

THE REFLECTION OF THE TREE OF LIFE CONCEPT ON THE WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY TURKISH WOMEN CERAMIC ARTISTS

Hayat Ağacı Kavramının Çağdaş Türk Kadın Seramik Sanatçılarının Eserlerine Yansımaları

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ÖZET

Bu araştırma, hayat ağacı kavramının çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçılarının eserlerine nasıl yansıdığını belirlemek amacıyla yapılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda; hayat ağacı kavramının ne olduğu, Türk kültüründeki yeri ve önemi, hayat ağacı ve kadın ögesi arasındaki bağlantı ve bu bağdan hareketle çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçılarının eserlerinde hayat ağacı kavramının kullanım şekilleri ele alınmış, incelenmiş ve değerlendirilmiştir.

Bu araştırma nitel bir çalışmadır. Bu doğrultuda; nitel araştırma yöntemlerinden biri olan betimleyici/durum saptayıcı araştırma yöntemi, araştırmanın yöntemi olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu bağlamda; araştırmanın evrenini hayat ağacı kavramını çalışmalarında kullanan çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçıları oluşturmaktadır. Örneklemini ise hayat ağacı kavramı ile ilgili birden fazla eseri bulunan, bu konuda yazılı çalışmaları olan ve araştırmaya gönüllü olarak destek verip çalışmaları ile ilgili görüş bildiren sekiz çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçısı (Alev Oskay, Ayşegül Türedi Özen, Figen Işıktan, Hamiye Çolakoğlu, Kifayet Özkul, Latife Aktan, Nazan İlğaz ve Sibel Sevim) oluşturmaktadır.

Araştırmanın bulgularından hareketle, hayat ağacı kavramının her bir çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçısı tarafından farklı şekillerde ele alınarak eserlerinde kullanıldığı, ortak kültürel etkilenmeler olsa da bireysel farklılıkların ve yorumlamaların eserlerde söz konusu olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bununla birlikte; malzeme çeşitliliğinin, hayat ağacı biçiminin soyutlanması veya değiştirilmesinin bireysel bakış açıları ile zenginleştirildiği sonucuna varılmıştır. Ayrıca; hayat ağacı kavramının eskiden bugüne taşınan anlam yapısı, çağdaş değerler ve bakış açısı ile çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçılarının eserlerinde bireysel değerlendirmeleri sonucunda yansıtıldığı ve yorumlandığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bununla birlikte; hayat ağacı kavramının taşıdığı anlamın geçmişten bugüne ulaşan bir bağ olarak çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçılarının eserlerinde yer aldığı ve bu doğrultuda geçmişle kültürel bir bağ kurulabildiği sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hayat ağacı, çağdaş, kadın seramik sanatçısı, seramik.

ABSTRACT

This research was carried out to determine how the concept of the tree of life is reflected in the works of contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists.

This research is a qualitative study. In this direction; The descriptive/situational research method, which is one of the qualitative research methods, was determined as the research method. In this context; The universe of the research consists of contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists who use the concept of the tree of life in their works. Its sample is eight contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists who have more than one work on the concept of the tree of life, who have written works on this subject, and who voluntarily supported the research and expressed their opinions on their Works.

Based on the findings of the research, it has been concluded that the concept of the tree of life is used in different ways by each contemporary Turkish female ceramic artist, and that individual differences and interpretations are in question in the works, even though there are common cultural influences. With this; It has been concluded that the diversity of materials, the abstraction or modification of the tree of life form are enriched with individual perspectives. Moreover; It has been concluded that the concept of the tree of life is reflected and interpreted in the works of contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists as a result of their individual evaluations, with its meaning structure, contemporary values and perspective, which has been carried to the present day. With this; It has been concluded that the meaning of the concept of the tree of life is included in the works of contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists as a bond from the past to the present, and in this direction, a cultural bond can be established with the past.

Keywords: Tree of life, contemporary, female ceramic artist, ceramics.

GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Bu araştırma, hayat ağacı kavramının çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçılarının eserlerine nasıl yansıdığını belirlemek amacı yapılmıştır. Bu doğrultuda; hayat ağacı kavramının ne olduğu, Türk kültüründeki yeri ve önemi, hayat ağacı ve kadın ögesi arasındaki bağlantı ve bu bağdan hareketle çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçıların eserlerinde hayat ağacı kavramının kullanım şekilleri ele alınmış, incelenmiş ve değerlendirilmiştir.

Hayat ağacı kavramı, birçok dünya mitolojisi, dini inanış ve felsefi geleneğinde temel bir yapısal olgudur. Hayat ağacı kavramı genel anlamda kutsal ağaç kavramıyla yakından ilişkilidir. Yaygın bir görüşe göre hayat ağacı kavramı Orta Asya'da ortaya çıkmış ve İskandinav mitolojisi ve Altay şamanizmi gibi diğer kültürler tarafından özümşenerek gelenekselleştirilmiştir. Genel olarak alan yazın tarandığında; cennete ve yeraltına bağlanan bilgi ağacı, tüm yaratılış biçimlerini birbirine bağlayan hayat ağacı, dünya ağacı veya kozmik ağacın formları, çeşitli dinlerde ve felsefelerde aynı ağaç olarak tasvir edildiği görülmektedir (Turan, 1992: 547-548; Uğurcan ve Koçak, 2021: 440).

Türklerin kültüründe ve geleneğinde "hayat ağacı" kavramı çok derin ve geniş bir anlama sahiptir. Türk topluluklarında geçmişten süre gelen yaygın inanışlar arasında tüm ağaçların ya da belirli ağaçların kutsal olarak kabul edilmesi inanışıdır. Geçmişten günümüze kadar süregelen ağaç kültürleri, bölgelere ve kültürlere göre farklılıklar gösterse de; ağaç kültürüne ilişkin inanış Türk kültür ve geleneğinin her aşamasında sıklıkla görülebilmektedir. Ağaç kültü, Türklerde hayatın devamı ve sonsuzluğun timsali olarak kabul edilmiştir (Işık 2004: 89).

Tarihin geçmiş dönemlerinden itibaren, hayat ağacı ve kadın ögesi arasındaki bağ Türk kültüründe ve inancında oldukça önemli bir yere sahip olduğu dile getirilebilir. Birçok Türk kültürü ve inancında hayat ağacı farklı şekiller ve biçimlerde ifade edilmiş, görselleştirilmiş ve dönem dönem kadın ögesi ile de bağdaştırılmıştır. Hayat ağacı biçimlerinin birçok günlük kullanım eşyasında kullanımının yanı sıra mimari öğelerde de yer verildiği görülebilmektedir. Bu doğrultuda; özellikle, seramik çalışmalarında sıklıkla kullanıldıkları dile getirilebilir. Seramik günlük kullanım kapları, mimari yüzeylerde kullanılan seramikler, vb. seramik çalışmalarında hayat ağacı ögesine yer verildiği görülmektedir. Birçok uygarlık incelendiğinde, hem hayat ağacı ögesinin hem de seramik uygulamalarının oldukça eski tarihlere dayandırıldığı görülmektedir. Bununla birlikte; insanlık tarihi boyunca birçok dönemde, hem hayat ağacı ögesi hem de seramik uygulamaları ile kadın ögesinin birlikte kullanıldığı ve anlam yüklendiği görülmektedir. Hatta insanlık tarihinde ilk olarak kilin pişirilerek seramiğin keşfedilmesinin kadınlar tarafından gerçekleştirildiği dile getirilmektedir. İnsanlık tarihinin gelişim süreci içerisinde kadın ögesinin, seramik uygulamaları ve hayat ağacı ile bir bağın kurulması kültürel aktarımla günümüze kadar geldiği dile getirilebilir. Özellikle Türk kültüründe hayat ağacının eski çağlardan günümüze kadar bir aktarımla geldiği ifade edilebilir. Hayat ağacı, seramik uygulamaları ve kadın ögesinin bir biri ile olan tarihsel geçmişi, birikimi ve bağı günümüz Türkiye'sinde de görülebilmektedir. Özellikle hayat ağacı ögesini çağdaş sanat eserlerinde kullanan bir sanatçının var olduğu dile getirilebilir. Bu noktada; çağdaş seramik sanatçıların da bu konuyu ele aldıkları ifade edilebilir. Çağdaş seramik sanatçıların, Türk kültürünün köklü geçmişinden gelen hayat ağacı ögesini, çağdaş sanat anlayışı ile nasıl yorumladıkları ve nasıl anlamlılaştırdıkları, araştırılması gereken bir husus olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Bu kapsamda; hayat ağacı kavramının çağdaş Türk kadın seramik sanatçıların eserlerine yansması nasıldır? sorusu çalışmanın problem cümlesi olarak ele alınmış ve sorun çeşitli açılardan ele alınarak irdelenmiştir.

