

# **The Green Colour of Paradisal Garden and Metaphoric Water: A Divine Gift and Promise from Allah to His People in the Islamic Religion and Environment**

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## **Abstract**

Water is the origin of life and the basis on earth. It is deep-rooted as the religion to purify the human soul. In Islam, it makes Muslims feel grateful to Allah as divine generosity. The Court of the Lion in Alhambra elaborates the Koranic verse of “Gardens underneath which rivers flow”. Channels and pools were developed for visual beauty and incorporated into sophisticated building schemes. Water is a complement to the nature in architecture, conveying a sense of repose and freshness. It creates openness and breadth to the enclosed spaces. Moreover, the beautiful nature is Allah’s sign which Muslims contemplate on them. Garden is the space of this meditation and an earthly reflection of Paradise. It is the perfect state of the world. A question arises: what signifies the notion of Paradise? It is a green colour, a linguistic-visual sign. In semiotics, Saussure (1959) divides linguistic signs to the signifier and the signified - a concept or meanings by the signifier. Various meanings are a result of arbitrary relationships between the two factors, caused by perceptions, emotions, and interpretations. This

paper focuses on the semiotics of the green colour, to manifest the paradisal garden and metaphoric water in the Islamic religion and environment.

**Keywords:** Semiotic interpretation, Green colour, Koranic paradisal garden, Metaphoric water, Barada mosaic panels

## 1. The Green Colour of the Islamic Worldview

Colours are a visual means of expressions and messages. As an integral part of the substance and life, they are associated with human cognitive and emotional states. As a critical role in emotions and identity, six colours can associate with different emotions.

Red (Passion), Orange (Vitality), Yellow (Cheerfulness), Green (Serenity), Blue (Infinity), Violet (Majesty)

The symbol of the six colours varies with time, place and culture, and even one colour can function differently in the same place. Each colour bears its history and a set of meanings, physically and emotionally. Contrasting meanings on colours are caused by (i) cultural associations - the colour of traditions, celebrations or geography, (ii) political and historical associations - the colour of political parties or royalty, (iii) religious and mythical associations - the colours of spiritual or magical beliefs, (iv) linguistic associations - colour terminology within individual languages, and (v) contemporary usage - objects generated by modern conventions and trends.

Despite the differences in the interpretation of colours, ancient civilizations worked out determined forms of colour symbolism to organize a world of multiplicities, making the primary colours to be divine. Besides, religions overlaid this with other significances because symbolism is the product of civilization developments as well. Depending on the region for which the civilization was originated, each colour has its variety of

meanings. Accordingly, with the expansion of the Islamic empire, pre-existing local and regional traditions, its common and scientific knowledge, and the region's civil characteristics were incorporated into the Islamic culture, affecting the colour meanings.

For example, green is the colour of nature, symbolizing growth, harmony, freshness, rebirth, and fertility. It is the colour of water and the goddess Aphrodite, who was born of the sea, a personification of nature. In religions, green stands for the resurrection as it characterizes new spring every year. With its comforting and balancing quality, the green spring represents joy for Egyptians; hope for Christian virtues rooted by a reflection of greenery from the Garden of Eden. The Greeks and Romans focused their thoughts on the green cypress, myrtle, ivy and laurel, while the Germans took the fir Christmas tree to strengthen hope in the darkest winter. The selection of the green plants yet different sorts testifies the common interests on the colour among human races.

*Green is the intermediate between yellow and blue. Fruitfulness and contentment, tranquillity and hope are expressive values of green, the fusion and interpenetration of knowledge and faith. When luminous green is dulled by grey, a sense of sad decay easily results. If the green inclines towards yellow, coming within the range of yellow-green, we feel younger, the vernal force of nature. Spring or early summer morning without yellow-green, without hope and joy for the fruits of summer, is unthinkable. (Itten 1975)*

In the Middle East, greenery implies cool shading, the presence of water, wealth and happiness. The Islamic green recalls the "Garden of Delights" in Paradise, and the green robe of the Prophet Mohammed became the colour of Islam. The green flag is comprised of the emblem of salvation and the symbol of richness in materiality or spirituality. Fulton (2014) argues that the European crusaders avoided using the green in their coats of arms, not to be mistaken for Muslims during Crusade, although the origins of this are obscure. Some scholars assumed that the green colour as the middle

colour of the colour spectrum connects Prophet's preaching for moderating complement each other.

