

## A Semiotic Study and Analysis of the Archetype of the Tree of Life in Contemporary Iranian Graphics

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### Research Article

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#### Abstract

The present study was conducted to investigate the semiotic archetype of the tree of life in contemporary Iranian graphic works. The purpose of this study is to investigate the importance and role of the archetype of the tree of life in contemporary Iranian graphics, which has been done with a semiotic approach and the study of myths related to Iranian culture. Library and interview methods were used to collect data. For this purpose, in addition to studying the relevant documents, in-depth interviews were conducted with experts in this field. The method of data collection in this study was interview. Interview findings were analyzed based on theme analysis. Based on this, our findings show that based on the codifications, the concept of the tree of life has been used in 21 categories and 7 main concepts. These concepts include eternity, death and life, connection to the other world, light, the importance of worldly life, the myth of life, and the myth of creation. The results of this study show that the tree of life in the works of contemporary Iranian graphic artists has been related to their religious, spiritual and historical beliefs, and what has made contemporary Iranian graphic works a meaningful symbol is its value and meaning in relation to concepts. It has been fertility, fertility and childbirth. Even the appearance of animal symbols, celestial bodies, and goddesses, along with this archetype, contains the concept of fertility. Although not all manifestations of tree idols in contemporary Iranian graphics are merely related to the concept of the tree of life, but the use of common imagination between artists and of course the distance from diversity, has caused artists in this field the historical, spiritual and cultural contribution of this element as a symbol on the contemporary graphic art of Iran.

**Keywords:** Tree of Life; Semiotics; Graphics; Theme Analysis

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## 1. Introduction

"Archetypes" or "archetypes" are complex psychological contexts that last as long as human life; He was born with the first human being and will certainly continue until the last days of human life. The term archetype was first used by Carl Gustav Jung. He believes that the archetype is only the constructive power or potential constructive possibilities of the psyche, which finds content and meaning only when it reaches the level of consciousness (Amini, 2002: 54). The archetype is a mental image that is clothed in symbolism and reaches objectivity. Most writers agree. Wilfred Green says: "When we talk about images that have a meaning beyond their usual real meaning, we are talking about the symbol. These symbols ... are also archetypal images; In this sense, archetypes are the symbols of experience" (Green, 1997: 197). Archetypes are the main pattern and stability and the result of human collective experience over thousands of years, which are stored in the cache of the human's unconscious, called the collective unconscious, so archetypes are universal and have the same meaning and essence in all places (Golabchi, and Zeinali Farid, 2014: 7). Archetypes are not specific to a particular region, culture or country; Rather, they are universal concepts and have never been published due to specific traditions and migrations. "Rather, they may manifest themselves at any time and place without any external influence" (Jung, 1998: 22).

One of the most common forms of archetype is the tree image. This phenomenon is an example of life, life and its various transformations. Trees also have a special place in mythology and their existence is dedicated to God. The existence of the tree of knowledge in Judaism, which is equal to the same forbidden fruit tree, is one of the manifestations of the tree in stories. The sanctity of this natural phenomenon shows his relationship with God in the perspective of the past human beings (Rangchi, 1993: 7). The tree has always been more than an ordinary plant in the human eye (Nouri and Sharifi, 2021: 307). The tree has been sanctified in the context of art, mythology and religions in different nations. The tree is the full mirror of man and his deepest desires. This exemplary image is the generator of a multitude of mysteries that spread in countless branches and reap in the context of myths, religions, arts, literature and various civilizations (Dubocor, 1994: 8). The tree was worshiped by many ancient peoples as the place of the gods or in fact God himself. Also, the tree was a symbol of the universe, a source of fertility, a symbol of knowledge and eternal life (Hal, 2001: 285). The tree has always been considered and praised as one of the oldest symbols in different cultures. The symbolic concept of the tree is intertwined with many aspects of people's culture and life in every way, even today, when we live in a non-religious age (Dadvar, Mansouri, 2006: 69). From ancient times, trees have been considered by primitive humans of ancient times and modern humans as having animals like humans and humans (Ibid., 2011, second edition: 99). In the world of human belief, the tree, despite its inactivity, is considered a symbol of birth, growth and development, and life in general, and has found sacred manifestations. The tree is also sacred in terms of vitality and fertility (Taheri, 2011: 45). The tree has appeared in three different cultures and myths. Cosmic tree, tree of life and tree of cognition are three forms of a symbol that have appeared in cultures and the history of the presence of this symbol as an archetype in various civilizations can be traced (Kazempour, 2010: 39). The tree of life in ancient Iran is usually in pictures and motifs, between two mythical animals (lion, wild goat, lion, etc.) that are considered its guardians. This tree is the symbol of a sacred and fearful force. In order to pick the fruits from which the heavenly elixir of life is obtained, one must fight with its guardian monsters and whoever wins this battle will be promoted to a superhuman level (Abedoost, 2009: 105). In the contemporary era, with the development of science and technology and human reliance on the scientific laws, the works of art of the past were analyzed and tried to decipher the meanings and meanings hidden in the heart of archetypes and images and related works. The science of semiotics

