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Traditional Traces of Fantastic Figures in Turkish Mythology¹

Türk Mitolojisindeki Fantastik Figürlerin Geleneksel İzleri

Abstract: The roots of fantastic figures in Turkish Mythology are based on Central Asia, the cradle of civilizations, which is the starting point of Turkish Art. Fantastic figures have a very wide area of use in Turkish art, which have survived to the present day without disturbing their originality in change and development, and which are the reflection of the Turkish belief system. Turkish communities, which are constantly intertwined with nature, have attributed various meanings to living creatures and natural elements in nature and created motifs that are their own common cultural product, with the influence of the belief in the Sky God. In this study, Umay-Ana, the protector of living beings, the dragon symbol of fertility and strength, and Tul-par, which is identified with Burak due to its Islamic importance, are discussed and examined in terms of various symbolic features and traditional reflections in many fields of art.

Keywords: Basic Art Education, Turkish Mythology, Umay, Tul-par, Dragon

Öz: Türk Mitolojisindeki fantastik figürlerin kökleri Türk Sanatının başlangıç noktası olan medeniyetler beşiği Orta Asya'ya dayanmaktadır. Değişim ve gelişim içerisinde, özgünlüğünü bozmadan günümüze kadar gelmeyi başaran ve Türk inanç sisteminin yansıması olan fantastik figürler Türk sanatında oldukça geniş kullanım alanına sahiptir. Doğa ile sürekli iç içe olan Türk toplulukları Gök Tengri inancının da etkisiyle doğada bulunan canlı varlıklar ve tabiat unsurlarına çeşitli anlamlar yüklemiş ve kendilerine özgü ortak kültür ürünü olan motifleri meydana getirmişlerdir. Bu çalışmada canlı varlıkların koruyucusu Umay Ana, bereket ve kuvvet

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sembolü ejder, İslami önemi dolayısıyla Burak ile özdeşleştirilen Tul-par, sanatın birçok alanında çeşitli sembolik özellikleri ve geleneksel yansımaları bakımından ele alınıp incelenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Temel Sanat Eğitimi, Türk Mitolojisi, Umay, Tulpar, Ejder

Introduction

Humankind has never acted alone in coping with difficulties since the early ages, by realizing the power of nature, they took refuge in some auxiliary forces that they determined and cared about (Ülkü, 1984: 121). The effect of belief in the sky created a relationship between supernatural beings and the cosmic system (Berkli, 2011: 37).

Various animals were used as ongun in order to reach God, and all beings associated with the sky were considered sacred. These sacredes were assigned as auxiliary and intermediary beings between the earth and the sky, which is of great importance for the Turks. These beings have been transferred from generation to generation with symbols, symbols and various signs as protection, talisman and a form of expression (Gültepe, 2013: 60). Turkish communities have had the opportunity to get to know various beliefs with the influence of the geography they live in and have blended them with their own beliefs. Although they accepted various religions such as Buddhism, Manichaeism, Christianity and Judaism before Islam, they most widely adopted the Sky God religion (Eroğlu and Kılıç, 2010: 762). For this reason, the importance of establishing a strong bond in terms of the meaning attributed to the sky and the associated entities is undeniable.

Due to the strong connection between Turkish culture and belief system and cosmology, fantastic figures are also supported by various mythological cults such as moon, sun, star, light, tree, water, cave, mountain (Özkartal, 2015: 86). During the transformation of the Turks into fantastic elements with symbolic and hidden meanings in their artistic forms, it has also attracted the attention of researchers that they can be fed from the mythical tradition (Gültepe, 2019: 1493). The most important feature of Turkish mythology is that it reveals important motifs with epic narratives (Taş, 2017: 34). Thus, mythological narratives that mediate the understanding of society have led to the emergence of fantastic characters.

