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DIAMOND IMAGES ON THE POSTAL STAMPS OF THE WORLD

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«One can hardly tell what exactly attracts people to this stone. Naturally, it catches your eyes with its extraordinary bright luster and a color play of rays it reflects. Numerous are other beautiful gems, but this one has gained its supremacy due to other reason. It has been its unusual hardness that counted. Hence its name diamond — diamant — diamas, i.e., utterly unyielding».

A.E. Fersman. Stories about Gems.

Existing bibliography on diamonds is unbelievably vast. Any kind of information is available on the mineral, from its formative conditions to structural features and techniques to produce artificial crystals. The following text is a compilation that employs data from various publications, occasionally with no proper references.

A legend related to the Pentateuch tells that God in the evening dusk of the sixth Creation day made ten things, and *shamir* (diamond in Hebrew) had been among them. It had been as large as a barley grain, and its single touch could crash a stone and burst an iron rod. This had been the stone Moses used to cut twelve names of the sons of Israel on the stone tablets and on the ephod fastenings (Bobylev, 2000).

Golkonda, India, has been the first place of the diamond mining. Mahabharata and Veda scripts of the 10th century B.C. refer to this stone as *waira*. Legends of the 12th century B.C. mention diamond as an adornment. The oldest diamond-related artifact is believed to be a Greek bronze statuette dated as 480 a. B.C., which eyes are diamonds of Indian origin.

Bobylev (2000) reported that it was Afanassiy Nikitin, a merchant from Tver, who managed to visit India in the 15th century, coined («imported») the existing Russian name of the mineral, *almaz*.

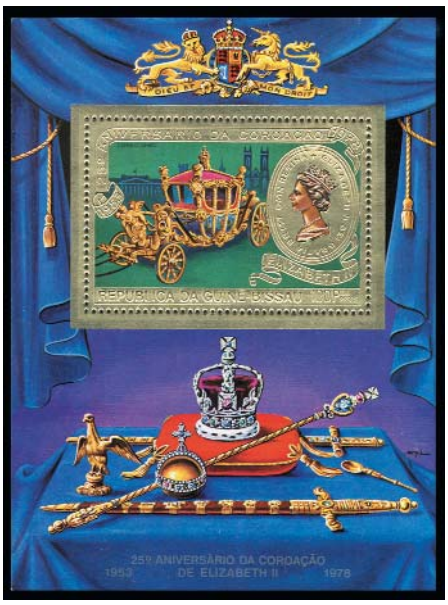
By the first half of the 20th century, major producers of diamonds were Angola, Australia, Botswana, Zaire, Namibia, and RSA; in the 1950s Russia joined this highly privileged "diamond club" to become its seventh member. Now 20 and more countries of the world mine diamonds, mainly from kimberlites and placers. Over 1000 diamondiferous kimberlite bodies are known in the world. A promising diamondiferous kimberlite pipe costs 5 to 6 billion USD. The mining output of diamonds per year is about 100 M ct (about 20 metric tons). A total amount of diamonds the mankind mined during its history is estimated as 3600 M ct (720 t); provided the mining rate remains, the explored reserves will last for three decades. The world production of synthetic diamonds is *c.* 450 M ct per year, what totally covers the existing demand.

About 60% of the mined natural diamonds are the jewelry and collection stones, and their considerable part is stored as the currency reserves. Diamond is the gem the jewelers value and adore. It combines magnificence, strength, and originality. Hardness and purity inherent in diamond symbolize the best human qualities and unbending nature of the Power. It is not by chance diamonds are the key adornments of the national regalia. Another unique property of the diamond is that it burns down leaving no residue like love, like passion. Maybe, that is why diamonds and brilliants are able to trap and enslave human souls entirely (Pelekhova, 2002).

Frequently unique diamonds are exposures of the state-owned or private museum collections. Some diamonds are historical relics. However, a vast majority of living people is deprived of the chance to feel the whole charm of this gem. Instead, most postal agencies of the diamond-mining countries issue stamps portraying minerals, diamond included. Countries where diamonds are cut into brilliants do the same. In our earlier publication we reported on the minerals, which images are reproduced on stamps (Dusmatov, 2001): diamonds adorn stamps issued in more than 20 countries.