studies and studies these meanings and meanings, and semioticians seek to discover the mechanism of meaning through signs. Pourkhaleghi Chatroudi (2001), in a study entitled *The Tree of Life and its Cultural and Symbolic Value in Beliefs: Using the method of in-depth research with deep and symbolic exploration*, find the secrets and messages hidden in the tree and interpret them and represent. The researcher tries to decipher the transformed and symbolic mythical face of the tree of life, which has become a dilapidated and menu-like diagram. Kamizi et al. (2014), in a study examining the symbol of the tree of life in Seljuk fabrics, the results show that the design of Seljuk motifs, while continuing the motifs of Sassanid art and the connection with Islamic themes, the role of the design more delicacy, combined with the background and adapted to the design structure of the motifs. Javani et al. (2017) in a study examined the representational approaches in graphic design with the aim of better understanding the communication methods and its role in visual communication works in order to make students and enthusiasts more familiar with extensive studies in this field. Also, Ahmadiani (2011) has studied the possibilities of graphics as a language and has tried to match the mechanism of the two systems of language and graphics, the researcher has been able to provide a systematic classification of the theories of semiotics such as Pierce and Saussure. The archetype of the tree as a genuine symbol has a wide range of meanings. The cosmic tree, the tree of life, and the tree of cognition or knowledge are signs of various manifestations of human thought from the beginning to the present, and semiotics try to identify and decipher these various forms of the tree in the context of cultures and myths. These forms have a continuous and wide presence in various arts and are sometimes repeated in different cultures, which shows the strong cultural connection of different civilizations.

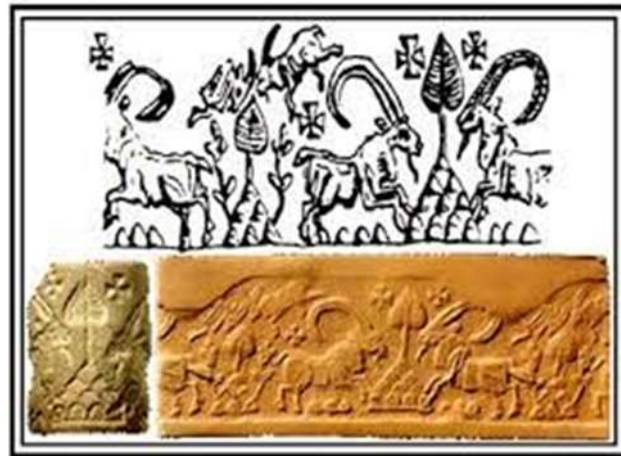
Today, artists around the world are indebted to historical experiences and genuine currents that have played a role in all aspects of human life since the beginning of the formation of civilizations and even much earlier.

## **2. Tree of Life and Related Symbols in Iranian Culture**

This symbol has a special place in Iranian culture. For this reason, it can be seen in works of art from different eras of history. Sometimes it is shown in the form of a deciduous tree and sometimes in a realistic way and in some cases it is shaped. And this is how myths and symbols preserve contemporary art as the massive and intertwined roots. Traces of myths can be seen in other fields of art, including literature, painting, architecture, cinema, graphics, and so on. In this research, an attempt has been made to study and analyze the status and importance of the tree as a sign of life in various civilizations, and then to perform a semiotic analysis of contemporary Iranian graphic works by symbolizing the tree of life. It has a geometry, which is often associated with plants and animals.

The mythical form of the "tree of life" is sometimes shown in the form of a deciduous tree and sometimes in a realistic form, and in some cases, it has a geometric shape, which in most cases is associated with plants and animals and can be continued in Iran. witnessed. Examples of these works can be seen in the vertebrae left from the Elamite period (Fig 1).

GC Cooper introduces the tree as "the whole of the objective universe, the combination of heaven and earth and water, a dynamic life in contrast to the rock in which life resides" (Cooper, 2000: 215). Also, "the tree was worshiped by many ancient tribes as the place of God or, in fact, God himself, and was a symbol of the universe and the source of fertility and the symbol of knowledge and eternal life" (Hal, 2001: 124).