Mythologies, which are an important source of communication for civilizations, are our treasure of belief and holiness in our genetic memory, source of secret information living the past and the future deep in societies (Gültepe, 2013: 62). The basis of art began with the creation of the earth and the respect of man to nature. The traces of extraordinary beings that are part of nature are the evidence that reveals the mystery of human history. During the development of humankind, which gives important information about Turkish culture and belief system fantastic figures, kneaded with the beliefs of other societies, transfer their existence from generation to generation with rich content in many fields of art from architecture to weaving.

Umay-Ana

Known as the Turkish goddess whose origin comes from the "Moon", Umay's (Geybullayev and Rızayeva, 1999: 217) three-slice crown and bird depiction are among the most important symbols (Bilgili, 2014: 127). The reason Umay appears in the form of a bird or a winged woman is that the bird is seen as a mediator between the "earth and sky" of the cosmos in Eurasian Mythology (Azar, 2019: 4). Umay-Ana symbolizes the womb, fertility, productivity, fertility and fertility. Cave, nest, dormitory, etc. It is one of the symbolic values of Umay-Ana. He stated that he only had Turkish belief by giving a sense of belonging to Umay (Ercan, 2018: 93).



Figure 1. Umay-Ana with her Tri-Slice Crown and Andean Goblet (Bilgili, 2014)



Figure 2. The Depiction of Umay Made of Felt Used as an Amulet (Çoruhlu, 2002)

Umay's celestial archetype is Moon-Venus. When Venus is born as the morning star, she takes on the warrior and masculine character, and when she is born as the evening star, she takes on the feminine character (Bilgili, 2014: 126).



Figure 3. Umay Artuklu Coin Holding Moon Tilgen (Bilgili, 2014)

Gokturks who went to war accept Umay as male and get permission from Umay Sir, wishes to protect them, While helping the privates at Umay Sir, it is thought that those who were martyred took an oath with Umay Sir. When viewed from an Islamic perspective, it is seen that this belief coincides with drinking the sherbet of martyrdom (Bilgili, 2014: 126).



Figure 4. Umay-Ana and the valiant Who Drinks Ant Wine and Holds the Ant Glass (Bilgili, 2014)

According to Bayat: It emerged as a result of Umay (Earth) Ana and Moon God belief. Radloff explains the word Umay as a female deity, emphasizing that it protects the young and dead

souls. Inan, on the other hand, mentioned that Umay is of Indian origin and is mentioned as Hūma or Hūmay in Iranian literature. The first written document of the name Umay as a feminine being is mentioned in the Orhun Monuments (Ercan, 2018: 94). It supports various beliefs about Hūma, which is seen in Turkish-Islamic culture and is mostly described as a bird of luck (Çoruhlu, 2002: 42).



Figure 5. Umay-Ana in Tri-Slice Crown and Winged Bird Form (Bilgili, 2014)

This sacred spirit gives them soul by dripping milk into the mouths of babies who were born by descending from the sky in the form of a bird (Bilgili, 2014: 120). According to the belief, the laughter of children in sleep indicates the togetherness of Umay, and the illness of the children indicates the separation of Umay (Çoruhlu, 2002: 40). In Khakas, if the child talks while asleep, it is thought that he is talking to Umay (Azar, 2019: 5). Bilge Kagan likened his to Umay-Ana, who is the protector of children: *“Like Umay, thanks to my mother Hatun's box, my brother got the masculinity name of Kültigin”* (Ercan, 2018: 4).

The hand symbol from archaic myths is associated with the hand symbol in Umay-Ana. This symbol, which is described as the midwife's hand and associated with birth it, is likened to the hand of Fatima in the Islamic sense (Bilgili, 2014: 121). It is seen that the Central Asian Turkish communities also kept the Umay-Ana cult alive within the framework of Islamic belief without losing anything from their understanding of value. Especially in the rituals of casting lead for the evil eye and removing the hair of the children, the wise woman who leads the community definitely reveals the deep effect of this tradition on belief by starting the words "Umay Ana hand". The transformation of Umay-Ana into the hand of Fatima in the Anatolian Islamic tradition and the beginning of the action "with the hand of our Mother Fatima" at the beginning of the action to be performed in the rituals in which this belief and this belief are kept alive are the most important examples showing the continuity of the effect. Fatma Mother, who has an important place in Turkish culture: She is likened to Umay-Ana as a symbol of power, goodness, righteousness and protection in line with God's orders (Ercan, 2018: 128). In fact, it has been revealed by the determination of the