During the Prophet Muhammad's lifetime, the only symbolism associated with the religion was in the usage of colours. In the Koran, five types of colours (black, white, red, yellow, green) with various meanings are mentioned. And the green colour is the most sacred and prominent due to its signification of hope as nature's revival.

Speculations on the association of the green colour to Islam can be attributed to (i) the colour of the Prophet's tribe, the Quraysh, (ii) the Prophet's favourite colour, (iii) the Prophet's sayings in the *hadith*<sup>1</sup>, and (iv) natural environments in the Middle East. Even in the Koran, the green colour is given a special status related to the notion of Paradise, the Garden of Eden.

*There will be gardens of Eden for them, with rivers flowing by, where they will be decked in bracelets of gold, with silken robes of green and brocades to wear, reclining on couches. How excellent the guerdon and excellent the resting-place! (The Koran 18:31)*

In Paradise, the blessed will wear garments of green silk, which has applied to the graves of Sufi saints. Korans are bound in green, and the Arabic word for "greenness" appears several times in the Koran, describing the state of the inhabitants of Paradise;

*khādiran/green plant (6:99:14)*

*khud'rin/green (12:43:13)*

*khud'rin/green (12:46:14)*

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<sup>1</sup> Some associated the colour with a *hadith* attributed to the Prophet: "Three things of this world are acceptable: water, greenery and a beautiful face."

*khud'ran/green* (18:31:17)

*mukh'darratan/green* (22:63:11)

*lakhdari/green* (55:64)

*mud'hāmmatāni/dark green* (55:76:5)

*khud'run/green* (76:21.4)

*waqaḍban/green fodder* (80:28:2)

In short, the green colour signifies the Islamic religion and environment in the Middle East. It endows a meaning of nature and life in the desert. Without the green, a feeling of retreat from the mundane world along with emotional correspondence with peace, harmony, and safety seems inflexible to obtain. The green colour is a semiotic visual sign, to generate meanings of paradisal gardens and metaphoric water for Muslims

## **2. Signifier (green) and Signified (Paradisal Garden, Metaphoric Water)**

### **2.1. Sign Theories**

In the West, the ground of medieval sign theory was indebted to reflections of St. Augustine (354-430) in his *On Christian Teaching (De Doctrina Christiana)*. The short treatise provided rules for the interpretation of sacred scripture and was intended for readers, who wished to experience the ambiguity in the biblical texts. Augustine was interested in the signifying capacity of words, instead of pictures. He spoke of communicative signs to the eye rather than the ear. His visible words were incorporated into gestures, and Augustine included pictorial representations among the non-verbal signs, to assist in setting up the meaning of words.

*"A sign," said Augustine (354-430), is a thing which of itself makes some other thing comes to mind, besides the impression that it presents to the senses. Whereas things, strictly*

*speaking, signify nothing but themselves, signs -including words- signify something else. They serve to transmit what is in the mind of one to the mind of another, but only if the other agrees with the convention in use. A sign for Augustine is thus a triadic construct: it is a thing that signifies something to someone.* (Sears and Thomas 2002, p.16)

Augustine's hermeneutical distinctions, transferred from verbal to visual signs, clarify the procedure of deciphering pictorial imagery which visualizes, interprets, or alludes to biblical words. However, the reader can be lost astray in two ways and faces with unknown signs (*ignota signa*) or ambiguous signs (*ambigua signa*). On this process, he suggested helpful learning methods for the Christian exegete with careful attention to ambiguous signs, to avoid the vagueness of the texts. First, it should be decided whether the sign is read literally or figuratively. Second, readers should examine its context because the nature of ambiguous signs signifies contrasting or numerous things in different places. Augustine exemplifies a snake and suggests readers considering alternatives.

