

Diamonds invincible

The word diamond comes from the Greek "adamas" (meaning indestructible) and initially referred to the very hardest of metals, before being applied to any very hard material such as magnetite and diamond.

For the ancient Greeks, diamonds were «adamas» because they could neither cut nor saw them. Man has associated diamonds with extraordinary qualities and symbolic meanings from very early times.

Indestructible

At the time, diamonds were appreciated less for their sparkle than their hardness.

Invincible

If the diamond cannot be bettered, it is because it is invincible, a source of power and victory on the fields of war and justice. This invincibility protects against sickness and poison.

Pouvoir

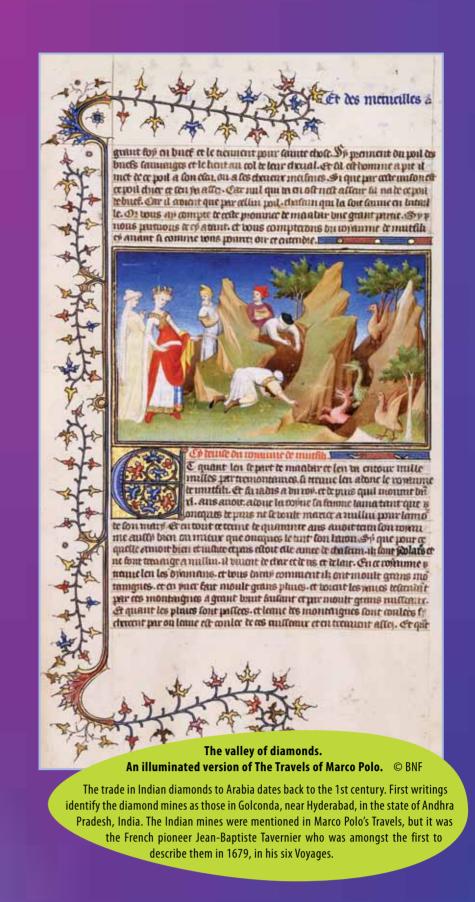
Diamonds also symbolise protection and eternity...

Powerful

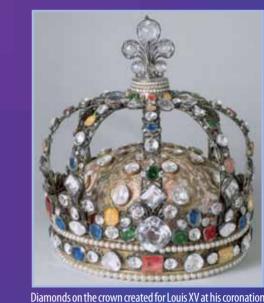
... the symbol therefore of eternal love and marriage...

The symbolism surrounding the diamond is heightened by the ancient legend of its origins: a mysterious valley of diamonds in India, whose location was hidden for centuries.

Famous diamonds have always been associated with the rich and the powerful. As objects of desire, they were destined to pass from hand to hand: from sultan to rajah, king to emperor, via merchants and adventurers,... finding their way only occasionally into the more modest hands of the museums.







Diamonds on the crown created for Louis XV at his coronat ceremony. © BNF, Marthine Beck-Coppola

Pliny recounts that diamonds were tested for authenticity on the anvil: «All these diamonds were tested on the anvil, by hammer blow; they are so hard they send the hammer sideways, to left or to right, and even manage to break the anvil sometimes.» (Pliny, Hist. nat, XXXVII). If the stone shatters it is not a real diamond... and they were many to fail the test.

The diamond's hardness was associated with total resistance to external forces, although there was one exception: the ancient texts report that diamonds succumb to goat's blood!...

The hammer and the anvil,

Virtus expugnabilis (A Collection of emblems ancient and modern) © BNF