

The Lost Mines and Rare Diamonds of Golconda

Did you know that the famous Hope Diamond, says the Smithsonian most likely came from Golconda? The 112 3/16-carat stone, described as a “beautiful violet,” is only one of the rare diamonds that originated in the ancient and now lost diamond fields of Eastern India.

But jewelers today continue to use the term “Golconda” to apply to very high quality diamonds or rare diamonds with an antique cut, those that auction house, Christie’s, ≈ describes as diamonds of “super luminosity and transparency.”

Ancient History

The same volcanic forces that created the Himalayan Mountains created diamonds. Over time, erosion washed the diamonds down into the gravel riverbeds where Golconda sits with its ancient fort, between the Godavari and Krishna Rivers.

India was one of the first countries to discover and mine diamonds around the 4th century B.C. By the end of the 14th century A.D., India had an established diamond trade with most of Europe. In fact, the country had been the diamond center of the world until diamonds were discovered in Brazil in 1725 and later in South Africa in 1866. By then, the Indian supply had been all but depleted.

Golconda Characteristics

According to DiamondVues, the Gemological Institute of America (GIA) characterizes Golconda diamonds as displaying the “finest white color and transparency as type Ila, signifying that they are free from nitrogen and therefore chemically pure and colorless.” (Incidentally, less than two per cent of diamonds qualify for the type Ila classification.)

The transparency allows the light to pass through without obstruction and produce an unrivaled beauty that is said to leave experts in awe. The older cuts that emphasize this striking luster are therefore considered the most precious.

Worth Millions

In 2005, a pair of Golconda diamonds sold at Christie’s for over \$4 million. In 2010 at Sotheby’s *Magnificent Jewels Auction* in Geneva, a rare light pink diamond ring, 10.46 carats, featuring a Golconda diamond with an antique cut sold for two and a quarter million. That same auction featured a 24.78-carat pink that had been off the market for about 60 years. It sold for \$46 million, the “highest price ever paid per carat for a fancy intense pink diamond, \$1,862,739 per carat.” The buyer: British jewelry dealer Laurence Graff who has named it the “Graff Pink.”

Sources:

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