

## The Golden Color Symbolism in Religious Sanctities The Case Study of Art Gilding in The Quran

رمزية اللون الذهبي في المقدسات الدينية  
فن التذهيب في المصاحف أنموذجا

Ghemmaz Meriem\*<sup>1</sup>, Dr.Khaldi Mohammed<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>meriem.ghemmaz@univ-tlemcen, University Abou Bekr Belkaid,Tlemcen, Algeria

<sup>2</sup>khaldimohamed40@yahoo.com, University Abou Bekr Belkaid,Tlemcen, Algeria

Laboratory of Arts and Cultural Studies, University Abou Bekr Belkaid,Tlemcen

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### Abstract:

The present study spot slights on the golden color's use and symbolism in religious sanctities by investigating how gold was symbolically associated with the religious sphere at different time periods of history as in pre-Islam religions in ancient Egypt, Inca people, Judaism and Christianity or in Islam as exemplified in the holly book of Quran through the colorful art of books' gilding and decoration.

In order to fulfill the aims of the research, the study made use of the historical approach as well as the descriptive one as a means to examine the different ways in which the golden color was utilized and what does it stand for. Besides , the major concern of this investigation is to elucidate to what extent the qualities of the golden color affected the those individuals who used it in their religious field.

**Keywords:** Quran Gilding; Golden Color; Symbolism; Religious Sanctities; the Art of Gilding.

### الملخص:

كشف هذا البحث عن رمزية اللون الذهبي في المقدسات الدينية، وارتباطه بالمجال الإلهي في فترات مختلفة من التاريخ، من خلال التطرق إلى نماذج في مصر القديمة وحضارة الإنكا والديانة اليهودية والمسيحية وتوظيفه في الحضارة الإسلامية في عدة نماذج من المصاحف، حيث اعتمد البحث على المنهج التاريخي والمنهج الوصفي للوصول إلى

الطرق المتنوعة التي استخدم بواسطتها اللون الذهبي ووظف في المجال الإلهي، وتمثلت أهمية البحث في توضيحه لكيفية تأثير رمزية هذا اللون على اهتمام الإنسان الذي استخدمه في بعض المقدسات الدينية.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** تذهيب المصاحف؛ اللون الذهبي؛ رمزية؛ المقدسات الدينية؛ فن

التذهيب.

★ *Corresponding author:* Ghemmaz Meriem, *e-mail:* meriem.ghemmaz@univ-tlemcen

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Gold is among the various metals in ancient times that played an important role in all civilizations throughout history, from the civilization of Mesopotamia, the Indus Valley, ancient Egypt, to the Greeks, Romans, Aztecs, and Inca. Gold has become an important material in spirituality and religions. Thanks to its unique shine and color, it symbolizing the sun.

The golden color was associated with the divine realm, whether in previous religions or Islam, as it is the most precious material. In addition to its aesthetic characteristic of color, which is the brightest color. Hence, the meaning of gold, its indestructible nature, its adaptability, and its relative rarity has made it an ideal material for The expression of the veneration of God, which is the appropriate material chosen by a man to bring the gods closer together, thus adopting many different and multiple meanings that have associated with the religious context as a material of powerful qualities that has retained throughout history. According to the teachings of Islam, prohibits the representation of tangible objects that demonstrate the sense of divinity in religious contexts such as icons or statues.

The use of gold and its color in the Islamic religion found its ultimate spiritual expression in the Arabic handwriting and the gold in the holy text of Quran. No doubt glorifying the Holy Quran has made the writing and decoration of Quran one of the important industries, in which Arabs Muslim have been concerned.

### **Research Problem:**

The qualities of gold have influenced the human being, using it in the religious sphere, which is evident in the relics that he left throughout the different ages, where his methods of employing this wonderful material varied.

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We, therefore, ask the following question: How was the symbolism of gold in religious sanctities, and what was the symbolic relationship between it and Quran?

### **Research Hypotheses:**

- 1- Gold and its color in ancient Egypt were associated with the Gods, so it is used in gold masks, as it symbolizes the strength and wealth of the Pharaonic civilization.
- 2- The gold material gained a very high and important position in the Inca civilization, so its color used in the statues of the Gods, due to its scarcity and high value among the other minerals they reached.
- 3- In the Jewish religion, the golden color is associated with the calf, and therefore it symbolizes worship, while in the Christian religion it is used widely in churches because of its elegance and superiority over other colors.
- 4- The golden color used to decorate the Holy Quran symbolizes the Muslims' appreciation for the words of God.