researchers that in some parts of Anatolia, "Let Umay-Ana's hand be" was started and the old belief and tradition were still kept alive (Azar, 2019: 5). It is seen that these meanings attributed to Umay-Ana in different Turkish tribes are broad. For example, in Saha (Yakut) Turks, this song of Umay, who sings like a bird over the child, finds meaning as an indication that that generation will be blessed (Gömeç, 2018: 705).



Figure 6. Hand Symbol Called Hamsa (Bilgili, 2014)

The hand expression is an indication of the goddess's protection. While the children are being treated, "It is not my hand, but Umay-Ana's hand." expression is used. In the past, women believed that Umay- Ana was Fatma and Zühre Ana. It is also thought that the stain on the hips of the babies is the Mongolian spot or the handprint of Umay-Ana (Bilgili, 2014: 121).

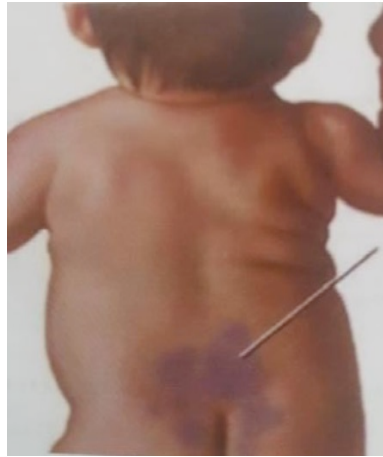


Figure 7. Mongolian Stain or Umay-Ana's Handprint -Newborn Stain (Bilgili, 2014)

These spots, which are seen in babies in some parts of Anatolia, especially in Erzurum and its surroundings, are also called "evliya me". The woman who treated the children and helped during the birth of the child said, "It is not my hand, it is the hand of Umay-Ana" She asks for help from Umay-Ana. Bibi Fatima's hand is also called Bibi Zehra's hand in Uzbeks (Taş, 2017: 67).



Figure 8. Umay-Ana – Wood (Turkish History no date)

Umay-Ana used by Altai Turks for protection (talisman) continues to be used as a gift item today.

Tulpar (Winged Horse)

One of the most important unique motifs of Turkish culture is the horse. It is observed that there is a strong bond between human and animal in the nomadic Turkish society due to the natural conditions. The horse, which is believed to have been sent to the Turks by God, is a friendly and sacred creature (Çufadar, 2019: 216).



Figure 9. Göktürk Coin M.S. VI-VII. Century (Bilgili, no date)

Huns are the first to ride horses among Turkish communities (Diyarbakirli, 1972: 39). As a result of the legends examined, the most important aspect of the myths about the horse is to come across the traces of the old periods (Roux, 2005: 43-44). The relations of the Turks with the horse and the unity of destiny are clearly expressed in the Orkhon inscriptions (Belek, 2015: 118). Again,

the horse and its color are frequently mentioned in the Orkhon inscriptions (Esin, 1995: 56). It is known that they evaluate the milk, skin and meat of horses other than riding (Diyarbakirli, 1972: 39).



Figure 10. Seljuk Coin-Horse (Bayraktar, 2013)

Horses buried with harnesses have been found in khan or alpine tombs, which have been buried since ancient times. This is an indication of the value given to the horse (Çufadar, 2019: 216). Western scholars state that the Altai peoples are eager to take their companion horses with them when they die. Their belief in the other world is important for the guidance and carrier of the horses in their residence (Roux, 2005: 47). For this reason, when a hero dies, his horse's tail is cut off and buried with him (Çufadar, 2019: 218). At the same time, some brave men who went to war gave the message that they accepted death by cutting the tail of their horse before they died (Çoruhlu, 2019: 67). This behavior can be matched with walking to martyrdom in Islamic religious beliefs.