The knowledge of the snake's habits can explain many analogies of the animal in scripture. As an ambiguous sign, a positive sense of the snake is "wise" (Matthew 10:16)<sup>2</sup>; its negativity is "cunning" (2 Corinthians 11:3)<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, Augustine permits the validity of meanings as long as they agree with other passages of scripture. His statement assists modern readers on how to imagine the medieval approach towards images, which depict the things and signs of the Bible. Augustine's sign theory became the groundwork for theories on signs and semiotics during the Middle Ages and continued.

*No one disputes that it is much more pleasant to learn lessons presented through imagery (similitudines) and much more rewarding to discover meanings that are won only the*

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<sup>2</sup> "See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

<sup>3</sup> But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning, your thoughts will be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ.

*difficulty*. (Augustine, *De Doctrina Christiana* 2:13, translated by Green 1997) Based on the groundwork of Augustine's medieval sign theory, semiotics is an interpretative framework and describes the process of encoding and decoding. Decoding interprets and evaluates the meaning regarding the relevant signs. Signs are systems of related conventions for correlating signifier and signified in specific domains.

## 2.2. Semiotics

As one of the two pioneers in semiotics in modern times, Charles Peirce (1931) recommends three types of semiotic signs. (i) "Indexical sign" bears a direct link to what the sign refers: the referent. For example, smoke is an index to fire. (ii) "Iconic sign" can produce a resemblance to the objects and serves as iconic referents to them. For example, the link lies in the colour's connotation of the object, exemplifying the red colour to be an iconic representation of blood. The green colour is for nature. (iii) Symbolic sign: A symbol is regarded pragmatic because both the sender and receiver of the text are aware of the meaning, helping interpretations and communication. Symbolic signs contribute to action or thought, and to this, cultural differences and types of object bring a direct influence on the way, which the colours are symbolized.

As another founder of semiotics, Saussure de Ferdinand in his *Course in General Linguistics* (1916; 1959) explains that a sign is both a sound-image and a concept. He divides the sign into the signifier (sound-image) and the signified (concept). The signified is not to be a real object but is some referent to which the signifier refers. This fact varies between people and contexts because it is the concept, the meaning, the thing indicated by the more stable signifier, causing an arbitrary relationship between the signifier and the signified.

According to Cambridge Dictionary, the term "signify" denotes as (i) to be a sign of something; to mean, (ii) to make something known; to show, and (iii) to have importance or to matter. And terms "signifier" and "signified" are related to semiotics, whose studies deal with signs and symbols and their use or interpretation.

Moreover, culture consists of behavioural patterns and characteristic attainment of human collectives. It is acquired and transmitted by signs-symbols, and the core of culture is made of traditional ideas and their attached values. In the semiosphere or semiotic spaces, the process of a sign operates in the set of all interconnected Umwelten<sup>4</sup>. The idea was invented by Yuri Lotman in 1984 and has applied to cultural semiotics. Metaphors and culture are semiospheres.

Metaphor is an expression of describing an object by referring to something similar. For Lotman, a metaphor provides a spatial model for the interpretation of culture. It accounts for self-referential as it is itself expressed in the form of a metaphor, encompassed by a border. Its internal places are discontinuous and heterogeneous in general. Lotman's semiosphere is based on dualisms, levels, stratifications, and spatial opposite. It marked a turning point in cultural studies and transformed to post-structuralism of culture.

Semiotic theories above can affirm the green colour to be a cultural signifier in the Islamic religion and worldview. In this process, emotions will direct the signifier towards specific meanings, judged by cultural traditions and circumstances.

### **3. Emotions**

Daniel Goleman, in his *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), suggests two types of intelligence (rational and emotional), which operate independently and do are need to be consistent with one another. Derived from Latin *exmovere*, the term "emotion" defines 'move out,' 'agitate,' or 'excite.' It is a neural impulse due to a psycho-physiological state, which moves an organism to action, characterizing affective phenomena by temporal duration.