First of all, we should mention a stamp with A.E. Fersman's portrait: he was the first Russian scientist who studied morphology of the dia-


AFS
10000
AFGHAN POST 1999


REPUBLICA DA GUINE-BISSAU
25º ANIVERSÁRIO DA CORÔAÇÃO
DE ELIZABETH II
1953
1978


500Sh.So. SOMALI REPUBLIC
POST 1997
Diamond


ประเทศไทย THAILAND
DIAMOND


3.00
DIAMONDS יהלומים
MILLENNIUM
ISRAEL
AIR MAIL · EXPORT
ישראל


BELGIË · BELGIQUE
3F + 1F

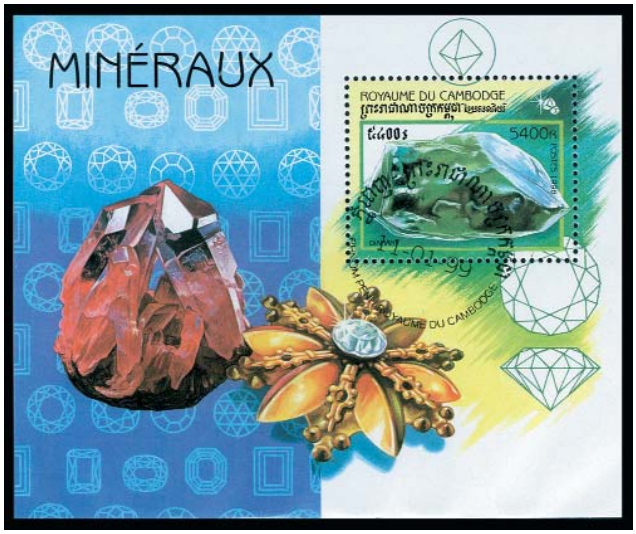

4d
GHANA


Sierra Leone
LAND OF
IRON & DIAMONDS
POSTAGE
5c


ANGOLA
CORREIOS
1980
DIAMANTE
16.00


Minerals of Tanzania
Diamonds
40/-
Tanzania

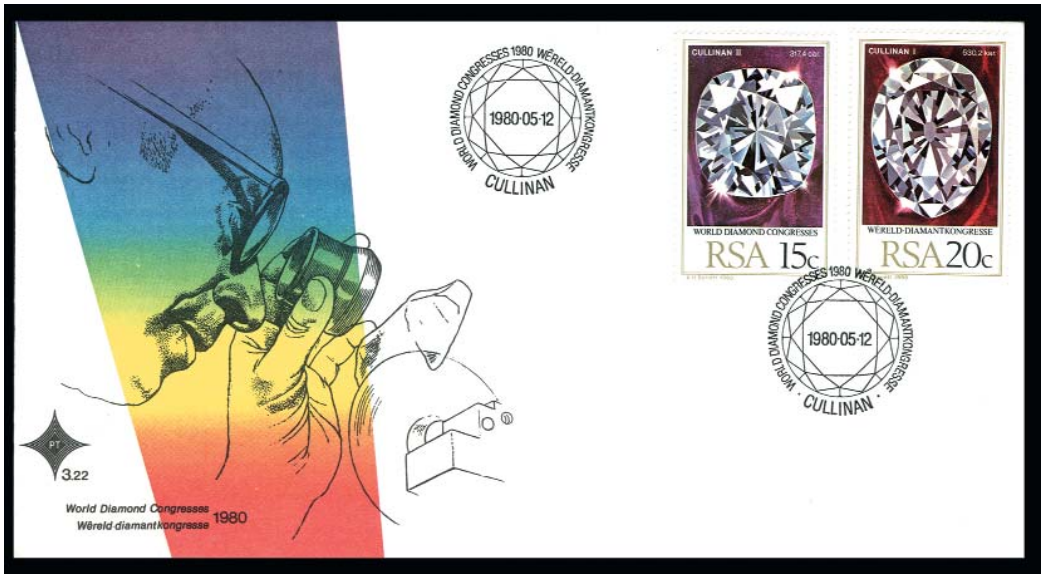

St. Christopher
Nevis
Anguilla
55c
THE HEAD OF SCEPTRE WITH CROSS
SILVER JUBILEE


MINÉRAUX
ROYAUME DU CAMBODGE
5400R


BELIZE
E R
$5


1961
1966
REPUBLIC OF
SOUTH AFRICA
1c

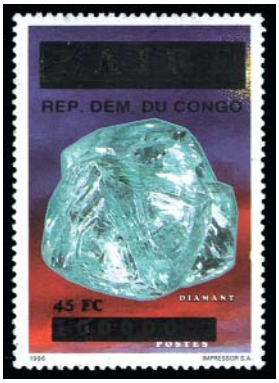

REPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE
70
CHARTE EUROPEENNE DE L'EAU


WORLD DIAMOND CONGRESSES 1980 WERELD-DIAMANTKONGRESSE
1980-05-12
CULLINAN
CULLINAN II
CULLINAN I
WORLD DIAMOND CONGRESSES
WERELD-DIAMANTKONGRESSE
RSA 15c
RSA 20c
3.22
World Diamond Congresses
Wereld diamantkongresse 1980