### **Importance of research**

The importance of this research lies in highlighting the role played by the golden color in the religious sphere and the knowledge of its characteristics and symbolism, which have enabled it to be the preferred subject of man, despite different cultures civilizations, and religions throughout history.

Identifying how the golden color is used in Quran and how Muslims have created many ways and methods to decorate some pages of the Quran and sometimes gilding their words in gold.

To recognize the importance of worship to man and how he expressed the sanctification of his religion and beliefs by using the color of gold.

### **Research Limitations:**

This research is limited to the following historical times:

1. Historical times associated with studying the pre-Islamic religions of ancient Egypt, Inca, Judaism, and Christianity.
2. Historical times associated with the Islamic study of the Umayyad, the Abbasid era, the Mamluk era, and the Ottoman era.

## **Research Methodology:**

This study deals with a set of sanctuaries, in which the golden color is used as a symbolism related to religious beliefs starting from ancient Egypt's religion to the Inca people's one in their worship of the sun. In addition to Judaism in which the golden color was dealt with in two contradictory ways, Christianity linked to gold statues and icons, then Islamic religion that added golden color to the Quran, which represents God's speech at home, this study adopted the historical and descriptive method.

### **1-Identification of Terms:**

#### **1-Holy definition:**

Ibn Mandoor defines in his book "The Arabic Tongue" the concept of the Holy See through the word Holy See, which blessed, and indicates that the Holy See is God's indulgence.<sup>1</sup>

#### **2- Definition of religious sacraments:**

In "Oxford Dictionary": sacred, which generally symbolizes the divine.

"Holy" from the Oxford English Dictionary usage divided into three categories:

First, attributes of God ... or the divine; Second, the attributes of things that derive their holiness through connection with God and third, the attributes of people and actions that match what believed to God's expectation. "When the word "Holy" was added into the language, he took some of this «the semantic scope of Holy: specifically, it referred to things respectable or revered but not to the divine itself and not to people. It seems that what was at stake in the extension of the Scriptures in English usage was trying to describe the reverence bestowed by humans and not asserting that the thing in question sanctified by God<sup>2</sup>.

### **2- The symbolism of the golden color in the divine sphere before Islam**

#### **1-2 Mask of Tutankhamen 1323 BC**

When considering the history of ancient Egyptian civilization, it turns out that the golden color used in the burial masks intended for the

gods, gold was very expensive, rare, and dedicated to the divine connections of the gods' kings and given to them with sacrifices and luxurious gifts,<sup>3</sup> as it believed that it had extraordinary magical powers, including the protection of man in the afterlife, so they mummify their gods and paint them in pure gold before the burial,<sup>4</sup> and while many struggled to reach this substance, ancient Egypt was the first gold-producing country that had unlimited supplies.<sup>5</sup> (Figure 01) Pharaoh Tutankhamen's mask burial is among the most famous treasure in ancient Egypt; an example of one of the greatest artistic and technical achievements of that era depict a mask made of 11 kg of gold, the facial features of Pharaoh studded with three different types of precious stones,<sup>6</sup> The golden color painted on gold masks symbolizes the firm belief of Egyptian civilization that the gods' skin and bones are gold and symbolizes the eternal immortality that the gods will inhabit after death.<sup>7</sup>

## **2.2. Tears of the Sun in Inca civilization:**

Gold in Inca civilization is the tears of the sun and its race in and the golden color in the statues of their gods symbolizes the color of the sun they worship. It sacred and its worship is the official religion, and because of this belief, which dates back to ages, before Inca civilization, a man practiced gold technologies at the beginning of the first millennium, and he made things that contained several kilograms of gold.<sup>8</sup>

These indigenous people adept at crafting gold using primitive tools, and they did unparalleled artwork. They decorated temples throughout their empire with colors gold,<sup>9</sup> the walls of their temples golden inside and out. In addition to their belief that gold was the sweat or tears of the sun, The golden color is a symbol of the high status and magical power of the gods but not of the rest of the human beings, and it is the grace of the gods when they send them in the form of tears or sweat. The king was only allowed to wear gold paintings as a symbol of his divine birth. The rich and the people of the noble classes of gold from their lives and had to wait until they died, and they put in the burial rooms with their wealth of gold.<sup>10</sup>