Theories with dissimilar viewpoints have discussed the effect of human emotions. In the 1870s, Charles Darwin suggested the evolutionary theory of emotions, arguing that

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<sup>4</sup> Umwelt is the semiotic world of an organism.



emotions exist because they serve an adaptive role. They motivate humans to respond to stimuli in the environment and improve the opportunities for success and survival. Although the theory treats emotions as innate responses to stimuli, it underestimates the influence of thought and learning on emotion. All cultures share basic emotions such as happiness, contempt, surprise, disgust, anger, fear, and sadness, and other emotions are the result of the mixture and different intensities of the basic emotions.

(i) The James-Lange Theory (the 1880s): Emotions occur as an outcome of physiological reactions to events. When people face an external stimulus, it leads to a physiological reaction. The emotional reaction depends on how people interpret the physical reactions. Emotion is experienced because people perceive their bodies' physiological responses to external events.

(ii) The Cannon-Bard Theory (the 1920-30s): The physical and psychological experiences of emotion happen simultaneously, and that one does not cause another. The brain gets a message which causes the experience of emotion at the same time; the autonomic nervous system gets a message which causes physiological arousal. People feel emotions while they also experience physiological reactions.

(iii) Schachter and Singer's Two-Factor Theory (the 1960s): As a cognitive theory of emotion, it drew the two theories above together. When people perceive physiological symptoms of arousal, they search for an environmental explanation of this arousal and label it as an emotion. The label depends on what they discover in their environment.

(iv) Cognitive Appraisal Theory: Thinking should take place before experiencing emotions. The sequence of events first involves a stimulus, followed by the thought, which then leads to the simultaneous experience of physiological response and emotion. People's experience of emotions depends on the way they appraise or evaluate the events around them.

Recently, the philosophy of emotions has addressed other questions. Paul Griffiths (1997) claims that emotions are an assorted cluster of phenomena and cannot comprise a single natural kind. They offend the senses and supply feelings.

One can ask how expressions of the paradisal green garden in the Koranic texts help generate different types of emotions to Muslims.

#### 4. The Paradisal Garden in the Koranic Texts

The word “paradise” has a Persian origin and defines ‘an orchard of pleasure and fruits,’ or ‘a garden’. It also used to the heavenly dwelling of the righteous in allusion to the Garden of Eden. Although Paradise is a place of contentment, a land of luxury and fulfilment, its notions are cross-cultural and often loaded with pastoral imagery in a cosmological context.

The 120 references describe Koranic Paradise as a green garden with vines, fruit-laden trees, fountains, and streams, which evoke a spiritual journey. In terms of an eschatological viewpoint, Paradise is imagined as a home of the virtuous dead, denoted as “garden” (Arabic *janna*) to explain ultimate place after death.

Some scholars propose that the plants in nature bear a deep symbolism, and the four gardens of Paradise imply a spiritual journey. Categorized by Martin Lings (1992), a date palm grows in the Garden of the Spirit; the pomegranate tree in the Garden of Essence. The olive tree appears in the Garden of the Soul, while the fig can be visible in the Garden of the Heart. Therefore, a garden signifying “Paradise on earth” is recognizable because the symbolism of courtyard gardens takes artifice to refer to nature. A trickling fountain evokes a spring, and a tended bed can propose the cultivated landscape. In this way, the garden becomes a metaphor for a whole landscape, transformed by human manufacturing.