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ENTRANCE

The concept of the tree of life is a fundamental structural phenomenon in many world mythologies, religious beliefs, and philosophical traditions. The concept of the tree of life is closely related to the concept of the sacred tree in general. According to a common view, the concept of the tree of life originated in Central Asia and was traditionalized by other cultures such as Scandinavian mythology and Altaic shamanism. In general, when the field is scanned; It is seen that the tree of knowledge connecting to heaven and the underground, the tree of life that connects all forms of creation, the forms of the world tree or cosmic tree, are depicted as the same tree in various religions and philosophies (Turan, 1992: 547-548; Uğurcan and Koçak, 2021: 440).

Turan (1992: 543), referring to Walter Hirschberg, states that the tree of life phenomenon has spread all over Asia from the Sumerian culture (Mesopotamia). In addition, Turan mentions that believing in the sanctity of the tree of life goes back as long as the history of Turkish history. Moreover; It states that the tree of life is accepted as the symbol of the center of the world and is a vertical center that connects the sky and the earth. In this context, he states that the tree of life depictions are mostly depicted on a high hill or mountain, the tree is positioned in the middle of the world and its branches are assumed to reach the highest floors of the sky. In addition to this, he also mentions a belief that the tree of life exists in heaven from time to time.

However, the concept of "tree of life" has a very deep and broad meaning in the culture and tradition of the Turks. Among the common beliefs in Turkish communities from the past is the belief that all trees or certain trees are considered sacred. Although the tree cults, which have continued from the past to the present, differ according to regions and cultures; Belief in tree cults can be seen frequently in every stage of Turkish culture and tradition. The tree cult has been accepted as the continuation of life and the epitome of eternity in Turks. For example, the phenomenon of shabby binding on the great trees next to the tombs and lodges is nothing but the result of the tree cult and related beliefs among the ancient Turks (Işık 2004: 89). In this direction; It can be stated that the tree cult and related beliefs in Turkish culture and tradition are also related to the shaman (kam) belief.

It has been accepted as a result of researches on the area that the content of the tree of life symbols appearing in Anatolian Seljuk art dates back to Central-Asian culture. The known beliefs of the Turkish tribes before the religion of Islam is Shamanism, which is a belief system carried out through Shaman. It can be seen that the tree of life is an important symbol in this shaman (kam) belief. In the pictures adorning the tops of the shaman drums used by the shaman (kama), known as the tree of life; There are branches on the long stick that act as a ladder. In addition, as a result of researches, it is known that in this belief, the tree of life is accepted as the center of the world and it mediates the shaman's journey between the earth and the sky (Çetin, 2012: 23). Based on this information; It is seen that the symbols of the central mountain and the world tree complement each other among Turkish communities. It is thought that the roots of the world tree, which is located in the center cosmically, extend deep into the earth and connect the regions to each other (Turan, 1992: 548).

In Turkish culture, the tree of life is a symbol that has a very important place, especially in Turkish mythology. The tree of life is the home of the first man and the ancestor of all trees, according to the beliefs of the Turks. The tree of life also has a connection with death, the souls of the deceased used to travel to the sky or underground through it (Erdem, 2017: 347-348). In Turkish culture, it can be seen that the tree of life is depicted and sanctified in many different ways, using many different tree species. However, it can be seen that the tree of life is also depicted with different symbols.