Figure 11. Tail Knotted Horse (Yiğit, 2019)

Horses are usually named according to their color and physical characteristics. Especially the name “white” in Turkish mythology is mentioned a lot. The expression "Ak" is usually expressed in terms of its close relationship with the sky and its connection with the Sky God (Roux, 2005: 178). The most mentioned horse color in Kök-Türk texts is "white" (Esin, 1995: 59).

Horse; known as the mount of the sky and star god (Gürçay, 2019: 48). At the same time, it is a being that is seen as a sacrifice to God because of its celestial relationship. Today, the tradition of burning the bones of sacred and sacrificial animals, which is the tradition of Islam, dates back to ancient times. The bones of the horse, which was considered sacred and a sacrificial animal in the ancient Turks, were not broken and burned, allowing the spirit to reach the sky (Roux, 2005: 49).



Figure 12. Horse Graves- Sacrifice (Türklerde At Kurban Etme Geleneği, 2016)

The white horse was especially chosen as the animal for sacrifice. “white” meant greatness and cleanliness. During the ceremony, shamans mounted a wooden horse to carry itself to the sky and thought of it as winged, thus allowing the shaman to fly through the air to reach heaven (Çoruhlu, 2019: 26-27).



Figure 13. The Tradition of Dressing Horses on Poles (Türklerde At Kurban Etme Geleneği, 2016)

In Turkish mythology, "Tul-par", "winged horse" is a very common belief due to its connection with the Sky-God. This horse is a very rich legend, especially in East Turkestan with white wings and black or white mane. It was believed that if Tul-par, whose wings were invisible, was seen flying by someone, his wings would be lost (Çufadar, 2019: 217).



Figure 14. Kazakhstan- Saka Turkish felt sample- Tul-Par (Winged Horse) (Özkartal, 2015)



Figure 15. Horse Sogd- Winged Horse Iconography on Cloth (Bayraktar, 2013)

Tul-par is a mythological stallion living in the depths of waters such as lakes and seas in Turkish mythology (Gürçay, 2019: 47-49). The oldest mythological elements about the horse show its connection with water. It is thought that the legends of the horse coming out of the water are compatible with the legend of the dragon-stalk living in the cave existing in the Hun and other Turkish beliefs (Esin, 1995:)

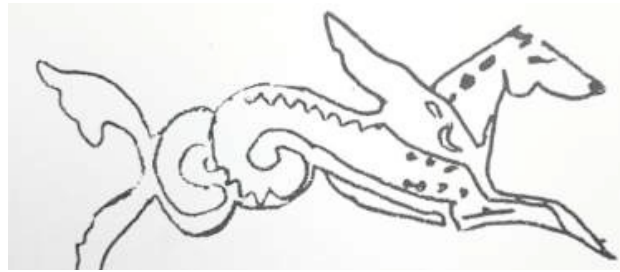


Figure 16. East Turkestan Winged Dragon Horse VI -VIII. Century (Çoruhlu, 2014)

Winged horse (Tul-par), believed to be brighter than light and faster than the wind before Islam, is thought to be identified with Burak (ref ref) during and after the Islamic period due to its

connection with God and rising to the sky. In the Miraç event, it is known that Burak (refref), who accompanied the Prophet's (S.A.V) accompanying the ascension (Taşpınar, 2007: 534).



Figure 17. Miraç Stage, Siyer-i Nebi, Istanbul, Ottoman Period (Pomegra, 2017)

Dragon (Universe, Buke)

The dragon, which is called "Universe" and "Büke" by the Turks in cosmological and iconographic terms, means "Universe" derived from the words "evolve" and "return" in Anatolia (Esin, 1970: 160; Aslan, 2014: 32). The dragon, whose origin goes back to Central Asia, is the symbol of the dome of the sky and the east as a direction (Çevrimli, 2012:195; Şahin, 2013: 212). It appears for the first time in the works of Artuklu and Saltuklu in Anatolian Turkish art (Ayhan, 2017: 1669).



