

AR-GOD and the meaning of TREE in popular mythology.

The symbol of the tree is a very rich one. The tree is the source of life, while the world tree is the axis of the earth, the Creator's original shot. In mythology, life is birthed by the tree, for example in Yakut myths a tree with eight branches was the first birthplace of mankind.

The belief that dead ancestors' souls live in trees is widespread. Central Australian indigenous peoples see themselves as connected with trees as places where, according to tradition, their ancestors' souls live.

Finno-Ugric creation tales mention a great oak, which tends to leave the world in shade. The oak wanted to shatter the sky, its branches break the clouds so that the sun couldn't shine anymore or the moon gleam or the stars sparkle.

The most widespread Estonian sacred tree is, according to folklore, the oak.

The oak was dedicated to the ancestral god Taara, Donar, or Thor for the Germanic tribes. As a tree that is present in many sacred groves the oak lives in the people's memories in the name Taara tammik (Taara's oak wood) on Toomemägi hill in Tartu.

Elder people believed that each single tree had its own spirit that did not die with the tree but looked for another dwelling in a younger tree.

People believed that trees were able to talk. But it is actually the spirit dwelling in the tree who talks.

A typically totemic belief is about so-called man-trees that wander about either as trees or as humans. Giving names to trees eloquently illustrates how far the equivalence between people and trees went.

In Buddhism, the bamboo plant shows stages of mental development.

For the Chinese, bamboo is the symbol of long life, winter, and love of children.

In Islamic culture it is believed that leaves on the world tree bear everyone's names. Tree leaves are a symbol of the book in teaching and education.

The luck tree is represented as planted with roots upward, so that its branches and their fruit cover the earth.

In Jewish culture a tree of life grows in the garden of paradise that comes from Mesopotamia mythology and represents immortality.

The ancient Greeks saw trees as symbols of the tree of life and the world axis.

In ancient Rome, people used the concept of the *axis mundi*, the world axis, as the world's symbolic centre, and this too was generally seen as a tree.

Among Celts the tradition of the world tree was widespread (*crann bethad*). The roots of the original tree reached the heart of the earth and its topmost leaves reached the sky.

For the Hindus the tree was also a symbol of the world: its roots are the nether world, the trunk the world on earth, the crown the sky.

In the Egyptian mythology, the tree represented the mythic axis joining the nether world, the world on earth and the sky.