspect and attitude of the ancient Greek philosophers and physicians towards the natural environment and the mountain.

Many ancient Greek philosophers (Plato, Aristotle, Theophrastus, Ippodamos, Pythagoras, Hippocrates etc) dialed especially with the flora and fauna and more generally with the natural environment, the climatic balance and the human relationship with them. Plato (427-347 BC) was among the first ones, who warned that deforestation causes soil erosion, climate change and damage to the crops, while he made numerous proposals relating to the environmental education (Plato, Kritias, 111d).

The following dictum of this philosopher, relating to the protection of the natural environment, is diachronic and timely "in the cities,

where the self-interest dominates, people deviate from the path of good and are indifferent to the protection of the environment" (Plato, Politia, a 557-562 d.). Plato also believed that human nature is affected, more or less, by the natural environment, in which humans are born and grown. For this reason, people who live in the same physical environment present, in his view, some common characteristics (Plato, Politia, 401 c, 435 e, Chronis, 2002).

For the relationship of humans with the natural environment the philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC), among others, states that "the processes of nature are governed by laws that do not change." He emphasized in particular the importance of the elements of the natural environment and some natural resources for the health and welfare of the city and citizens (Aristotle, Politika, 10, 1330a 36-b 18.). Theophrastus (371-287 BC) underlines the close relationship of humans with the natural environment, calling them to accept the beings of nature as relative society and to behave in ways that are relevant to animals and plants, as well as to the true nature of man (Dimitrakopoulou, Tsoukalas, 2017, Bartseliotis, 2009). Indeed, the above philosopher is considered to be the father of ecology, while for the Stoic philosophers the man's relationship with the natural environment formed the core of their philosophy (Mouratidis, 2007).

Also, the various physicians and philosophers (Hippocrates, Xenophon and Dion Chrysostom) knew the beneficial effect of exercise on the body and the soul of man, when it is cultivated in a natural environment and especially on the mountain (Galen, Healthy Speech, III.6, Lipourlis, 2015).

Besides all these, many religious ceremonies and other events relative to the ecology, the fertility and the good harvest took place and in the mountains.

Strabo (64 B.C - 24 A.C. ) refers to the departures and ascents of women in various mountains (Parnassus, Kithaironas, Taygetos, etc.), where they participated in various mystical ceremonies (Strabo 256.393).

In Homer's epics, with which the ancient Greco-Roman world, but also the Western-Christian world had been nurtured, a specific mountain held a dominant position. This is the famous, notorious and worldwide well-known mountain of Olympus, the seat of the twelve ancient Greek gods, which is a world monument of nature, but also a symbol of faith, intellect and freedom (Marasoulis, 2005).

In conclusion, the ancient Greek world and especially many philosophers believed in man's relationship with the mountains and the natural environment in general. It was not only a matter of life,

but primarily an educational, moral, religious and political issue. (Dimitrakopoulou, Tsoukalas, 2017).

### **The mountain and the natural environment in the culture and religion of the ancient Greeks.**

Greece is the third most mountainous country in Europe (after Norway and Albania), since the 80% of the land of the country is covered by mountain ranges. Of course, it is the land of the ship, the olive oil and the wine, the bright sun, the sea and the sandy beaches, since it spreads in the Aegean Sea like a palm with a lot of fingers.

It is not a coincidence that in this land, in this scheme (sea, mountains) and in this climate, the brilliant ancient Greek civilization developed. The natural environment, where many mountains possessed a dominant position, was loved and worshipped as sacred by the ancient Greeks, as in none other nation. In the Minoan civilization the dominant deity "Mother goddess" of nature, fertility and sports, was worshipped, in honor of which the Minoans danced, cultivated sports, prayed for fertility and good harvest, moaning the nature (Evans, 1964, Mouratidis, 2008).

Later on, the ancient Greek world had placed many and beloved gods and deities in the natural environment and especially on mountains. Olympus was the seat of the twelve Greek gods, Helicon of the Muses, Mainalo of Panas, and Parnassus of Apollo. According to the beliefs and faith of the ancient Greeks, the forests, the mountains and the springs were full of deities, (Driides, Amadriades, Nimfes, Oriades, Neraides).

Also, the goddesses Demeter, Persephone, Artemis, Rhea, Cybele and the god of sea Neptune had a direct relationship with the natural environment (D Kaimakamis., 2014). The feasts and the prayers to the gods, who protected the nature, the fertility and the good harvest, were numerous (Deubner 1932, Ventris 1959, Athenaeos 11.476).

The presence of the goddess Demeter and of her daughter Persephone in the Mysteries of Elefsina was significant, while the great ceremony of Blooming was devoted to the god Dionysus (Filostratus Iroikos 12.2, Ysichios, Eleusinia, Athenaeus, 13.609e, Pausanias, 2.14.1.).