МЕЖДУНАРОДНЫЙ КОНГРЕСС ПО ОБОГАЩЕНИЮ ПОЛЕЗНЫХ ИСКОПАЕМЫХ
VIII
ЛЕНИНГРАД-1968
ПОЧТА
6к СССР


SIERRA LEONE
Land of Iron & Diamonds
POSTAGE
3½c
MORE GREAT GEM DIAMONDS ARE FOUND IN SIERRA LEONE THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY


LESOTHO BROWN DIAMOND
Lesotho
5c


REP. DEM. DU CONGO
45 FC
DIAMANT
POSTES


GIBRALTAR
E R
International Youth Year
20p


PILIPINAS
U.P.
DIAMOND
JUBILEE
YEAR
1983
P1.20


АЛМАЗНЫЙ ФОНД СССР
БРОШЬ «РОЗА»
1971
ПОЧТА СССР
20к


АЛМАЗНЫЙ ФОНД СССР
АЛМАЗ «ШАХ»
1971
ПОЧТА СССР
10к


АЛМАЗНЫЙ ФОНД СССР
БУКЕТ НАРЦИССОВ
1971
ПОЧТА СССР
10к

mond crystals in detail. The stamp issued in the USSR in 1971 shows the Shah, a diamond of dramatic history described by Fersman and stored now in the national Diamond Fond. A stamp issued in the USSR in 1968 due to the 8th International mineral processing congress displays the Gornyak (Miner) a 44.6-ct diamond, also stored in the Diamond Fond.

Golkonda, South India, was the finding place of the Koh-i-noor, or Mountain of Light (Urdu), originally 800 ct. After the first cut (rose-not-brilliant-cut) it weighed 191 ct; in 1852 it was re-cut into a stellar (oval) 108.9-ct brilliant. Queen Victoria used to wear it as a brooch; later the diamond was mounted on the cross at the top of the crown of Queen Elizabeth. A stamp issued in Belize portrays this crown.

The Cullinan (named after Thomas Cullinan, a president of the diamond mining company) is an undisputable leader among diamonds portrayed at the postal emissions. When found in South Africa, it weighed 3106 ct. A Cambodian postal block presents its view. In 1907, they presented the diamond to King Edward VII. Later on, nine large and 96 smaller brilliants were made of it; the total weight of the brilliants was 1063.65 ct (65.75% lost). The largest of these, Cullinan I, or the Star of Africa (516.5 ct), adorned the Sovereign's Royal Scepter. The Cullinan II, an elongated brilliant of 309.33 ct, became a part of the Imperial State Crown of Great Britain. The Minor African Stars aka the Cullinan III and IV are among the Crown Jewels. The Cullinan III (92 ct) is mounted in the finial of Queen Mary's Crown and can form an ensemble with the Cullinan IV (62 ct) thus to be converted into a pendant-brooch. The Cullinan V a 18.5-ct heart-shaped diamond, adorns a circlet of Queen Mary's crown. The Cullinan VI (11.55 ct), a marquise-cut stone, is a drop on a diamond-and-emerald necklace of the Crown Jewels. The Cullinan VII (8.7 ct, marquise-cut) and the Cullinan VIII (6.7 ct), an elongated stone, are parts of an all-diamond brooch (see the Cambodian postal block). The Cullinan IX (4.4 ct) is set in a ring, and 96 smaller diamonds (a total of 7.55 ct) are mounted in the Imperial State Crown. A postal block issued in Guinea-Bissau demonstrates all regalia of Queen Elizabeth II. Postal emissions of twenty and more countries display the Crown Jewels with brilliants made of the Cullinan fragments. South Africa issued stamps and an envelope with the Cillinan 1 and II images.

Diamonds are shown on Botswanian stamps. One of these shows diamonds of variegated color mined in the country: colorless, blue, greenish, yellowish, and pale lilac. A series of diamond-shaped stamps demonstrates diamond mining and processing, as well as diamond jewelries.

Sierra Leone issued a wide variety of diamond-related stamps. These vary in shape and contain information on weight of natural and cut stones. A stamp from Niuafoou shows a kimberlite pipe, kimberlite that hosts a diamond, and a brilliant. Ghana issued a stamp with a diamond against the background of the open-pit mine. Diamond images adorn the stamps of Tanzania, Congo, Angola, Australia, Lesotho, Afghanistan, and Somalia; in the latter case the stamp demonstrates both a mineral and its crystalline structure.

References

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