**Fig 1** An example of Elamite seals (Ihal, 2001: 124)

### 3. Relationship between Trees and Natural Symbols in Ancient Iranian Art

Ancient Iranian art is full of natural phenomena and their relationship. Man did not neglect nature to portray myths and the imaginary world, and sought his ideals, myths, and heroes in the heart of nature. The Iranian artist from ancient times has shown extensive manifestations of this harmony in his works.

#### 3.1. Relationship between Water and Trees in the Art of Ancient Iran

According to mythological descriptions, the cosmic tree has its roots in cosmic waters. In the Manichaean painting and the text that describes it, it says, "Next to the cosmic reservoir, there is a cosmic tree that has fallen to the ground on one side of Khordad and Amرداد on the other" (Pope, 2001: 60). Among the bronze works of Lorestan, a number of cups in the form of Saghar but without handles have been seen. Most of the motifs of these Sagars show Assyrian influences. On one of them is holy water, which is taken from the leaves of the Assyrian palm and is placed in a spherical pot that flows in a stream of water and the heads of eagles standing in front of it fertilize or purify it (Fig 2).



**Fig 2** Lorestan bronze cup painted with inspiration from palm tree leaves and bird motifs (Boston Museum of Fine Arts) (Pope, 2008: 337)

### 3.2. Relationship between Mountains and Trees in the Ancient Iranian Art

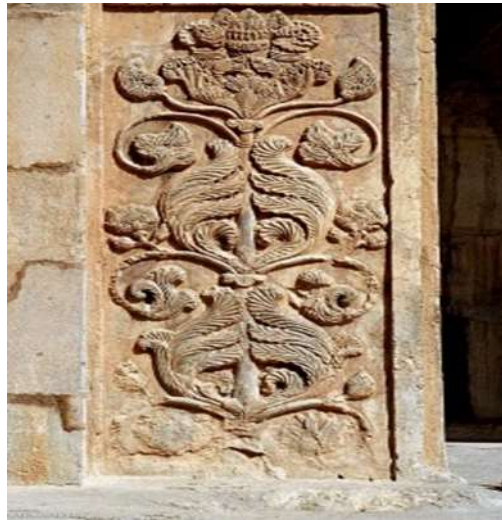
The mountain is one of the symbols of the connection between heaven and earth. Among the linkers of heaven and earth (mountain, tree, pillar, rope, ladder, water) has a special place in terms of height and sanctity. The mountain is one of the cosmic elements that is always associated with the tree. Hersfeld identifies the overlapping scales on the Elamite line as a mountain sign (Hertzfeld, 2002: 43). According to Ackerman, "a tree from the genus of deciduous cones, which is located on a mountain, represents the moon of the tree" (Pope, 2008: 3124). In a part of a Sassanid Simin bowl, two tree goats are surrounded by a mountain symbol on the Dalberi signs (Ibid: 1096). Goats that surround a tree perched on a mountain can also be seen in Mesopotamia (Fig 3). It is not possible to determine in which civilization this composition first appeared, and it can only be emphasized that these motifs exist simultaneously in two regions.



**Fig 3** Sassanid silver plate with the role of a goat and a bird (Smithsonian Museum) (Pope, 2008: 3124)

### 3.3. Relationship between Columns and Trees in the Ancient Iranian Art

One of the forms of the cosmic tree is the column or pole. It is not possible to say exactly from which civilization this symbol entered Iran and where it originated, but it is certain that it is the secret pillar of the universe. The tree sometimes appears in an artificial form and is placed between a pair of horns (Pope, 2008: 369). One of the most obvious examples of the appearance of a tree in the facade column is the Bostan arch. Two rectangular pillars can be seen in the work with the motif of the tree of life, a decorative symbol of the ancient Hittites and Assyrians in the Bostan arch. What distinguishes it from its Eastern ancestor is the Greek artichoke leaf. The root tree has an irregular trapezoid shape which is one of the characteristics of Sassanid flowers and plants (Hertzfeld, 2002: 336) (Fig 4).



**Fig 4** Column tree in Iranian handmade carpet with geometric shapes (Hertzfeld, 2002: 336)

### 3.4. Relationship between Cypress and Trees in the Ancient Iranian Art

Sebo is a symbol of blessing and fertility. Two-bladed or unbranched sebum, from which two streams of water may flow symmetrically outwards. As stated in the hash clause, "Tishtar used it to bring down rain" (Pope, 2008: 1056). An example of the connection between a tree and a cedar or vase appears in Marlik motifs. This dish can be seen among the winged cows while the golden tree is in it (Fig 5) (Negahban, 1964: 140).



