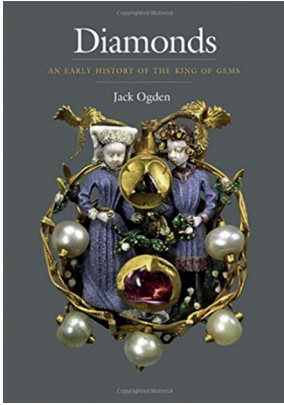


Book Reviews

書評

Diamonds: AN EARLY HISTORY OF THE KING OF GEMS

Reviewed by Richard W. Hughes



Author: Jack Ogden
Published 2018
Yale University Press,
New Haven and London
www.yalebooks.co.uk
408 pages, illus.,
ISBN 978-0-300-21566-3.

If I had to pick an author to pen the history of any gem, it would probably be Jack Ogden. Thus, when I first learned of this book, I was extremely excited to get my hands on a copy and – when I did – was not disappointed.

First let me explain that this work is not a celebration of diamond. There are a half-dozen other books that have played that role, including many glossy coffee-table volumes such as *Diamonds – Myth, Magic and Reality* (Maillard, 1988) and most recently, *Diamonds* (Gordon, 2008). It is also not a compilation of details regarding major diamonds. While the reader will learn a lot about such stones, it is not meant to be a replacement for Ian Balfour's *Famous Diamonds* (1987). Nor is it a history of diamond mining, such as Williams' *History of the Diamond Mines of South Africa* (1902, 1906).

Instead what you get is a hard-nosed look at the history of this extraordinary gem, written by someone at the top of his game. Ogden has worn many hats in a multi-faceted career. Born into a jeweller's family, he was for many years Secretary General of CIBJO, and then CEO of the Gem-A. But Ogden's true strength is as an historian.

Do not expect breezy text. Similar to other Yale University Press volumes on gems (Lane, 2010), Ogden's *Diamonds* is an historian's history of the subject. This means incredible detail, full referencing, painstaking dedication to burrowing deep into a subject from various directions – all towards the goal of creating a better understanding

of diamond and its history, from early times up until the discovery of diamonds in Brazil in the 1700s. At this, the book succeeds in splendid fashion.

All of the major personalities that have had a hand in the history of diamond are here, from Alexander through Pliny, al Biruni and on to Tavernier and dozens of others. While diamond trading from East to West occupies a major section of the book, there is also what arguably represents the finest description of the development of diamond cutting extant.

Despite a somewhat dry subject matter, Ogden does include occasional nuggets of humour. On page 68 he writes:

"...there was a useful test for a wife's faithfulness: 'if any man put a Diamond under the head of a woman sleeping, she manifesteth if she be an adulterer, for if she be so, she leapeth back out of bed afraid, and if not, she embraceth her husband with great love'.... Such a test would have been cruel to report if suspicious husbands had no access to such stones."

Not exactly a testimonial for diamond being a girl's best friend, but of course that tagline came centuries later.

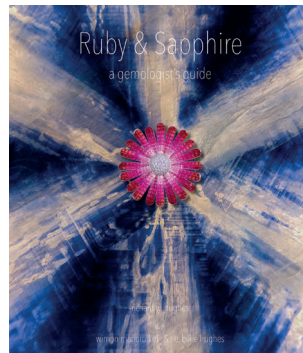
Similarly, on page 172, Ogden writes:

"The Scottish scientist Sir David Brewster even went so far as to state that 'the brilliant form was invented in England'. Rare praise from a Scot."

Jack Ogden's *Diamonds: AN EARLY HISTORY OF THE KING OF GEMS* succeeds mightily in its stated purpose, plugging what was previously a large gap in the literature on this important precious stone. Highly recommended.