### **3.2. Gold in Christianity and Judaism:**

This material and its color have always associated with holiness, evil, and sin. In Judaism, where "the golden calf is a symbol of worshipping idols; <sup>11</sup>a human sin in the Exodus; while in Genesis, "Abraham described as rich in gold and silver, while the prophet Moses ordered to cover the chair of mercy for the coffin of the covenant with pure and pure gold."<sup>12</sup>

In Christianity, color of gold used, and played a great role in the history of the icon<sup>13</sup> is associated with the color of the sun<sup>14</sup>... It symbolized calm and the light of the divine. and the heavenly world represented in Roman and Byzantine art, so it had an overwhelming presence on major holidays and replaced the white, red, or green for its splendor and uniqueness from the rest of the colors, Gold had a special purpose in Byzantine icons and was often used to highlight the auras of Christ, Mary, and Christian saints.<sup>15</sup>

### **3. Gilding of Quran:**

The Quran is considered the greatest ancient manuscript, although the Holy Quran does not need to be embellished, artists excelled in decorating it with out-rigger gold. The Quran that has written in early Islam came free of gilding, as the Companions, May ALLAH pleased with they took care to memorize and memorize it more.<sup>16</sup> From their care in writing it, they unanimously wrote Quran that was devoid of points, shape, and sweetness, as well as devoid of separations between verses,<sup>17</sup> in the Umayyad era the beautification of the Quran was not limited to the use of gold only, this went beyond the silver in which the pages of the Quran were decorated, and it is likely that method used in gilding the Quran pages was not by the method of painting but represented by decorative compositions made of gold foil. Thus, it said that the use of gold in beautifying the Quran has become an acceptable matter among the greatest jurists, including the Hejaz jurist "Anas Ibn Malik", who authorized the sweetening of the Quran with gold.<sup>18</sup>

### **1.3. The Blue Quran in Kairouan:**

The titles of the chapters are written at the beginning of the thirteenth century AH ninth century AD in some Quran in gilded ornamentation devoid of decoration, where there is a Quran written in blue or in digo parchment that goes up to the third century<sup>19</sup> written in golden Kufic (see

Figure 04) and it is known as the elegant Quran, which is a unique model with seven sections in seven volumes. Some remaining parts of which were preserved in the Museum of Islamic Civilization and Arts in Raqada, Tunisia, and the others were distributed among the Museums of the world.<sup>20</sup> Gilded decorations in some other Quran represent breaks between chapters and this method was common at the beginning of the (fourth century AH, 10th century).

### **2.3. Ibn Al-Bawab's Mushaf:**

As soon as the Abbasid era arrived, the signs of a civilization renaissance appeared in various fields on the horizon. Art flourished, so the artists competed towards creativity, and from the arts that those concerned were keen to pay attention to is the making of book gilding. And the use of gold in the Quran in particular during fourth-century reached a high level especially in Iraq, because of the great attention paid by the state to the care of the decorators and religious scholars and specialists among the Arab Muslims have discovered materials that help increase the speed, stability, and attachment of golden chips on paper,<sup>21</sup> such as white fish glue and plant gum (Figure 5), which only takes one hour pasted ,process of gilding the verses' breaks fifths and tenths of various shapes continued. At first, Sassanid and Byzantine elements in gilded decorations, and soon the hexagonal and octagonal star motifs and palmette fans Lattice plant branches.

Development of the gilding during this period is due to Ibn al-Bawab, who had previous experience in the work of paintings and wall decorations and was able to develop them, make them more accurate and modern as he worked in the gilding of the Quran.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it can be said that the gilded space in Quran has expanded. Even more, his words were written by him, and his decorations went through the use of new principles in which Ibn al-Bawab showed a distinguished artistic in Genius that no one had ever been before him, including his use of a gold pen in writing the beginning of the chapters.