The depiction of the tree of life in different forms and with different symbols is a practice that can be seen frequently in Turkish culture. For example, Bars (2013: 194) states that ascension to the skies has a fundamental place in the belief of shamanism and this ascension is represented by the symbol of a tree or a flying bird. With this; When the early Anatolian Seljuk art is examined, it is seen that the pomegranate motif used is usually depicted on the branches of the tree of life in stonework. The content of the pomegranate symbol, which appears on the branches of the tree of life, is the symbol of heaven according to Islamic belief. It is among the views that the birds on the branches of the tree of life may be spirits associated with heaven (Çetin, 2012: 23). In this context; When the historical process is examined, the changing belief structures, cultural differences, geographical factors, etc. of the Turkish tribes. It can be thought that many variables cause the tree of life to be

depicted with different form structures and different symbols.

In the beliefs of the Turks about the tree of life; It is thought that the khans, the women whom the khans married, were born from the light descending from the tree that symbolizes the "Tree of Life" and that they were fed from that tree. Likewise, in other holy religions, it is believed that revelations descend on the sacred tree in the form of light-fire-light, that the light of God descends on the "Tree of Life" and that blessed births take place in this way (Arslan, 2014: 64). Besides happy birthdays; It can also be seen that the tree of life is identified with the woman. In Eurasian culture, a connection is established between the "Tree of Life" and woman, and some depictions are female at the top and a tree at the bottom. It can be seen that they make nests in the branches (Arslan, 2014: 64; Çetin, 2012: 23).

The tree of life is considered as a "living being" with the power to "make it rain", "make the sun shine", "reproduce herds and cattle" and "give women easily" in Turkish and world cultures. It is one of the symbols of the Gok-God in Gokturk belief. As expressed in Turkish epics; The tree of life is described as a symbolic structure that breeds people, wishes for children to have children, makes vows, donates sacrifices and asks for blessings (Erdoğan, 2020: 63-64; Arslan, 2014: 66).

Based on the stated; It can be stated that the expressions and belief structure about the derivation from the tree have a very old history in the Turks. In this context; The existence of expressions and a deep-rooted belief structure about the tree of life, which has a very old history, can also be explained by the existence of forest culture in the lives of Turks. In other words; The formation of the concepts of Cosmic Tree, World Tree and Tree of Life among Turks can also be attributed to the forest culture that existed in their lives.

According to the ancient Turks; The Tree of Life emerged with the creation of the universe by God. In this direction; When the Oghuz Kagan (Oğuz Kağan) Epic belonging to the Huns is examined, it is seen that there are some important expressions regarding the derivation from the tree and the woman element. For example: In the Oghuz Kagan Epic, the sacredness of the tree is also seen in the section where Oghuz gets married to the daughter of the earth.

“One day he went hunting, in the forest Oghuz Kagan,

A single tree stood in the middle of the lake.

In the hollow of the tree sat a girl.

Her eye is more heavenly than the sky, this was a daughter of God...

He engaged in marriage with the girl, took whatever he wished,

They named the first boy Day,

For the second boy, they found the name Moon,

Let the sea be the third, they were glad.

When Oghuz heard about this, he had it ancestral in his province” (Tunç and Akbulut, 2016: 88).

In this direction; When we look at the characteristics of the tree in this legend, the act of giving birth, the cosmic tree character outweighs the creation. It is stated that the sacred trees and the tree of life, which is the most important of them, are in the task of communicating with God. God sent the daughter to Oghuz Khan through the tree. The girl, on the other hand, was fed with the sap of the tree of life and came to life here. It is one of the legends that the tree of life is used as the central location of the world and it takes place together with its life-granting quality. Same way; It is seen that the derivation from the tree is used as the theme in the legend about the descent of the Kipchaks: “The wife of one of the Oghuz soldiers got pregnant and her husband was killed in the war. In this battlefield, the woman was approaching to give birth. Nearby was a hollowed-out tree. The woman went to that tree and gave birth to her child. When they brought the boy to Oghuz, they told him about the situation. Oghuz named him Qipçak (Erdem, 2017: 344; Tunç and Akbulut, 2016: 87-88; Bars, 2013: 190).