**Fig 5** Jam Zarrin Marlik (Museum of Ancient Iran) (Neghaban, 1964: 140)

### 3.5. Relationship between Sun and Trees in the Ancient Iranian Art

When man left the life of cave-dwelling and hunting and turned to agriculture, he realized the importance of the sun and he, who used to worship the moon as his god, replaced the sun and the symbols of the moon came under the domination of the sun (Dadvar, 2006: 54). Often in myths, the sun is the conqueror and possessor of the storm, and in the totemic system, the defeated totem is



usually taken over. For this reason, the stamps of cows and horses, which are lunar animals, can be attributed to the sun (Pope, 2008: 990).

### 3.6. Relationship between Moon and Trees in the Ancient Iranian Art

In early civilizations, the moon was the first deity to be worshiped, and they considered the moon to be the cause of rain (Samadi, 1988: 43). In Iran, just as the moon is the guardian of the stars and the bearer of their race, it is also considered the guardian and protector and the source of plants (Pope, 2008: 1064). Woman was associated with the moon in ancient Iran. Because it is one of the attributes of the fertile month (Dadvar, 2006: 57). Sometimes the role of the moon is shown next to a tree and sometimes it is depicted as a tree on the top of a mountain. Moon, water and rain bring life with them, and therefore the ancients believed that the sap of a tree called the moon tree is the essence of life (Dadvar, 2006: 157).

### 3.7. Relationship between Horse and Trees in the Culture of Ancient Iran

The horse is a symbol of the sun and the moon. When white, golden or fiery horses appear with the sun gods and kill their chariots, they are the solar force. While meaning the wet element, the sea, the initial turbulence and the gods of the ocean are the lunar force. The winged horse of the sun or the cosmic horse, the white horse also means purity, intellect, innocence, life and light (Cooper, 2007: 20). In Marlik there is a goblet with motifs in two rows, in each row the legendary horned animal is repeated on both sides of the dish. At intervals of horse designs, beautiful decorative and geometric flowers are generally used to fill the space (Fig 6) (Neghaban, 1984: 33).



**Fig 6** Marlik cup with plant and horse motifs (Museum of Ancient Iran) (Neghaban, 1984: 33)

### 3.8. Relationship between Bird and Trees in the Ancient Iranian Art

In the art of the Sassanid period, the role of birds can be seen next to trees and foliage. Including the shape of birds among the hair tree, which shows the extension of older traditions to this period (Fig 7).



**Fig 7** Sassanid Sassanid plate with the role of a bird and hair branches (Smith Sonyan Museum) (Pope, 2008: 3130)

### 3.9. Relationship between Lion and Trees in the Ancient Iranian Art

Iranian weavers have shown the lion symmetrically on both sides of the tree of life (Ibid). A group of Sassanid fabrics show the role of a tree among repetitive rotating rings in which two riders are placed on both sides of a tree to hunt in the village. In this group, other animal motifs such as two lions, two jumping lions, a cow or a deer, two birds sitting on a tree, etc. are depicted. By examining Byzantine fabrics that have many visual similarities with Sassanid examples, Grishman has considered the art of the medieval empire under the influence of Sassanid art style and this group of motifs (Grishman, 1991: 315). The silk cloth from around 600 AD depicts riding on both sides of a tree of life.



**Fig 8** Byzantine fabric adapted from Sassanid themes (Vatican Museum) (Grishman, 1991: 315)

### 3.10. Relationship between Snake and Tree in the Culture of Ancient Iran

Ackerman believes that "the snake was originally the only water symbol for the air and in terms of meaning and content with the pond. But its mythical literary attention was formed over time, which portrayed the snake as a creature of the enemy of profession and aquatic threat to the moon-



tree. A horse and a horned snake can be seen on the silk pottery belonging to the second millennium BC. The horned snake is a well-known symbol of the moon. But later the snake became a threat to the moon tree. According to Andre Godard, the collection of palms, snakes and cows in the works of Lorestan, which are attributed to the great god of fertility, draws attention to Ilam, and Ilam has certainly been the inspiration of Central Lorestan throughout the second millennium BC.