Therefore, the trees and the sea, the mountains, the plains and the sky "everything was complete with gods and goddesses," who protected the natural environment as a whole, since the Greeks considered it respectable, holy, life-giving and nurturer (Kaimakamis, D, et al. 2009). The birthplace of Asclepius (god of Medicine), but also the ideal environment for healing various diseases was, according to the god and the ancient Askliades, the altitude, the clean air, the cool springs, the towering trees and the natural beauty, combined with the soft glow and heat of the sun and the mild climate. It is no coincidence that the priests of Asclepius used to treat various pains and insomnia with gymnastics, especially in the natural environment, (Lipourlis, 2015, Mouratidis, 2007).

One of the highest peaks of Mount Olympus that nowadays is called "St. Anthony" (2,817 m altitude), was selected by the ancient Greeks for their various religious ceremonies (Kiriazopoulos, Livadas, 2016, Gallis, 1982).

Beyond all those relating to the sacred relationship of the ancient Greeks with the natural environment and especially the mountains, it is useful to be noted that and in other ancient nations, deities, representing and protecting the mountains and the natural environment, held a dominant position (Mouratidis, 2008). Indicatively, some mountains are considered sacred and surrounded by a veil of mystery. For the various indigenous nations they are a source of strength and inspiration. They are the following: Foutsi (Japan), Emei (China), Sina (Egypt), Agung (Bali), Shasta (USA), Kailash (Tibet), Croagh Patrick (Ireland), Taranaki (New Zealand), Athos (Greece).

### **The mountain as a stronghold, a shelter, a protector of the oppressed people, but also a source of inspiration of the creators**

Over the centuries the mountains were for the attacking armies or people cursed, inaccessible natural fortresses, while for the indigenous defenders they were a blessing and gift of God. The war campaigns, where the army had to climb and cross mountains and mountain ranges, something that sometimes proved impossible, were well known in the world history.

Agisilaos the II (444-360 BC), the general of Sparta, fought against the Persians in order to free the cities of the Minor Asia. Alexander the Great, the king of Macedonia, also fought against the Persians for eleven years (334-323 BC).

The great strategist, in order to reach in the depths of Asia and to the fringes of India had, inter alia, to climb and cross many mountains and mountain ranges. Even, Arianos (95-180 AC) refers to the special troops of Alexander, which consisted of skilful climbers and impetuous acrobats, who had as a mission to permeate difficult mountains and to conquer castles. They are the ones who conquered the so-called "Sogdiana" Stone, a particularly inaccessible and fortified site of Sogdians, (Arianos, Alexander's ascent, and 4.18.4-19.4.).

The general's Hannibal (from Carthage) adventurous campaign (247 -183 BC.) was worldwide famous, because of his course from Spain via the Pyrenees mountains and Alps to the north Italy.

The Roman general Julius Caesar (100-44BC) had similar war adventures, since his troops reached the English Channel and the Great Britain. Also the Roman general Emilio Paul (229-160BC) beat Parsees (212-162BC), the last king of Macedonia, in the battle of Pidna (168BC).

If someone wanted to describe in detail the campaigns conducted through the centuries in the mountains or the battles that took place in them, it would take him hundreds of pages.

But also in times of occupation and slavery many people sought freedom and autonomy in the rugged mountains, which constituted their natural fortresses and shelters. The Greek people survived and retained their main characteristics (language, religion and customs) during the 400 years of slavery of the Ottoman Empire, mainly because many of them had turned to the mountains. There, far away from the direct supervision and control of the conquerors, they established neighborhoods, communities and a lot of thriving towns like Metsovo, Syrako, Kalarrytes, Nymfaio (Koukoudis, 2000, Merzos, 2001, Tritos, 1995, Lazarou, 1997).

As the Ottoman authorities could not easily reach the inaccessible mountain areas, a lot of Christian monks turned to the mountains and established monastic complexes. In times of persecution, almost all these monasteries housed women and children, but also fighters and rebels and a lot of times the monks were punished with martyr's death and the monasteries with a complete burning (Kaimakamis, 2013).

The prophetic enlightener of the enslaved Greeks Saint Kosmas Aetolos (1714-1779), in his perennial touring, often blesses the residents of mountainous areas with the following or other similar phrases: "Oh blessed mountain, how many souls of women and children you will save, when the bad years will come. Lucky you, because you live up here in the mountains. They will protect you from many ills. You will hear about the danger, but and you will never see it" (Kandiotis, 2013).

In the world history numerous people (tribes, families and villages) were rescued from attacking enemies, even from epidemics and pandemics (plague, tuberculosis, and cholera), finding shelter in the mountains.