Similarly; It is seen that there are narrations about the "tree" in the Epic of the Uighurs: At that time, there were two rivers called Tuğla (ie Tula) and Selenga between the Karakorum rivers. These were merging with each other in a place called Kamlancu. Between these two rivers were two trees close to each other. The tree, which they called the fesuk tree, which is in the shape of a pine tree and does not lose its leaves like a cypress in winter, was the tree of the lap tree. A great mountain appeared between these two trees. The light, growing day by day, began to shine on that mountain from the sky. Seeing that strange situation, the Uighur people began to hear

heartwarming and joyful sounds from the mountain when they approached the mountain with respect and humility. From that day on, a thirty-foot-long light appeared around the mountain every night, like a pregnant woman in childbirth, and a door opened on the mountain. Inside were five tent-like houses set up separately, and in each of them sat a boy with a pacifier in his mouth with milk according to his needs. The tents also had a silver roof over them. Learning of this circumstance, the chiefs of the tribe came there to see this strange sight and knelt before them as a sign of respect. When the children grew up a little and gained the strength to walk, they came out of their place. They appointed nannies (daye) for them and performed the ceremony of respect and love. When they got past the age of drinking milk and started talking, they asked about their parents. When they showed the trees, they went there and showed the trees the respect that the son showed to the father (Ögel, 1998: 90). As it is seen, in this epic, it is not possible for children to be born from trees. The tree was used as a means for the birth of children. In the Turkish belief and thought system, inns or gentlemen are descended from God to the earth through sacred trees (Ergun, 2012: 336).

It can be stated that since the past periods of history, the bond between the tree of life and the woman element has a very important place in Turkish culture and belief. In many Turkish cultures and beliefs, the tree of life has been expressed in different shapes and forms, visualized and associated with the woman element from time to time. It can be seen that tree of life forms are used in many daily use items as well as in architectural elements. In this direction; In particular, it can be stated that they are frequently used in ceramic works. Ceramic daily use pots, ceramics used on architectural surfaces, etc. It is seen that the tree of life element is included in the ceramic works. When many civilizations are examined, it is seen that both the tree of life element and ceramic applications are based on very old dates. With this; In many periods throughout human history, it is seen that both the tree of life element and ceramic applications and the woman element are used together and loaded with meaning. It is even stated that the discovery of ceramics by firing clay for the first time in human history was carried out by women. In the development process of human history, it can be said that the woman element, ceramic applications and the establishment of a bond with the tree of life have survived to the present day with cultural transfer. It can be stated that the tree of life, especially in Turkish culture, has come from ancient times to the present day with a transfer. The historical background, accumulation and bond of the tree of life, ceramic applications and the female element can be seen in today's Turkey. In particular, it can be stated that there is an artist who uses the tree of life element in his contemporary works of art. At this point; It can be stated that contemporary ceramic artists also deal with this issue. How contemporary ceramic artists interpret and make sense of the tree of life element, which comes from the deep-rooted past of Turkish culture, with the understanding of contemporary art has been evaluated as a matter that needs to be investigated. In this context; How is the concept of the tree of life reflected in the works of contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists? question was taken as the problem sentence of the study and the problem was examined from various perspectives.

METHOD

This research was conducted by considering the descriptive/situational research model, which is one of the qualitative research models. Descriptive studies reveal what happens in the cases, what goes together with what, instead of explaining the cause of the phenomenon. With the descriptive research model, the current situation on a subject is investigated (Neuman, 1997: 370-371). Descriptive research aims to explain the phenomenon it deals with in detail and mainly focuses on "What happened?" Descriptive studies describe a given situation as precisely and carefully as possible (Büyüköztürk et al., 2016: 23).

Universe and Sample of the Research

The universe of the research consists of contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists who use the concept of the tree of life in their works. Its sample is eight contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists (Alev Oskay, Ayşegül Türedi Özen, Figen Işıktan, Hamiye Çolakoğlu, Kifayet Özkul, Latife Aktan, Nazan Ilgaz and Sibel Sevim) who have more than one work on the concept of the tree of life, who have written works on this subject, and who voluntarily supported the research and expressed their opinions on their works.