### 3.11. Relationship between Fish and Tree in the Culture of Ancient Iran

The fish is a symbol associated with the sun, and in mythology the sun gods are depicted as fish. In the zodiac, the fish are astronomically located next to Jedi and Aquarius in the sun. In general, there is very old evidence that fish was considered a sign of regeneration (Mokhtarian, 2008). Herzfeld, in his book *Iran in the Ancient East*, quotes a work from Samarra in which birds of prey and fish rotate in a rotating motion around a swastika (Herzfeld, 1941: 59). According to some scientists, Su Astika actually represents the sun and has some solar concepts such as light, fertility and especially happiness (Hal, 2001: 5). The silver plate belonging to the 5th-7th century AD from the Sassanid period is perhaps an illustrated form of the mythical description of the protective fish floating at the foot of the bush seed tree in Zoroastrian religious texts (Hali, 1997: 94).



**Fig 9** Silver plate belonging to the 5th-7th century AD from the Sassanid period (Dadgi, 2006: 151)

### 3.12. Relationship between Trees and Natural Symbols in Islamic Iranian Art

After the entry of Islam into other lands, Islamic culture was formed based on the slogan of unity. Islam used the art of the people of that region in every land. In Iran, too, Islamic art, based on the original culture of Iran and the slogan of equality and unity, served to express Iranian and Islamic values. The presence of ancient myths in post-Sassanid culture and art shows the continuity of Iranian art based on Islamic views.

### 3.13. Relationship between Water and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

The relationship between water and trees continues in the Islamic era. His servant speaks of a pond full of fish at the foot of the cosmic tree from which everything grows. At the same time, this role is reminiscent of the importance of gardens and water in Iran (Pope, 2008: 1824). Toubā tree is

the Islamic form of Bes Takhmeh tree, which is a Zoroastrian myth in the Sea of Farakhkord. It is noteworthy that this tree is described as follows: "It is a tree of the atmosphere that is in the Aquarius tower" (Rezazadeh, Malek, 2005: 123). In this description, the relationship between the cosmic tree and water is beautifully discussed. In the architecture of Iranian mosques, we see the presence of a strong Touba tree on a blue bed, which is a symbol of water and light.

### 3.14. Relationship between Mountains and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

The archetype of the relationship between mountain and tree continues in post-Islamic Iranian paintings. In these works, the tree is often formed on a rock. In a page of Baysanghari Shahnameh, we see that the troops did not climb the top of the mountain and the rock from which the ancient trees emerged. In most of the paintings, the tree is located on a rock (Fig 10) (Pope, 2008: Table 876).



**Fig 10** A leaf from Baysanghari Shahnameh (Golestan Museum Palace Library) (Pope, 2008: 876)

The sacred cypress tree of the Iranians has also been formed on the mountain in the paintings of Islamic schools. An example of that is a leaf from the drawing of Zahak being tied up in Isfahan school. In this picture, crooked heads are seen on the rocks on both sides of the figure. (Fig 11) (Zakat and Ghazizadeh, 2015: 188).



**Fig 11** Cypress in the drawing of Zakat (Golestan Museum Palace Library) (Pope, 2008: 876)

### 3.15. Relationship between Columns and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

In the Islamic era, the presence of these two elements together in works of art continues, and in mosques we see the appearance of tree arrays on the pillars of altars. In the Nain Grand Mosque, the two main and central sides of the altar, the columns are reminiscent of the cosmic tree. The scaly designs on the top of the columns may have been an abbreviated form for drawing the bark of the tree, and the continuous foliage is always reminiscent of the decorative design of the rafters that have found their way on this cover and have reached firmly under the headboard. (Fig 12) (Ibid: Tablet 267).



**Fig 12** Tree arrays above the altar of the Nain Grand Mosque (Pope, 2008: 876)

### 3.16. Relationship between Sun and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

The presence of the sun next to the tree in the Islamic period continues. This connection is subtly mentioned in one of the astronomical texts of the Islamic period (Reza Zadeh and Malek, 2005: 664). From the studies of natural elements in mythology, it seems that the role of the moon and the sun in Iranian art appear less directly and they can be identified more through the symbols associated with them. Symbols such as eagles, lions, etc., which are solar animals, and symbols, such as snakes, deer, cows, etc., which are symbols of the moon.

### 3.17. Relationship between Horse and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art



**Fig 13** Eastern Iranian silk woven garment with horse and tree design (Reza Zadeh and Malek, 2005: 664)

Like other symbols, the accompaniment of horses and trees continued during the Islamic era. According to Ackerman, the decorative motifs of the horsemen perched next to the tree on a piece of fine silk cloth with the "wash" show the symbol of the sun, and in some cases, there is a deer, which is a strong reference. It has to do with our connection with the moon" (Ibid.).