Besides all these, mountaineering, mountains and the contact with nature inspires the imagination and it is a great source of inspiration for several authors and artists (poets, singers, writers, painters). That is why, over the years, more or less, people of the world praised the mountains with songs, poems, books and paintings. Several authors, in order to be inspired and to experience empirically their creation, lived in the mountains as the Greek painter Ithakios did (Georgantas B., 1878-1977. He used to live in a cave of the mountain Olympus during the summer months for twenty years, where he painted beautiful landscapes, steep slopes and inaccessible peaks (Newspaper "Vradini" 9-7-1953).

### **The mountain as a nurturer and life-giver to the humans and to the living beings in general.**

One of the greatest goals and desires of the modern man is the escape to the countryside and the natural environment, where he will rest, he will calm down, he will deal with various physical activities and he will regain the lost tranquility and balance, forgetting for a while the everyday life (Chatsichabis, 2017).

The mountain holds a dominant position in people's preference for such an escape-destination, since it is known that the mountain can offer them many psychosomatic benefits (Lipourlis, 2015, Mouratidis, 2007). Of course, there are a lot and different reasons for people to climb mountains. From the ancient times until the modern era people ascend mountains in order to cover some of their basic life needs (logging, livestock grazing, cultivation, hunting, browsing). Particularly people used to ascend or cross the mountains with the caravans-mainly the mountainous tribes-for commercial purposes, under very difficult circumstances.

Sometimes they visited the slopes and peaks of mountains for scientific purposes (to observe the sun, volcanoes, altitude), but also for religious ones (ceremonies, erecting shrines, altars), (Nezis, 1988, Kiriazopoulos, Livadas, 2016, Gallis, 1982).

The usefulness of the mountains is not limited to those benefits listed above. The mountains and forests, first and foremost are the primary resources of life for humans and almost for all living beings. From there rivers stream, the underground tanks are filled with water, the forests offer oxygen and lumber, the wild animals and many birds find shelter, the ranchers get, during the summer months, their cattle on the mountains in order to graze and so many other utilities.

Below there is some interesting information concerning the mountains: they cover approximately 28% of the earth's surface, with the largest percentage is in Asia (64%) and the smallest is in Africa (3%). The 10% of the world's population lives in mountainous areas.

The most important fact is that most rivers come from mountains and get their water from the mountain springs. More than a half of the earth's population depends on mountains, mainly because of the water springs (<https://el.wikipedia.org/wiki/mountain>).

Finally, each year, worldwide, forty nine million deaths of human beings happen, of which 75% are due to diseases associated with the physical environment and lifestyle. The direct relationship of humans with this natural environment and notably with the mountain is very clear considering these elements (Manolas, E, Protopapadakis, D, Tsantopoylos, G 2013).

### **The mountain as a place for mountaineering, skiing and recreation.**

In the old times people used to climb mountains or go through the ravines, plateaus and slopes as ranchers, loggers, traders, walkers, pilgrims. Nowadays, there is a pretty broad category of people, who go up to the mountains for other, completely different reasons. They are climbers, skiers, hikers, mountain marathon runners, mountain bikers and many others dealing with various outdoor activities,

sports, hiking and recreation. From all these activities man used, since the ancient times, mountaineering and ski mountaineering for bread winning and belligerent reasons (Xenofon Kathodos, Mirion, Diem, 1960, Börm 2007, Giovanis, 1996).

In the modern times these two activities began to be cultivated primarily for recreation reasons, since the decade of 1950. At the same time the climbing on ice and rock began to appear and evolve as a recreational sport and racing sport and until nowadays many other sport activities and leisure sports made their appearance. The development and spread of the above activities created new technical means, but also a great demand in the market (Kaimakamis, 2017).

It is no coincidence that the Alpine tourism, combined with sports, touring and leisure is one of the fast -growing special form of tourism worldwide, which can contribute to the economic and cultural development, both in local communities and in countries (Coghlan & Filo, 2013).

From all these activities, the simple climbing is the easiest, the most natural, popular and well-known activity to man, since he appeared on the earth.

People do hiking for several reasons. Some people do it for pleasure, some others because they have a desire to explore and «conquer» the mountain, others by curiosity or desire and internal appeal to overcome the classified difficulties, but the most of them for physical activity, tranquility and spiritual or mental rest. (Nezis, 1988).

