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Reviews

SUSAN B. JOHNSON AND JANA E. MIYAHIRA, EDITORS

THE DEALER'S BOOKS OF GEMS & DIAMONDS

By Menahem Sevdemish and Albert Mashiah, 1004 pp., illus., Kal Printing House, Israel, 1996. US\$98.00*

This two-volume work was first published in Hebrew in 1986 by Mada Avanim Yekarot Ltd.; a second revised edition in the same language was issued in 1995. This is the first English edition.

Menahem Sevdemish is a Fellow of the Gemmological Association of Great Britain, a founder and president of the Gemological Association of Israel, and the owner of a gemstone manufacturing and trading company. He has particular expertise in gemstone cutting and selling. Co-author Albert Mashiah also has impressive credentials: A long-time member of the Israeli precious stones industry, he has been a vice-president of the Israel Precious Stones and Diamonds Exchange, as well as vice-president of the Israel Emerald Cutters Association and the Gemological Institute for Precious Stones and Diamonds.

This book presents an interestingly different approach to a gemological text, in that it is written from the gem dealer's point of view. The authors seem totally at home with the business aspects of diamonds and colored stones, as well as with assessing rough and cutting it for the market. In general, however, the two volumes of this work differ in effectiveness and value. The chapters on diamond are up-to-date and probably the best exposition of current practices in diamond cutting to be found anywhere in book form. The chapters on diamond grading and on judging value in colored-stone rough are very well

planned and executed. However, the chapters on colored-stone identification leave something to be desired. Although many of the comments made from a dealer's viewpoint are germane and useful to the reader, these chapters suggest that the authors have had little experience in colored-stone identification in a laboratory—or that the copyediting and proofreading were inadequate.

For example, in a discussion of spinel identification, the authors mention that glass would be distinguished because it is amorphous and, thus, isotropic. As I am sure the authors are aware that both spinel and glass are isotropic, this is undoubtedly a fault of inadequate proofreading. They also state that "it is sometimes very difficult to decide if a stone is peridot or sinhalite, and only a chemical test will distinguish between them." It is true, certainly, that for many years sinhalite was thought to be brown peridot, but the difference in spectra and the nature of the birefringence readily separates the two. In the identification table for the peridot section, they list the birefringence of sinhalite—which they refer to as DR—as exactly the same as peridot, and they also give the refractive indices, specific gravity, and hardness of the two as identical. Both the R.I. and S.G. for sinhalite are higher than those for peridot, and the beta index is closer to that of gamma.

Elsewhere, the explanation of what causes play-of-color in opal leaves the reader bewildered. It states, in referring to the silica spheres, "When the spheres are uneven in size, the light reaching them is dispersed differently in each sphere, so that different colors are reflected. But, since the human eye is unable to see the minute spheres, the color coming from

this layer will appear white because the human eye interprets a mixture of the spectrum as white." These are just a few of a significant number of examples where careful editing would have been useful. Editing in the chapters related to diamond seems to have been more rigorous.

Yet there are also interesting chapters on subjects not found in other gem books, such as "A Commercial Analysis of the Gemstone" and "A Pre-purchase Cost Analysis." In addition, there is a lucid account of the ingenious Robogem, a new instrument that analyzes rough to obtain maximum yield.

On the whole, the book is useful because it offers not only the exceptionally good diamond chapters, but also unique insights into other areas of the gem field. Although slightly flawed, the book seems, to this reviewer, a very worthwhile addition to any gemological library.

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NEW FRONTIERS IN DIAMONDS—THE MINING REVOLUTION

By David Duval, Timothy Green, and Ross Louthean, 175 pp., illus., publ. by Rosendale Press, London, 1996. US\$55.00*

History has shown that no single factor—other than the world economy—has affected the orderly functioning of the diamond industry more

*This book is available for purchase through the GIA Bookstore, 1660 Stewart Street, Santa Monica, CA 90404. Telephone: (800) 421-7250, ext. 282; outside the U.S. (310) 829-2991, ext. 282. Fax: (310) 449-1161.