### 3.18. Relationship between Goat and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

In the Islamic era, we see goat motifs on pottery that probably belong to the early Islamic era and shows the continuation of the goat and tree motif after Islam in Iran (Fig 14)



**Fig 14** The role of a goat on pottery of the Islamic period (Museum of Ancient Iran)

### 3.19. Relationship between Bird and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

In the art of the Iranian Islamic period, the bird appears on the tree a lot. The combination of cypress trees with birds on the golden pottery of Kashan and Rey, which has been repeated a lot in the pottery of this region, can be considered related to this theme (Pope, 2008: 1825). Examples of this can be seen in post-Islamic tiles. An example of this is the golden painted tile of Kashan, the first half of the seventh century AH, which shows four birds on a central plant that has its roots in a water pond (Fig 15) (Ibid., 1810).



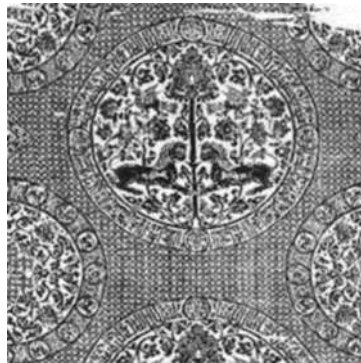
**Fig 15** Kashan Golden Tile of the Islamic Period with Plant and Bird Design (David Collection) (Pope, 2008: 1825)



In the architecture of mosques and religious buildings, we see the use of bird motifs next to the tree, especially with the concept of the tree of life, and we see the continuation of the Sassanid style in combining bird motifs and plant motifs (Zakat, and Ghazizadeh, 2015: 11).

### 3.20. Relationship between Lion and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

Ackerman states the continuity of the Sassanid style in Islamic art, and the winged lions that surround a tree sitting on cloths on both sides of the fifth and sixth centuries AH are reasons for this view (Fig 16) (Pope, 2008: 2323).



**Fig 16** Islamic period fabric with lion and tree design (Pope, 2008: 2323)

### 3.21. Relationship between Snake and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

In some works of the Islamic period, the connections between water and snake and plant and snake appear. This connection sometimes exists in the paintings of Islamic periods in the form of drawn stories. For example, in a drawing from the manuscript of Galen of the Seljuk school, which was painted in the seventh century AH in the form of a story of a snake and a jar of wine, this connection can be found (Fig 17) (Pope, 2008: Table 812).



**Fig 17** A drawing of the manuscript of Galen of the Seljuk school (Pope, 2008: Table 812)

### 3.22. Relationship between Fish and Trees in Islamic Iranian Art

The relationship between fish and the sun and even the sunflower can be seen more explicitly in the works of the Islamic period. During this period, the motif of the floating fish in the water pond

in which the tree or plant has roots is repeated in many potteries, which shows the continuation of the ancient tradition of fish-water and plant formation. The opposite figure shows a bowl painted on glaze from Neishabour in the sixth century AH, in which four fish and four Simorghs can be seen, and plant arrays are involved in Simorgh decorations (Fig 18) (Pope, 2008: Table 687).



**Fig 18** Peacock and fish pottery of the Islamic period (Museum of Antiquities, University of Saskatchewan, Canada) (Pope, 2008: 687)

#### 4. Research Methodology

The present study is fundamental in terms of purpose and exploratory quality in terms of data collection method. The present study was planned and conducted based on the data theory model of the Strauss and Corbin Foundation. Grounded theory is suitable for identifying processes in their social context and analyzing and interpreting process-related factors and situations. On the other hand, it identifies, describes, and explains interactive processes between individuals and groups in a social context (Polit and Hungler, 2006). In this study, 20 samples of graphic works were selected and 10 experts and researchers in the field of contemporary graphics in Iran who had sufficient expertise in the field of the role of the tree of life in contemporary graphic works were interviewed.

According to the purpose of the study, purposive (non-probable) sampling method was used for the interview. In order to enrich the research, an attempt was made to interview graphic experts and researchers who have sufficient expertise in the field of the role of the tree of life in contemporary graphic works. Data analysis was based on approaches such as coding, conceptualization, note-taking, and bulge search.

Data collection continued until the data was saturated. Gradually, the text encoding of the interviews and the analysis of the data led to the summarization and classification of the data. Data analysis used three stages of open, axial and selective coding, which is the method used in grounded theory research. In the open coding stage, the text of all interviews was extracted individually and line by line, their concepts and then their categories were extracted. In the central coding stage, we compared the categories extracted from each interview with the categories of other interviews and integrated the categories. For categories, if necessary, we defined subcategories, characteristics and dimensions. In the selective coding stage, the categories and their dimensions were compared and integrated, and the final classes were obtained; Which is the first step to extract the model from the data. To ensure the validity and reliability of the research, the interview questions were approved by several experts. In evaluating qualitative studies, Lincoln and Guba referred to the criteria of reliability, trustworthiness, dependability, transferability, and confirmability (Flick, 2008). To achieve these, the following steps were performed: Implementing interviews and continuous analysis and collecting data during the interviews, examining how the



interviews were coded by another expert to ensure the coding was correct and the researcher did not have a taste for the interview.