Figure 18. Artuklu Coin Shaman Figure Riding a Dragon (Bilgili, 2014)



Figure 19. Entangled Dragon Figure in Erzurum Emir Saltuk Cupola (Topal, 2018)

In early Altay mythology, the dragon is believed to be a mythological entity, which is perceived as a symbol of power, strength, fertility, prosperity, rain and power, protecting from evil and the evil eye, and symbolizes water, rain, abundance and rebirth (Türkan, 2016: 220). It is generally known in two ways as snake-like, footless, scaleless, wingless, hornless and winged, horned, scaly and footed, reflecting celestial dragons (Çevrimli, 2012: 194).



Figure 20. Dragon Heads Carved in Stone-Konya Ince Minaret Madrasa (Topal, 2019)



Figure 21. XII-XIII. Century Seljuk Period Dragon Iconography (Tarih ve Arkeoloji, 2017)

The dragon, which is in the fifth place in the Turkish Calendar with 12 Animals, shows its relationship with astrology and its relationship with the planets and signs (Esin, 1970: 163-167). Yusuf Has Hacib, in his work *Kutadgu Bilig*, states that the sky wheel is turned by the universe (dragon) (Duman, 2019: 483).



Figure 22. Dragon Constellation (Tinnin) Acaibü'l Mahlûkat, BL Add. 7894) (And, 2020)

There are different opinions about the place where the dragon lives in Turkish cosmology. For example, while it is thought that the Uzbeks, Turkmens and Kazakhs lived in an underground cave and guarded the treasury; it is believed to live in the forest by the Azerbaijani and Siberian Turks. The general view is that the dragon is prepared to come out of the ground and mingle with the clouds during the spring months when he lives in both (Türkan, 2016: 220). It is thought to be a mythical spirit that lives in the depths of the earth-water in winter and flies in the spring, thus adhering to the principles of both earth-water and sky (Esin, 2001: 83).



Figure 23. Dragon Biting Its Own Body, Konya (Topal, 2019)

The Double Dragon, which we emphasized as a horoscope and calendar animal, is one of the symbols of the moon and the sun. The highlighted node on the body of the dragon indicates the states of the planets during solar and lunar eclipses (Erginsoy, 1992: 48).



Figure 24. Erzurum Double Minaret Madrasa Dragon Iconography (Topal, 2010)

The dragon, which is the common product of the Asian cultural environment, increased with the acceptance of Islam by the Turks and entered the Anatolian Seljuk art through the Great Seljuks (Güngör, 2014: 1154). Dragon iconography has an important place in Anatolian Seljuk art. The double-headed dragon and its combination with different animals is a very remarkable feature (Erginsoy, 1992: 47). In Seljuks, one of the periods when dragon iconography was used most, it usually ends with dragon heads at the ends of long knots, as a typical feature. In some works, two opposite dragons are seen in the form of pointed ears and large almond eyes on the heads, spiral curves on the lips, and pointed teeth (Erginsoy, 1992: 48).



Figure 25. Ejder- Konya Castle (Topal, 2019)

The Seljuk period approached the dragon with a different perspective. A never-before-seen depiction of a dragon with ears is seen (Ögel, 1995: 569). The dragon, which is usually seen as a knot in Seljuk art; it is also depicted with a scaly body, with or without feet, with or without wings (Güngör, 2014: 1154).



