



**INTERNATIONAL
SYMPOSIUM ON
ANATOLIAN MOTİFS
FROM TRADITION TO THE FUTURE**



**The Tree Of Life İn Turkish Mythology: From The Epic Of Oğuz Kağan To Anatolian
Art**

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Abstract

The Tree of Life (Şecere/Tuba), one of the most ancient symbols of Turkish mythology, is not merely a plant element; it is a visual expression of the cosmic order established between earth, sky, and the underworld. This study aims to examine the formal and semantic transformation of this symbol in Anatolian art by considering its mythological origins within the context of the Epic of Oğuz Kağan. Thus, it reveals how an ancient mythological image gains continuity in cultural memory through traditional arts.

In the epic, the motif of the girl appearing in the hollow of the sacred tree in the middle of the lake symbolizes the tree's function in Turkish culture as a symbol of creation, procreation, and establishing a divine connection. The girl's direct emergence from within the sacred tree emphasizes her cosmic and divine origins, while her depiction with elements of sky, water, and light strengthens her connection to the celestial order. Her union with Oğuz Kağan signifies the beginning of the sacred lineage and legitimate power through the transmission of divine favor (kut).

This mythological framework has been reinterpreted in Anatolia. The Tree of Life motif is associated with the continuity of life, the conception of paradise, and divine order in carpet and rug weaving, wood and stone decorations, architectural ornamentation, and tile art. Especially in the nomadic Yörük culture, this motif has become an integral part of both the belief system and daily life.

In this paper, the Tree of Life motif is considered not merely as a historical decorative element, but as a living and evolving cultural heritage. The contemporary uses of Tree of Life forms

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shaped by traditional craft techniques are investigated. The complex, dense, and symbolic tree forms of the ancient period are reinterpreted today through the principles of modernization and minimalism. The study concludes that the Tree of Life motif can be reproduced in different disciplines through contemporary design practices. The use of the motif in jewelry, clothing, accessories, and decorative objects offers remarkable potential in terms of both aesthetics and continuity of meaning. These contemporary interpretations, drawing from the traditional world of meaning, contribute to making cultural memory visible again through the aesthetic language of today. Thus, the Tree of Life, whose roots extend to mythological narratives, continues to exist as a symbolic bridge between the past and the present.

Keywords: Oğuz Kağan Epic, Tree of Life Motif, Traditional Arts, Anatolian Art, Cultural Heritage.