## 5. Findings

In this study, 10 interviewees participated, of which 7 were male and 3 were female. Of these, 6 had administrative and government jobs and 4 had free and personal jobs. As we know, the data theory of the foundation has a specific approach and the approach of Strauss and Corbin used in this research. Examines each phenomenon in the form of six concepts. According to these theorists, every phenomenon has a central category, a set of causal conditions, a set of contextual and intervening conditions, a number of strategies to influence the central category, and finally a set of consequences. To analyze the data, Strauss and Corbin (1998) comparison technique including three steps of open coding, axial coding and selective coding was used:

- A. Open coding: After copying an interview, open coding began. Open coding means breaking down the collected set into the smallest possible conceptual components. The following table shows the concepts obtained from the research findings and the categorization process of the concepts.
- B. Axial coding: Classification and categorization, in open coding, leads to a reduction in the number of units we have to work with. This helps the process of implementing grounded theory in the axial coding stage. Coding at this stage was done axially and according to the process embedded in the data. The Strauss-Corbin coding paradigm was used to facilitate the data embedding process. In other words, at this stage, by linking the categories, the information is linked together in new ways.
- C. Selective coding: Selective coding is the last stage of coding in which the main category is selected and its link to other categories is determined. (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). All the factors obtained from the research background and the factors obtained in the analysis of the interviews, along with the categories and semantic codes are plotted in the table below.

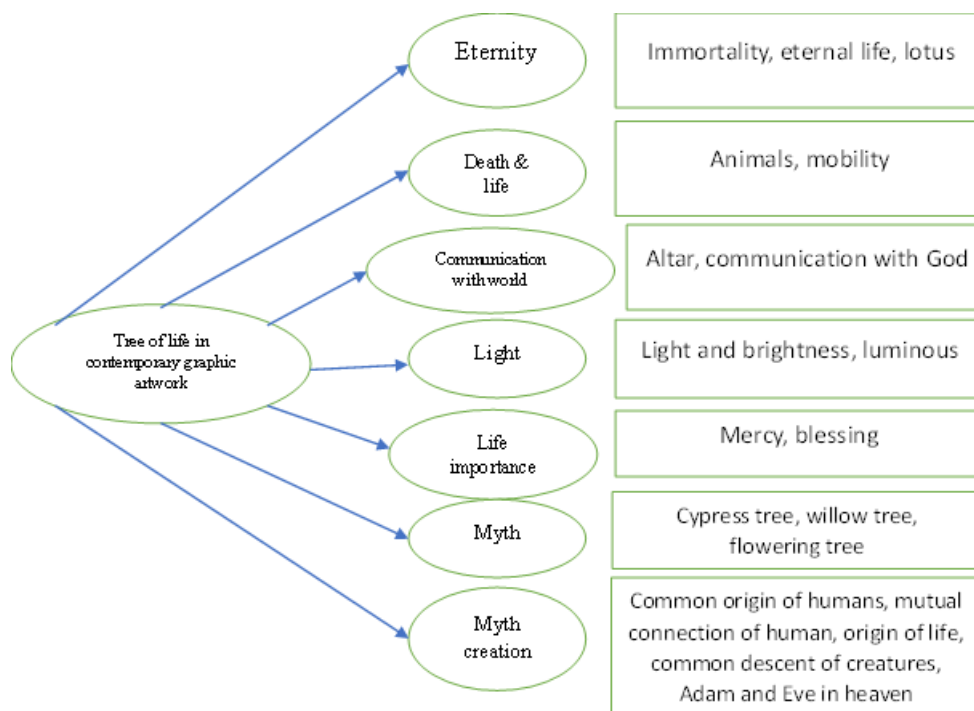
**Table 1** Analysis of categories and concepts related to the tree of life in contemporary graphic works

Basic codes	Category	Concept
Dealing with death, delaying death, preventing death	Namiraei	Eternity
Eternal life, life again, life after death	Immaturity	
Another world, the underworld, the eternal world	Eternal life	
Flowers and nature, living nature, the flow of life	Lotus	
Breastfeeding, usefulness, production	Animals	death and Life
Life and flow, vitality, excitement	Mobility	
Worship, divinity	Altar	Connect with the other world
Worship and servitude, servitude	Communication with God	
Light, sunbeams, chandeliers, light rays	Light and brightness	the light
Awareness, guidance, direction	Shine	The importance of worldly life
Cebu, Vase, Rain	Mercy	
Continuity of life in the universe, worldly life	Blessing	Myth
Duality – Contradiction	Good and Evil	
Endurance, tolerance, forbearance	Cypress	
Love, mania	Willow	
Wealth, good luck	Flowering tree	