### **3.3. The Holy Quran of Al-Mustasami:**

And in the late Abbasid era, another star appeared in Baghdad, who called the chief of the Muslims calligraphers Yaqut al-Mustasami in the seventh century AH the first quarter of the next century (13-14 CE),<sup>23</sup> and had worked in copying luxurious Quran for several decades after this era, a complete copy in volume one preserved in the Tareq Al-Rajab Museum in Kuwait in which the text written in black ink by Al-Rayhan, on a single page, thirteen lines, in a rectangular frame, the names of the chapters and the number of their verses written in a thuluth pen in rectangular frames over a mulch of delicate plant branches in gold and blue, and another Quran the same font is in Christie's London (Figure 06) auction house in shape.<sup>24</sup>

### **4.3. The Holy Quran of Baybars:**

An example of the gilded decoration is the Quran of Baybars (Figure 07), named after its patron Rukn al-Din Baybars al-Jahangir. This Holy Quran has written in Cairo between 1304 and 1306, and it is the oldest Holy Quran dating back to the Mamluk period (1250-1517). It has seven volumes, each of which a double Side that is distinguished by its splendor and unique beauty. The first pages decorated in the Mamluk style, which characterized by the great use of thin vegetal branches borrowed from some Arabesque species.<sup>25</sup>

The entire Quran is has written in (golden thuluth ornamentation); a type of Arabic ornamentation, and surrounded by black ink, with red vowels and other Spelling marks in blue. Choice of the third because the text is unorthodox,<sup>26</sup> as it was generally considered decorative, as it used mainly for chapter titles and not for the body of the text. The layout of the calligraphy is of special importance as each page of Baybars's Quran has an even number of lines. This is practically unprecedented. Most Quran has an odd number of lines per page. Also, of interest is the and chapter headings indicated only by changing the color, with red ink overlaying gold, but without extra line spacing as the calligrapher maintained the visual flow of the page.<sup>27</sup>

### **5.3. The Ottoman Quran:**

The Ottomans paid great attention to the art of gilding, and this clear in a group of Holy books of Quran attributed to<sup>28</sup> the Ottoman era that



shows to us the artist's effort to make them masterpieces of art that emotionally and spiritually link to him. One of the Holy Quran copied by Sheikh Hamad Allah Al-Amasi preserved in Arab museums is a Quran preserved in Tareq Al-Rajab Museum in Kuwait City (Figure 08). The Quran dated from the year 907 AH 1501 CE written in Naskh script in bold brown ink in a circular, gilded manner.<sup>29</sup>

#### **4. The Symbolism of the relationship of gold to shape and color in gilding Quran:**

Because of the unique shine of gold, resistances to rust, its durability, its flexibility, and its ability to be shaped, its symbolic qualities are represented and are associated with purity, light, and truth.<sup>30</sup> Gold symbolizes the strength and wisdom that a Muslim finds in his faith through his reading, contemplation, and learning, so the Holy Quran is the wise book. Gold is an eternal metal in its uses that symbolizes eternity and stability, so it does not transform with time, does not end, and does not corrode. These chemical qualities which are associated with gold are believed by the Muslims as symbolic qualities that characterize the Quran.<sup>31</sup> The Quran is described as a Holy book, preserved from absurdity. And it is the preferred metal for holy things or for the holy kings, shepherds of gilding, and the work of kings.

##### **1.4. The Symbolism of the Shape of the Sun and the Golden Color:**

God Almighty mentions the Quran in several places as light or shining the light. "God comes to you a light and a clear book." Therefore, gilding the sun and its rays in the Quran were other symbols that also express perfection and the infinite.<sup>32</sup> Whereas revelation is the bright light that blurs the ignorance of the unbelievers in God almighty, and it casts its light towards the world through the guidance by Prophet Mohamed Peace is upon him.<sup>33</sup> Gold in itself forms a vital presence, as it is the background of the text, and it increases the influence of letters and diacritics in words, As for the gilded decorations, they show an image of rhythm, is continuous repetition on the page, especially in the decorations of arabesque, which is regularly used to symbolize rhythmic Quran recitations.

#### **2.4. Symbolism of the Golden and Blue Colors in the Quran:**

The ingenuity of the two schools of thought was clear in the decoration of the first and second pages of the Holy Quran, as well as in the last two pages of it. Gold water used in different colors, especially the turquoise blue color.<sup>34</sup> In some Quran, it raised to the level of equality with gold, while this color preserved the place. The first for the secondary colors with golden combines two celestial or solar symbols.

Blue is the color of the infinite symbolizing the surrounding sky and the sea, if the blue is infinitely liberating, then the golden color liberated because, like the sun,<sup>35</sup> it is a symbol of the soul and this actually transcends the entire world of shapes.

In writing words with ink, the calligrapher identifies letters in black or chooses a darker background, because gold, by its nature, escapes from the form,<sup>36</sup> although in its essence there is a symbol of knowledge. Therefore, the blue color in the presence of gold tends to its symbolism represented in mercy by revealing itself in the presence of gold,<sup>37</sup> and we notice in several Quran the picture how the splendor of the golden color and blue is depicted, in ways that make them reinforce each other and make balance greatly, which results in a comprehensive coolness on the design.

