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In the Islamic world, the peacock also has significant symbolic meaning and is particularly associated with Paradise. There is a belief among Javanese Muslims that peacocks are the guardians of the Gates of Paradise, and in other cases the symbolic link

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is even stronger. In his epic work *The Conference of the Birds*, the 12th century Persian poet Farid ud-Din Attar says the peacock was one of the creatures that originally lived in Paradise, but like Adam and Eve, was tempted into sin by the serpent and thus exiled from the Garden of Eden. Attar also says, however, that if the peacock can defeat the serpent and its temptation, Paradise will once again be open to it, adding a theme of redemption to the peacock's symbolism. This bird's magnificent fan-shaped tail was associated with cosmic entities such as the sun and the heavens, and, consequentially, the power of royalty. The famous 'Peacock Throne' of Persia (an immense jewel-encrusted treasure) was originally commissioned by the Indian emperor Shah Jahan in the 17th century and subsequently stolen by the Persians about a century later (it has since been lost).

Arriving in Europe via international trade routes such as the famed Silk Road, the peacock was well known to both the Ancient Greeks and Romans. The Greeks associated the bird with Hera, the queen of the gods, but the many circular markings on its tail feathers were seen as a form of the evil eye and thus considered inauspicious. The Romans frequently depicted peacocks in mosaics and other artworks and, possibly via the old Greek connection to Hera, the birds became closely associated with the Roman Empresses. The European fasciation with peacocks continued into the Middle Ages, and although they were widely admired as symbols of beauty and immortality (it was believed that their flesh could not decay), the birds also acquired much of the negative symbolism still connected with them today. The well-known association of the peacock with pride and boasting doubtless came from its flashy display of tail feathers while courting a mate, and unlike the Indians, the Europeans often featured roasted peacock, still dressed in its skin and tail feathers, as a prominent piece of Medieval banquets.

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