**Figure 1. Alev OSKAY, "Demeter" (13x10) h=35cm red clay shaping on a lathe, firing at 1050°C, 2018.
Associazione Pandora Artiste Ceramiste collection**

In Figure 1, it is seen that Alev OSKAY expresses and reflects a tree trunk and branches with a human figure in her work on the concept of the tree of life. In her study, Alev OSKAY assembled the cylinder and sphere forms on a ceramic lathe after shaping them and deforming some forms. As can be understood from the name of the work, it is seen that the holy, supreme woman, the god of fertility of the earth, expresses Demeter in the form of a tree. In literature, Demeter symbolizes a strong and fertile woman. Moreover; Demeter can be expressed as the symbol of mother's love looking for her daughter and the symbol of abundance, which teaches people to cultivate the land. In this work of Alev OSKAY, Demeter is stated as a source of life, in the form of a tree made of ceramic, that feeds from the soil and enables people to sustain their lives with its fruits. It can be said that Alev OSKAY was inspired by Demeter's story. In addition, combining Demeter with the tree form, it can be stated that the changing seasons and the change from life to death are shaped as a geometric cycle of transformation.



**Figure 2. Ayşegül Türedi Özen, “bird on a branch”, 30 x 35cm., hand sculpted with chamotte clay, glazed, 1200°C, 2002
Ayşegül Türedi Özen Collection, Eskişehir.**

Ayşegül Türedi Özen draws attention as an artist who frequently uses the tree of life and bird among contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists. As can be seen from Figure 2, the concept of tree of life in Ayşegül Türedi Özen's works can be used sometimes alone or together with a different element. Ayşegül Türedi Özen shapes her works in two or three dimensions using different clays and glazes. In connection with the concept of the artist's tree of life; she deals with many tree species such as poplar, pine, cypress, plane tree, and redbud in his works. The artist shapes the tree of life, sometimes with a tiny bird, on the branches of these trees.

In Ayşegül Türedi Özen's work, although the concept of tree of life is expressed with a single bird element, it can be seen that the tree represents nature, life, seasons, abundance, fertility and productivity according to the climate and soil of the region it belongs to. Ayşegül Türedi Özen can identify the tree of life with the trees in the geography of Eskişehir and add a contemporary interpretation to her works. In this work of Ayşegül Türedi Özen, the concept of tree of life, with its roots; their centuries-old, lofty, lofty features with their clinging to the soil; with their trunks; the characteristic of power and majesty by standing upright; with its branches, leaves, flowers and fruits; the feature of reproduction, fertility, abundance and fertility; It also emphasizes the feature of originality with its color, texture and smell. While the artist deals with the concept of the tree of life in her works, she emphasizes an even more privileged awareness of this magnificent natural existence and makes a reference to the questioning of the future.



In Figure 3, Figen Işıktan, on plate 1 from left to right, expresses the concept of tree of life with a tree form and a pair of birds perched on its branches, looking at each other. Likewise, on the 2nd plate from left to right, a pair of birds is depicted, perched on a tree branch, looking in different/opposite directions, with a star behind the bars. Figen Işıktan depicts a tree and a pair of free birds in nature with the concept of the tree of life on the 1st plate. With this depiction, Figen Işıktan symbolically expresses life and lineage. On the 2nd plate, a couple of birds perched on a tree branch are limited and indicated as datay. Thus, it can be stated that she refers to the concept of the tree of life and the interventions towards natural life today.

In Figen Işıktan's work, it is seen that the symbols of the tree of life and golden cage existing in Turkish culture are used. In the tree of life (Plate 1), a pair of birds depicted looking at each other emphasizes that a couple makes up life. On the other hand, 2. The gold color used on the plate means the limitations and convictions that are made to have.



**Figure 4. Hamiye Çolakoğlu, “Tree of Life”, 7m x 2.80m, Metal and Porcelain, 1997.
Çanakkale Ceramic Factories ÇAN Collection.**

Hamiye Çolakoğlu Figure 4 shows three tree trunks formed by using a thin and long metal construction structure and tree branches made of porcelain pipes on them. There are horizontal and vertical contrasts in the study. In this study of Hamiye Çolakoğlu on the tree of life, metal and porcelain materials are used together. The harmonious combination of metal and porcelain material in this work refers to the harmony of the tree of life with life. In this work of Hamiye Çolakoğlu on the tree of life, the contrasts in the essence of life are emphasized by using materials that will create contrast. The harmony in the shaping, firing, coloring and arrangement of the porcelain material creates a balance with the simplicity and verticality of the metal structure. Just as the tree of life plays a balancing role. While the artist interprets life as the "tree of life"; she also depicts her upright stance against difficulties in her work. Hamiye Çolakoğlu's imagination, technological know-how and mastery of materials can be seen in this tree of life depiction.