Figure 26. Dragon Iconography, Konya Ince Minaret Madrasa (Topal, 2019)

In the Seljuk universe, the second head on the tail is sometimes found biting itself. The dragon engraved on the artifacts is generally seen in the form of a planet, calendar, double-headed eagle, bull, lion, tree of life, water troughs, and struggle scenes engraved from the profile (Esin, 1970:177). There is no doubt that the dragon is used for different purposes in every structure and material for various symbolic purposes (Erginsoy, 1992: 48). In Anatolia, the dragon figure was used in architectural structures to protect it from evil and to bring good luck and happiness on doorknocker. In addition, its use continued in both tombstones and tombs in Anatolia (Ayhan, 2017: 1670). It is known that the name "Ahi-evran", which is widely known in Anatolia, comes from "universe" "büke" (Ulusoy, 2019).



Figure 27. Dragon Head Door Knocker Shepherd
Mustafa Pasha Complex (Ayhan, 2017)



Figure 28. Door Ring of Hacı Bayramı Veli of Tomb
(Ayhan, 2017)



Figure 29. Ahlat Tombstones Dragon Iconography (Çoruhlu, 2014)

The dragon motif in Ottoman art emerged in the XVI century. Various animal fight scenes are seen mostly in miniatures in the form of herbal decorations and mythological characters (Aslan, 2014: 33).



Figure 30. Ottoman Sultanate Boat Dragon Figure (Deniz Müzesi Komutanlığı, no date)

The dragon figure is mostly seen in architectural structures, as well as in areas such as metal, weaving, wood, tiles and miniatures. Scraping, carving, inlay, openwork and relief techniques are applied in three-dimensional metal objects in architectural areas (Çevrimli, 2012: 193).



Figure 31. Hz. Muhammad's Conversation with the Dragon Intercepting the Caravan (Siyer-i Nebi, TSM H.1222 (And, 2020)



Figure 32. Seljuk Mirror (Detail) (Çevrimli, 2012)

Conclusion

In our study, which we aim to examine and reveal in terms of the effect of fantastic figures on Turkish art and cultural relations in Turkish mythology, it is seen that the figures have reached a stylistic unity by kneading them with Turkish art and Turkish mythology.

Among the fantastic figures whose roots are based on a solid and original style and which arouse interest as a reflection of our culture and civilization; Umay-Ana comes as the first being after God, who communicates as auxiliary (intermediate) beings with her cosmic features. Bahaeddin Ögel gave Umay-Ana a sense of belonging as an being believed only by the Turks. The hand symbol, which is identified with Umay-Ana, which is described as a symbol of protection and fertility, reveals the deep influence of this tradition on belief by the wise woman who leads the community especially in the rituals of casting lead for the evil eye and removing the hair of the children, by starting the word "Umay-Ana's hand". Umay-Ana is still used as a protective spirit in various jewelry, amulet and souvenirs in Anatolia. One of the important motifs of Turkish mythology, the brighter than the light, the faster than the wind (Tul-par) was identified with Burak (Refref) during and after the Islamic period, due to its connection with the pre-Islamic god. The winged horse depicted as spotted in Islamic miniature works can be associated with the spotted tul-par, known as the horse of paradise in Central Asia. At the same time, this being, which is sacred to the Turks, is sacrificed in the name of the gods.

It is thought that the bones of the sacrificial animal, which has a place in Turkish traditions the soul is transported to the sky by burning it. This practice, which is one of the Turkish traditions, continues in Anatolia in the form of not burning and breaking the bones of sacrificial animals. The acceptance of death by the Alps, who cut off the tail of the horse without going to war, coincides with accepting martyrdom in Islamic understanding.

Among the fantastic figures, the dragon is one of the most reflected in art. It is believed as a mythological entity that protects from evil and the evil eye, which is perceived as a symbol of power, strength, fertility, prosperity, rain, and symbolizes rebirth. Dragon stone completing the contrasts between earth and sky, it appears with its original meanings in many art fields such as wood, miniature and metal. As with other fantastic figures, it has been observed that the dragon is used for fertility and protection in households, personal belongings, and various accessories.

As a result of our research, it has been determined that the fantastic figures we tried to express above leave deep traces to future generations by preserving their original structure with different meanings according to the materials used and the place of application in many fields of art (stone, wood, textile, metal, miniature, painting, tile).

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