*“The Mighty and All-knowing created them.” He who made the earth a bed for you, and laid out tracks upon it so that you may find the way. (The Koran 43:9-10)*

Philologists confirm that the Persian and Arabic words for “paradise” (*firdaus* and *janna*) are synonymous with “garden”; thus, notions of Paradise and garden are inseparable. As the Koran describes Paradise as a garden, its relevant passages should

be the meaning of real gardens. Regarding the afterlife of the faithful with the garden in Islam;

*Announce to those who believe and have done good deeds, glad tidings of gardens [janna] under which rivers flow, and where, when they eat the fruits that grow, they will say: "Indeed they are the same as we were given before." (The Koran 2:25)*

*The semblance of Paradise promised the pious and devout (is that of a garden) with streams of water that will not go rank, and rivers of milk whose taste will not undergo a change, and rivers of wine delectable to drinkers, and streams of purified honey, and fruits of every kind in them, and forgiveness of their Lord. (The Koran 47:15)*

As the Koranic Paradise is a garden with four rivers, some scholars interpret that all quadripartite gardens must be direct reflections or anticipations of this Heavenly Paradise. Fairchild Ruggles (2000) refuses this theory, underlining that the Koranic texts did not provide the concept and the layout of Islamic gardens. Historically, a four-part division had existed before Islam. Therefore, the image of Paradise as a garden was indebted to preexisting Jewish and Christian ideas of Eden and Heaven. Instead, the Islamic garden measures the conceptual distance between the land as a physical entity and its transformation into a cultivated landscape. This aesthetic measure was the conviction that Muslim rule was justified and divinely sanctioned. Those and all successive rulers took landscape cultivation and gardens to uphold the institutional power of the Umayyad dynasty and to convey the legitimacy of their rule as the centre in the Islamic world. The greenery scenery of the Barada panels of the Great Mosque, Damascus is the case.

## **5. Green 1: the Great Mosque of Damascus and Barada Mosaic Panel**

The construction of the Great Mosque of Damascus (completed 715) was a political means of establishing the permanence of the Umayyad rule and a gesture whose area

had been under Persian rule (612–628) and then Arab control (635–661). Situated in the old part of Damascus, the mosque is one of the largest and oldest mosques in the Islamic world. As reminiscent of Byzantine architecture, its spatial concept was changed to a new form and a unique experience of space to represent a declaration of power in the city conquered by the new faith of Islam. It was an affirmation of Islamic domination over the existing spiritual and material power, yet demonstrating the splendour and maintenance of the Christian heritage. Late Antiquity and Byzantine art provided forms and styles. And artists in the Arab world made use of them to develop a new art based on their religious rules and aesthetic tastes.

After the Muslim conquest of Damascus in 634, the mosque was erected on the site of a Christian basilica. It dedicated to John the Baptist and was honoured as a prophet both by Christians and Muslims. In an address to the Damascus citizens, the Umayyad caliph alWalid I (r. 705–715) proclaimed;



*Inhabitants of Damascus, four things give you a marked superiority over the rest of the world: your climate, your water, your fruits, and your baths. To these, I wanted to add a fifth: this mosque.* (Cited in Flood 2001, p.1) The specific value is traceable to the mosaic panels that decorate the facade of the mosque.



Figures 1.1 & 1.2. The façade of the Great Mosque of Damascus and the Barada mosaic panel in the west courtyard, 705 (Image 1.1: Jerzy Strzelecki; 2.2: flicker)

It displays landscapes of towns, houses, geometrical and vegetal motifs under the Umayyad dynasty. Named “the Barada panel” (c. 34.5 x 7.15 m. Figs. 1.1 & 1.2), the mosaic appears in the prayer hall, the inner side of the perimeter walls, and the court facades, depicting flowing Barada river, fantastic houses, and opulently foliate trees of variegated greens with the golden background. The motifs resemble those of the earlier masterpiece of Islamic architecture - Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem (691. Fig. 2.2).

The river on the Barada panel is often identified as the river in Damascus. Among multiple interpretations on the panel, it is (i) a quasi-Byzantine paradisal depiction, (ii) the lavish Umayyad palaces and gardens of Paradise, and (iii) the world at peace under the Islamic governance and the great Islamic religion.