Ruby & Sapphire: a gemologist's guide

Reviewed by Hpone-Phyo Kan-Nyunt



Authors:
Richard W. Hughes with Wimon
Manorotkul and E. Billie Hughes
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In early 2016, one of the most influential gemmologists, Richard W. Hughes, along with his

wife, Wimon Manorotkul, and daughter, E. Billie Hughes, both fellow gemmologists, published a massive book called *Ruby & Sapphire*, a gemologist's guide. The book is an updated version of his famous *Ruby & Sapphire*, published in 1997, and this masterpiece has been widely recognised as one of the most authoritative and comprehensible references on gem corundum. It is aimed at devoted gemmologists, jewellery appraisers and gemmological students and with it Richard W. Hughes, with the help of his wife and daughter, has surpassed his previous achievements in the field of gemmology.

Disagreeing with the purely physi/chemical approach to the subject of many scientists, Richard sets out his own philosophy neatly on page 47:

Get your facts first, and then you can distort them as much as you please.

- Mark Twain (as quoted by Kiplin)

Many in the gemmological community take a dim view of non-scientific aspects of the subject. They question the need for details on mystical beliefs, history, even the gem business itself. In the author's view, this is not only unfortunate, but also unduly restrictive. Far too many gemmological treatises are clinical heartless shells, with any trace of spirit sucked out in the name of science, proper diction or decorum. Considering we are fortunate to work with one of the most romantic products on the planet, this is all the more surprising.

Godehard Lenzen has rightly pointed out that gemology is not merely a subset of mineralogy, but simply knowledge of a certain type of merchandise. We subscribe to the Lenzen view. To our way of thinking, gemology is a rich tapestry of interwoven discipline. Its threads include not just mineralogy; physic, chemistry, crystallography and geology, but also history, trade, economics, decorative arts, religion, mysticism and magic. Yes, even magic.

Thus, what follows is not merely the science, but also the GEMology of ruby and sapphire. We hope to convey its romance, it's history, its beating heart, its spirit, its magic. If we have succeeded in capturing even a portion of that magic, then this book is a success.

The book opens with a fascinating chapter reviewing the history of corundum, followed by a clear explanation of its chemistry and crystallography, physical and optical properties. Later, armed with the insights of another foremost gemmologist, Kenneth Scarratt, one of the best scientific researchers John L. Emmett, and Emily Dubinsky, GIA Research Associate, Richard

transcribes the perception of colour in coloured gemstones.

In the chapter on the microscope, the author shines a light on illumination techniques used to capture corundum's fascinating inclusions and their formation, showcasing the enchanting internal world of corundum together with renowned gemmologists, John Koivula, Nathan Renfro, Danny Sanchez and E. Billie Hughes.

A new chapter, "Treatments", addresses not only the history of ruby and sapphire treatments, but also the latest low temperature heat treatment and other hot topics introduced by means of photomicrographs and illustrative diagrams.

Also included are synthesis, assembled stones, methods of fashioning and judging quality, and pricing factors using coloured charts and diagrams, as well as his spectacular photographs.

Discussing the fundamental features of geology in Chapter 11, the author refers back to the elemental mating game. Presenting rock types and formations, and a case study of gem corundum formation, he reveals the defining characteristics of rubies and sapphires from 53 gem mining localities with landscape of the mines, rough crystals and specimens. Uniformly beautiful, provocative photographs by the whole Hughes family are accompanied by comprehensive maps, and timelines of ruby and sapphire discoveries in these countries, along with tables of detailed, documented characteristics properties.

In Appendix A and Appendix B of the final chapter, Richard features Tagore's ruby and sapphire with illustrations, nicely documented prices and ID flow charts updated with new localities from his previous *Ruby and Sapphire* book written in 1997.

Ruby & Sapphire: a gemologist's guide, not only provides the reader with a massive amount of knowledge and great references, it is also no lightweight when you carry it around, weighing a full 4.01 kg! The book might have been a bit lighter without advertisement from gem companies in each chapter. However, without these sponsors, the book could almost certainly not come at this incredibly affordable price.

Ruby & Sapphire: a gemologist's guide is the definitive reference book. With over 1000 photos, geological and gemmological maps and illustrations, and over 3500 references, this book deserves to be called the "Bible" of Corundum. I would highly recommend the book to anyone who wants to expand their horizons in colour stones.