Beyond all these, the man by doing climbing improves his aerobic and cardio capacity, while he strengthens his musculoskeletal system and makes his immune more durable (Reeves et al., 2004, Saunders et al., 2004). For those who suffer from various diseases, such as severe anxiety and stress, hyperthyroidism, varicose veins, respiratory problems, etc., holidays in mountainous environment (clean air, healthy climate, tranquility, sports) are indicated. The researchers Hanson S & Jones A (2015) analyzed forty two studies from fourteen countries, concerning a total of almost 2,000 people. They examined the benefits of their participation in clubs that organize frequent excursions in the countryside. The analysis showed that a person's participation in such a group offers him a great range of benefits.

The participants in such groups show, after a while, lower blood pressure, reduction of the heartbeats, cholesterol and body weight. There is also an improvement in the degrees of the diabetes. Even, those involved with the group hiking show improvement in their lung function and in their general physical well-being, as well as in the mental health, particularly reducing significantly any depression that there was before starting the activity.

It is clear that mountain can not belong to some specific local communities or even to some nations, since it is a public good. It belongs to all people and all living beings. This means that any damage and infections of the mountain can be spread and affect all of humanity (Mantsaridis, 2014). Therefore, ascending and mountain climbing should be intertwined with the protection of the mountain and more generally with the environmental consciousness of man and especially of the conscious climber. Moreover, it is claimed that the position a man or a society has in general towards the natural environment demonstrates the morals, the education and their cultural level (Dimitrakopoulou, Tsoukalas, 2017).

It is a debt, a duty and an imperative need of the modern man to ensure not only the technology for the protection of the environment, but mostly the appropriate education and the ecological awareness of the future generations. Besides, the cultural level, the education and the culture of people is judged by the care for the weak ones and the ecological conscience. Therefore the

environmental consciousness is an indicator of education and culture.

### The mountain as a place of fellowship and psychotherapy

As the climber ascends from the foot of the mountain to the slopes, the ravines and the springs, he has the opportunity to discover the wild beauty of the mountain, the unique biodiversity and the severe topography, while feeling the magic of sight, the altitude and the endless horizon.

On the mountain the psychic world of the mountaineer is affected positively, he prevents or reduces the stress, while he improves his self-estimation and confidence. The mountain also affects positively the theme of optimism, creativity, mental clarity and action (Kaplan, 1984).

Especially, the climbers of the same company have the opportunity to know each other better, to exchange views on their common interests and to establish ties of friendship. The pressure for efficiency, improvement or practice is replaced by the free choice and expression of the person, which is overpowered by a sense of calmness, clarity, confidence and natural beauty (Rossman & Ylehlä, 1977).

Even, the contact with the adverse conditions that sometimes prevail in a mountain, the person's struggle to reach his destination either it is the overnight shelter or the peak of the mountain-the solidarity developed among the team members, the new experiences (sometimes unpleasant), the exploration of the mountain and the contact with nature in general make up the true meaning of mountaineering.

Especially, when one reaches the peaks, he feels he has done a purpose, a conquest that led him to the balcony of heaven, near the divine, where he sees the world from above and experiences a sense of contentment and freedom. He feels that he becomes one with the clouds, the cool air and the mountain itself. "There, man discovers the world, and even more himself," as the lovers of mountain and mountaineering use to say.

It is empirically observable, from narratives of mountaineers, that some people are pushed toward the mountains not only by their conscious choice, but also by their own instinct, by an inexplicable and indefinable inner strength, which in many climbers nestles in their soul as an invincible addiction for a course upwards in order to conquer the height (Kaimakamis D, 2012). Of course, as higher is the peak that the climber "conquers", the more he is subdued by the grandeur of the mountain and he feels so small under the starry sky and the life-giving sun.

Finally it should be noted that the research regarding the psychological benefits that one can gain from his participation in mountaineering and outdoor recreation is still in an embryonic stage. Nevertheless it is supported that the countryside and especially the mountain has therapeutic qualities in the human psyche (Scherl, 1989, Kaimakamis, 2017).

### Conclusions

The deities representing and protecting the natural environment and especially the mountains possessed a dominant position in the religious consciousness of all ancient nations. For the ancient Greek world man's relationship with the mountains and the natural environment in general, was not only a matter of life, but primarily an educational, moral, religious, holy and political issue.

The mountains were unconquerable fortresses, on several occasions, for the defending people, shelters for the persecuted, but also the source of inspiration for various authors and artists, who praised them with songs, poems, books and paintings.

The life, the prosperity and the continuity of the human beings of all the eras on the planet are intertwined and interlinked with the

natural environment and especially with the mountains, since from there rivers stream, underground tanks are filled with water, there are forests that offer oxygen and lumber and much more.

For the modern man mountain is one of the most important destinations for recreation, hiking, skiing and other sports activities. As it is known, both from, ancient philosophers and modern scientists, man may gain a lot of psychosomatic benefits.

The position that a man or a society has towards the natural environment demonstrates their morals, education and educational level.

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