Local Christian or Muslim artists who trained in Byzantine art (Fig. 2.1) could execute this decorative work, but Byzantine artists from the labour service system are an alternative as well. Papyri from Upper Egypt records artisans who were summoned to Damascus to build the Great Mosque in 709. Caliph al-Walid I wrote asking the Emperor of Byzantium; “Send me 200 Greek labourers, for I mean to build a mosque the like of which my predecessors never constructed, nor will my successors ever raise such a building.”



Figures 2.1 & 2.2. “Lamb of God” mosaic in the Basilica of San Vitale (547) at Ravenna exemplifies the early Byzantine architecture.

The Dome of the Rock of Jerusalem (691) is one of the oldest Islamic architecture, patterned after Byzantine. The pier panel of the circular arcade has the same floral motif as that of San Vitale. (Image 2.1: Petar Milosevic; 2.2: Virtutepetens)

Accordingly, the mosque bears the style of different mosaics, the repertory of ornamental forms, and landscape images of Byzantine yet Islamic iconography. Landscapes of towns and villages occupy a central place, in addition to geometrical and vegetal decorative motifs between them. Humans and animals are non-existent, suggesting the absence of narrative scenes as well as a ban of figures according to Islamic art. The predominating colours are blue and green. Therefore, several possible interpretations were put forward to the ornamentation of paradisal images, as was the frequent case in Byzantine buildings, where this type of subject appeared.

Two semiotic signs of the Barada panel related to paradisal garden in Islamic worldview of water can be argued. The first sign is the greenness. Flood Finbarr (2001) suggests that the notion of the green mosaics is connected to the Koranic passages quoted in inscriptions on the walls.

*Let man therefore consider (the sources of) his food. We poured down rain abundantly. Then We cracked the earth open under pressure (of germination). And we made corn grow, And grapes and herbage, Olives and dates, Orchards thick with trees, And fruits and fodder. (The Koran 80:24-31)*

The second sign is the hanging pearls and the hanging lanterns in the archways. Beads or ovoids in the shape of pearls hung on golden chains are a shared cultural heritage with Byzantine mother-of-pearl pendants. Both are related to the iconography of Heavenly

Jerusalem or Islamic Paradise. Flood connects the pearl with the bejewelled architecture of the garden, proposing the Heavenly connotation. Golden vines set between the mosaics and the marble may also confer paradisal imagery.

In the late medieval times, different interpretations of the Barada panel occurred between commentators. The panel could demonstrate the grandeur of the world under

the Islamic Umayyad rule, but it could invoke the “vision of Paradise”. For example, a medieval Arab geographer Al-Maqdisi (c.945/946-991) identified the image of grandeur with the caliph’s rule on earth. Others sided with the representation of Damascus itself; still, others recognized palaces as a promise in Paradise with the rivers flowing underneath.

In any case, the architectural beauty of the mosque and its ornamentation could reinforce a religious, aesthetic of the garden, based on the Koran and elaborated in *hadiths*. In other words, the mosque was interpreted to be a primary pilgrimage site, as the centuries were passing. Pilgrims travelled across religious places to enter sanctified space. Of the spiritual importance of their journeys, pilgrims could see the garden image with its bejewelled residences, flowing rivers, and lush greenery within the colourful, elaborate mosaics of the mosque. This fact can be testified from a *hadith*, narrated by al-Bukhari, in which the Prophet Muhammad said: “Whoever builds a mosque is rewarded with a house in Paradise.”

By inviting masons and artists from various lands, caliph al-Walid I sought the Great Mosque of Damascus to be luxurious and prestigious, hoping to secure similar grandeur for his promised palace in Paradise. Moreover, the depiction of the mosaics of Paradise, which is described by the Koran and *hadith* as containing palaces and gardens of fruit and palms, is caliph al-Walid I’s intended expression. Mosaics on the sanctuary entrance indicate the faithful to enter a garden of Paradise, where water exists in the form of the river. In Muslim artists’ imaginations and semiotic interpretations, greenery gardens occupy a special place, providing contemplation and an earthly reflection of Paradise.