Figure 5. Kifayet Özkul, “Turkish states- tree of life panel-2”, tile underglaze technique, 60x100cm, 2019.
Kifayet Ozkul collection

In Figure 5, Kifayet Özkul, it is seen that the tree of life form, made in a rectangular panel form, was designed symmetrically in the Rumi style. It is understood that all of the elements used in the design are the elements used in Turkish culture. In Kifayet Özkul's study on the concept of the tree of life, it can be thought that the turtle element, which is considered sacred in Turkish belief as a very long-lived animal that carries its home on its back, is used as it symbolizes the power, protection and eternity of the state. With this; With these figures used in the tree of life design, it can be said that the Turks act with free will, they do not obey the rules, they struggle for life for the Turkish race, they founded many Turkish states, and the awareness that being a martyr means reaching Allah without fear of death. In this study by Kifayet Özkul on the concept of the tree of life, it is seen that the Göktürks, Oghuzes, Great Seljuks and Anatolian Seljuks periods are referred to. In addition, it can be stated that the Ottoman Sun hidden among the clouds at the top of the panel contains a reference to the Ottoman State, and the Crescent and Star in the middle of the sun to the Republic of Turkey. At the same time, in this study by Kifayet Özkul on the concept of the tree of life, Hilal; Islam and the Star; It can be thought that it is used because it represents the five pillars of Islam. Moreover; It can be assumed that it was used to show the value given to Islam by the Turkish Nation, which continues from the line of Divine Word.



Figure 6. Latife Aktan, “tuba tree”, 170x340 cm, layered tile technique, 2017. İstanbul Büyük Çamlıca Mosque, Women's Hall (included as a twin panel).

In Figure 6, Latife Aktan depicts the Tuba tree, whose roots are in the sky and inverted from top to bottom, in her rectangular work based on the concept of the tree of life. The tuba tree hangs down from its roots among the stars. The stars are depicted as 49 pieces. 24 of them are layers. Different flowers included in the rumi composition are depicted at the bottom of the work. There are 10 flowers and 99 leaves as layers on the branches of the tree. Numbers from one to ninety-nine were created in the empty spots of the leaf veins with a digital software system (binary) and octal array. The trunk of the tree depicted in the work is spiral. In this context, it can be thought that this formation expresses Adam-Eve, woman-early or mother-father. Since the tree trunk is positioned in the center, it can be assumed that the emphasis of the work is on this tree trunk.

At the same time; In the study, the motifs in the form of spikes (right and left) can be thought to represent Adam and Eve. Small flowers may be assumed to refer to children and other flowers to siblings, relatives, or individuals by blood. There are 99 leaves of the tree and numbers (from one to ninety-nine) with the digital software system in the leaf veins; It can be thought that he is emphasizing Esmā-ul Husnā (the ninety-nine names of Allah).

It can be assumed that life is time dependent, like an hourglass. In this direction; Latife Aktan's phrase "When the number of breaths is over, you become soil" comes to mind with the hourglass image that dominates throughout her work. It can be thought that the stars depicted in the work represent grains of sand. The rumi fiction at the bottom of the study can be interpreted as symbolizing the streams circulating between the lands and the life that is greening up again. Time between heaven and earth is life. Life and death are one. It should not be forgotten that death is also about life.