#### **5. CONCLUSION:**

Through this study in which we tried to identify the golden color and its symbolism, which was according to beliefs and religions, civilizations gave gold a value, so its status changed and its price rose globally, which is what several generations touch between the past and the current moments, and the reason behind all this attention is due to the characteristics of Gold, which is immutable, which earned it symbolic and monetary value, distinguishing between metals with flexibility and resistance to corrosion. This has preserved golden monuments for centuries until now, without being subjected to collapse in the face of climate change and erosion, but has withstood time and has become a symbol of eternity and beauty.

In ancient Egypt, Gold was one of the most important wealth that used in life after death. It is symbolically linked to eternity, for it is the eternity of color and the immortality of the mummified Gods at a burial, and in the Inca civilization it was symbolically associated with the tears of the sun as it was a bright golden color, which made them believe that gold

is its scattered tears. Therefore, one of their major concerns was collecting a great wealth of gold with which they form statues and decorate their temples. In the Jewish religion, the symbolism of gold differs, as it is the golden calf and sin, as it is an unpopular color for them, but it is linked to one of the major and important rituals, which is covering the coffin with this precious color. As for the Christian religion, it symbolizes the divine light. Christianity made it one of the most important colors and the most used in churches, wall paintings, and drawings of saints.

The Muslim artist linked gold to writing the Holy Quran, starting with the use of gold as a metal with precious stones to the creation of many ways to write and decorate them with gold flux and leaves, thus creating a stand-alone art as a result of his mastery and keenness to write the Holy Quran in the most beautiful forms. Thus, gilding been linked Symbolically by the light of the word of God, the light and the eternal truth and it symbolizes the great reverence of the Qur'an and the true value of gold, by choosing the most expensive and valuable color in coloring the decorations of the pages of the Holy Quran.

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<https://doi.org/https://search.emarefa.net/detail/BIM-887414>

# The Golden Color Symbolisme in Religious Sanctities

## The Case Study of Art Gilding in The Quran

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### Appendices

Figure N° 1: mask of Tutankhamen



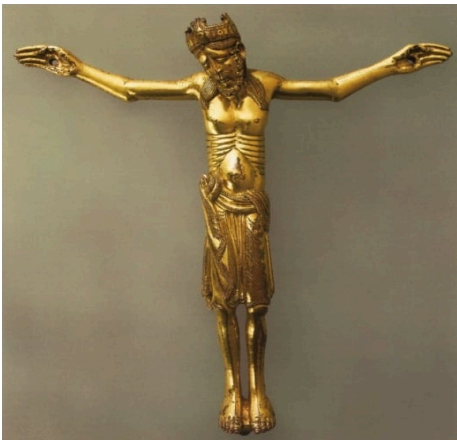
Art and history :Legacy of Tutankhamen ,Mey Zaki,P 10.

Figure N° 2: an Inca sun god mask made of gold.



Exploring the incas,john Malam, p 07

Figure N° 3: Christ on the cross-



Christ in Art, Ernest Renan, Parkstone International ,2012,P 27.

Figure N° 4: 1 the Blue Quran in Kairouan



Byzantium and Islam: Age of Transition, 7th-9th Century, Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York, N.Y.) P 276

Figure N° 5: Ibn Al-Bawab'sMushaf



خط المصحف الشريف و تطوره في العالم الإسلامي،  
عبد العزيز حميد صالح، دار الكتب العلمية ،بيروت  
لبنان ، ص 220

Figure N° 6: The Holy Quran of Al-Mustasami



نصار محمد منصور ،الخطاط ياقوت المستعصي دراسة تحليلية  
للخصائص الفنية لأسلوبه في الخط الريحاني ،المجلة الأردنية  
للتاريخ والآثار ، المجلد 12، العدد 19، 2018، 57-2، ص 37.

Figure N° 7: Baybars Quran



Sultan baybars' Qur'an ,British Library  
,p02.

[www.BaybarsQuran.com](http://www.BaybarsQuran.com)

Figure N° 8 : The Holy Quran of Sheikh  
Hamad Allah Al-Amasi



عبد العزيز حميد . (1971). تاريخ الخط العربي عبر العصور القديمة . لبنان:  
دار الكتب العلمية ص 244