## **6. Green 2: the Court of the Lion in Alhambra**

The gardens in the palace and tomb architecture of Spain have kept the intricate and combined use of water in history. They stand for a symbolic object or a decorative one,

in addition to a practical purpose. Applying the water for adornment as well as for coolness is seen in secular architecture. Water is a mirror to reflect the architecture and to multiply its decorating themes and a means of highlighting its visual axes. Pools of water reproduce the images, which they hold and deform their reality. They are irreversible, yet altering, fluid and dynamic yet static.

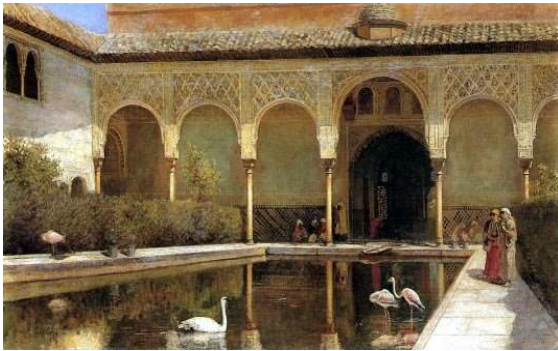


Figure 3. *A Court in the Alhambra at the Time of the Moors* (Painting: Edwin Lord Weeks, 1876)

Alhambra (“the red one”) is a palace and fortress complex of the Moorish rulers of Granada in southern Spain (al-Andalus). It occupies a hilly terrace to form the city’s old part, and to its east, are the splendid gardens of the Generalife, the former rural residence of the Nasrid emirs in the 13<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries. Greens and waters are everywhere, as mentioned at the introduction of this paper: the Koranic verse of “Gardens underneath which rivers flow” at the Court of the Lion. Five types of water features in Paradise are rivers, fountains, springs, wells, and streams. But, any types of water, either real or conceptual at Alhambra, can validate the paradisal garden in ever-green nature in the Islamic religion and environment.



## Conclusion

The word “salvage” is a core concept of literary and cultural activity, and translation, reception, and re-reading are the substance for comparative literary research, searching for the processes by which literature’s significance is activated or released in the actions of salvage.

This paper attempts to assess how the green colour and water are related to the notion of Paradise and garden in the Islamic worldview. My first approach is to choose the green colour as the signifier, hoping to find several metaphoric meanings as the signified.

My second approach is to apply the green colour into various semiotic theories because its multiple meanings can be produced, depending on people’s religion, tradition, culture, mindset, habit, perception, and emotions. For me, Peirce’s three types of semiotic signs (index, iconic, symbolic), Saussure’s two signs (signifier and signified), and Lotman’s semiosphere are relevant. In this process, the theories of emotions are invited to enhance better interpretations of the green colour.

My final approach is a comparison between the Koranic paradisal texts and their examples in the greenness, such as the Barada mosaic panel and the Alhambra water fountain. By doing the manifold processes, a full understanding of using the green colour at a specific time and space in the Islamic world can be achieved.

Why so?

According to Sears and Thomas (2002, p. 13), “understanding objects...based upon available knowledge, training, and practices, and further shaped by the places and modes of our encounters with the objects.” In my view, it deals with intangible cultural heritage, which designates the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, artefacts, and cultural spaces transferred through generations. Intangible cultural heritage recreates to their environment and history for a sense of identity and

continuity, strengthening esteem for cultural diversity and human creativity.

You may still wonder what my paper has to do with water. Please wait!

In the realm of intangible cultural (religious) heritage with the assistance of semiotic interpretations, the green colour goes through metamorphoses to be Paradise, garden, water, etc. It is a metaphor, expressing contemporary ideas of beauty and aesthetic concepts to communicate Muslim thoughts and to reflect the spirit of their times. Metaphoric water in the greenery Paradise is a divine gift and a promise from Allah to his People in the Islamic religion and environment.

*The likeness of Paradise promised the pious and devout is (of a garden) with streams of rippling water, everlasting fruits and shade. This is the recompense of those who keep away from evil; but the recompense of those who deny the truth is Hell. (The Koran 13:35)*

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