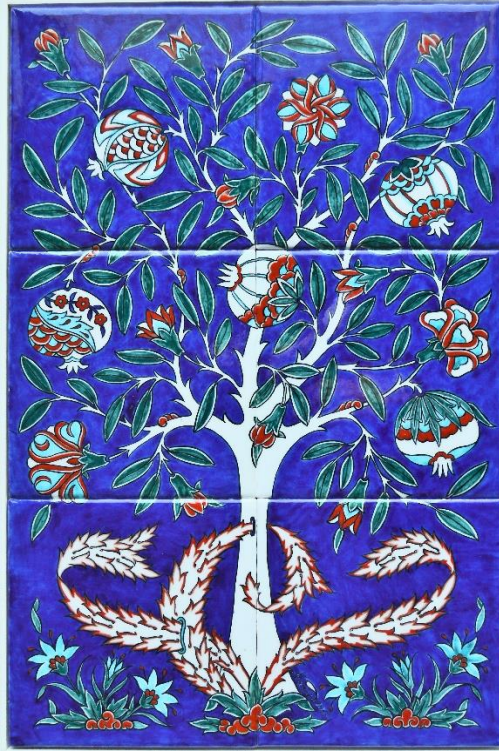


Figure 7. Nazan Ilgaz, “pomegranate tree”, 4x60 cm., underglaze technique on Iznik stone tile, 2013.
Nazan Ilgaz collection.

In Figure 7, it is seen that Nazan Ilgaz stylized a pomegranate tree on a cobalt background in her work “pomegranate tree” in connection with the concept of the tree of life. In her work, it can be stated that the artist carries out the design by paying attention to the pomegranate flower's bud, slightly bloomed, fully bloomed and pomegranate state in nature. When picture 7 is examined, it is seen that there are leaves in the style of reed path with red contours at the bottom of the tree. Moreover; It is also seen that flowers resembling saffron flowers are depicted in the lower right and left corners.

It is known that the pomegranate, which is a fruit that has been sanctified and immortalized by every culture from shamanist beliefs until today, is described as the fruit of heaven. When the application forms and mythological origin of the pomegranate in Turkish Culture are examined, it is seen that it is depicted with extraordinary power, beauty, abundance, fertility, the sacred tree, the tree of life/knowledge, the evil eye symbol that drives away evil possessors, and the characteristics of having offspring. In Nazan Ilgaz's work titled "pomegranate tree" in connection with the concept of the tree of life, it is seen that she depicts the pomegranate tree as a whole, all the stages of the pomegranate fruit's flowering process and its transformation into a pomegranate.



Figure 8. Sibel Sevim, "tree of life", 50x55x22 cm., openwork decor with pouring, 1180 C, 2017
Gelengul Tiglioglu Collection

In Figure 8, Sibel Sevim's work named "tree of life" in connection with the concept of the tree of life, as the name suggests, depicts the tree of life. In Sibel Sevim's work, openwork decors were obtained by pouring and a tree form was formed by bringing together the units on which marbling decor was made when they were wet. It can be said that Sibel Sevim was inspired by the Hittite and Seljuk motifs associated with Turkish civilizations in her work titled "tree of life" in connection with the concept of the tree of life. It can also be stated that there is a reference to the art of marbling in Turkish culture. With this; It can be thought that the round units in the work represent civilizations, the stem part in the lower part of the work represents rooting and the motifs realized with the marbling technique represent vitality. It can be stated that the holes in each of the units refer to the link between civilizations and civilizations. As known; The tree of life represents life and vitality, as well as the bond between lives. It can be thought that in Sibel Sevim's work named "tree of life" in connection with the concept of the tree of life, the historical process of Turkish culture from the Anatolian Civilizations to the Hittite, Seljuk and Ottoman Periods is discussed and the connection between them is interpreted and transferred to the work.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings obtained within the scope of the research, it has been concluded that the concept of the tree of life is used in different ways by each contemporary Turkish female ceramic artist, and that individual differences and interpretations are in question in their works, even if there are common cultural influences. With this; It has been concluded that the diversity of materials, the abstraction or modification of the tree of life form are enriched with individual perspectives. Moreover; It has been concluded that the concept of the tree of life is reflected and interpreted in the works of contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists as a result of their individual evaluations, with its meaning structure, contemporary values and perspective, which has been carried to the present day. With this; It has been concluded that the meaning of the concept of the tree of life is included in the works of contemporary Turkish female ceramic artists as a bond from the past to the present, and in this direction, a cultural bond can be established with the past.

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