Common bonds, the same origin of human beings	The common root of human beings	The myth of creation
Communication between humans, communication between humans	Human interaction	
Basis of life, origin of life and life	Source of life	
The equality of human beings, the same principles of human life	Common lineage of creatures	
The Myth of Creation, Adam and Eve	Adam and Eve in heaven	

After identifying the categories and concepts and placing them in the factors expressed by the researcher, according to the paradigm model of grounded theory, the theory is as follows:

The concept of eternity includes: immortality, eternal life, lotus. The concept of life and death includes: animals, mobility. The concept of communication with the other world includes: the altar, communication with God. The concept of light includes: light and brightness, shine. The concept of the importance of worldly life includes: mercy, blessing. The concept of myth includes: good and evil, cypress tree, willow tree, flowering tree. The concept of the myth of creation includes: the common root of human beings, the interrelationship of human beings, the origin of life, the common descent of beings, Adam and Eve in heaven.



**Fig 19** Tree of life and related categories (Author)

## 6. Conclusion

Man has always represented his mental manifestations of nature in the form of images on various works, some of which gradually became directly related to his beliefs and convictions. Throughout history, some plants and animals, with their inherent powers and abilities, have been sanctified alongside gods and goddesses, and in popular belief, have become mythical beings due to allegorical and symbolic arguments. Tree painting is one of the elements that has been repeatedly recorded on various works, but in some cases in the form of the role of the tree of life is associated

with symbolic meanings and concepts, whose semantic similarity in many civilizations, has turned it into a symbol with concepts. Has been subscribed. In this study, the purpose was not to examine the long process of using this symbol, but inevitably provided short definitions of similar concepts in some cultures and tried to show what impact the tree of life has played in the graphic world in the contemporary world.

Numerous historical evidences and studies show that not all manifestations, allegories of the tree, are simply related to the concept of the tree of life. In recreating the symbol of the tree of life in graphic works, it can be seen to what extent, using the common imagination among the actors and, of course, avoiding diversity, in many cases, has caused the creators of the historical contribution of this element as a symbol, play a role in the history and graphic culture of our country.

The tree has been sanctified in the context of art, mythology and religions in different nations. The tree is the full mirror of man and his deepest desires. This exemplary image is the product of a multitude of mysteries that spread in innumerable branches and reap in the context of various myths, religions, arts, literatures, and civilizations.

The inseparable connection of man with the tree from the beginning of life has caused him to be incompatible with nature through transformation. It was once thought that the earth was flat and round, and it was said that it was covered by a kind of inverted bowl, the sky, which needed central bases such as mountains, pillars, and trees to stand.

The tree is a symbol of perfection and growth, and its presence in human life, myths and legends is as old as itself. In this study, while examining contemporary graphic works, I saw that if a tree is full of sacred power, it is because it is upright that it grows, which loses its leaves and regains them. As a result, it is revived. He dies many times and is reborn.

The tree of life was also called by other names. Types of life trees in different cultures with the names of trees such as dates (palm), sycamore, grape, olive, jumbo, fig (tin), tongue sparrow, turmeric (Shahnameh), tree of life or immortality (Torah), hummus, hummus, white or tree Life and Immortality (Ancient Iran), Gokren (White Home), Taghuk, Berries, Elm, Willow, All Seeds, etc. are known. One of the most important concepts related to the tree of life has been the issue of fertility and immortality throughout history. The tree was worshiped by many ancient peoples as the place of God or, in fact, God himself. It was also a symbol of the universe and a source of fertility and a symbol of knowledge and eternal life.

Studies show that in this context, he believes that the tree in its archetypal meaning implies the life of the universe, its continuity, and the growth and reproduction of reproductive and regenerative processes. The tree is a sign of inexhaustible life and is therefore equivalent to immortality. As a result, according to what has been mentioned, the most important findings of the present study include the following:

- The tree of life has been associated with their religious and spiritual beliefs before the fantasies of the actors.
- The value and meaning of the tree of life in graphic works has been relentlessly linked to the concepts of fertility, fertility and procreation.
- Some symbols such as animals, celestial bodies, gods and goddesses used next to the tree of life also include the concept of fertility.

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