



Lanzanite

TIME SHROUDS THE ANCESTRY OF MOST GEMSTONES IN A VEIL OF MYSTERY. YET TANZANITE'S WELL-DOCUMENTED LINEAGE ONLY FANS THE EXOTIC ATTRACTION OF THIS BREATHTAKING VIOLETISH BLUE GEMSTONE. NO HAZY DREAMS OF CLEOPATRA BEDECKED IN BREATHTAKING EMERALDS HERE—TANZANITE FLEW THE DIRECT ROUTE FROM THE PARCHED PLAINS OF AFRICA TO THE BLUSTER OF FIFTH AVENUE.

Nonetheless, tanzanite shares its birthplace with the first stirrings of humanity: the East African nation of Tanzania. Tanzania's soil is a fertile source of gem riches. While the 1960s were our American decade of strife, for Tanzania they were a decade of strikes—gem strikes, not only of tanzanite but also of the green garnet known as “tsavorite,” fancy-colored (meaning non-blue) sapphire, ruby and tourmaline.

Tanzanite was first thought to be blue sapphire by the prospector who discovered it in the 1960s while combing the Merelani Hills of Tanzania looking for ruby. The stone soon made its way to the United States, and Tiffany & Co. initiated a tanzanite marketing campaign in 1968. Tanzanite's mineralogical name is “zoisite.” Savvy marketers, Tiffany & Co. coined the name “tanzanite” in honor of the gem's homeland. And certainly, “tanzanite” conjures up a very different mental image than the less-than-romantic-sounding “zoisite.”

Independent prospectors mined the Merelani Hills deposits until mine nationalization came about in 1971. Production was irregular—the government regularly added and canceled

Tanzanite Makes Its PRESENTS Known

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mining concessions throughout most of the 1980s. Until the recent introduction of relatively sophisticated mining techniques, gem mining was extremely labor-intensive, with little aid from mechanized equipment. Tanzanian gem explorers' keenest tools were their eyes: roving herds- men with some gem familiarity would visually scout for superficial gemstone deposits. Mining was completed by itinerant laborers working when, and if, climatic and political conditions allowed.

Though Tanzania is gemologically rich, by U.S. standards, the country is economically undeveloped. Little money is available for building the infrastructures needed to support industry, such as roads and water pipelines. So during the months of highest rainfall (December through May), mining is generally hampered.

**TANZANITE FLEW THE
DIRECT ROUTE FROM THE
PARCHED PLAINS OF AFRICA TO
THE BLUSTER OF FIFTH
AVENUE.**

In 1978 and 1987, cholera epidemics virtually halted all mining in northern Tanzania. And, too, the AIDS epidemic has had a devastating impact on the African population, including the workforce.

In 1988 the Tanzanian government temporarily opened the Merelani mining area. Tens of thousands of hungry miners descended upon the district. As the world turned, workers hollowed hundreds of holes and burrows yielding thousands of carats of tanzanite. By December 1990, the

Tanzanian army aggressively established control over the great quantity of miners and tanzanite flooding the international market. Since that time, the Tanzanian government has sectorized the area into distinct blocks, limiting mining contracts for each block to a different joint venture. Today all are being

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No one is left unmoved by tanzanite's exotic blend of colors.

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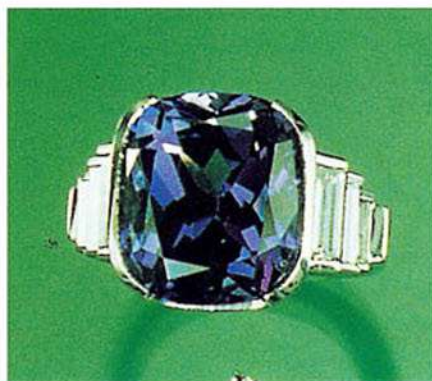
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mined using primitive pitting or semimechanized extraction techniques.

Tanzanite is a gemstone found in only one locality. Ruby, emerald and sapphire are found in many countries throughout the world. Though tanzanite has been known for almost thirty years, people are just now becoming aware of it due to the unusually large find that hit the market in the 1980s. That period of relative abundance increased public awareness of tanzanite and stimulated consumer demand to unprecedented levels. The greater supply also had the effect of temporarily lowering prices. Now fine tanzanite is scarce again, and prices, though not where they were before the large find, are rising. Tanzanite has become well established as a jewelry-store staple. Though we are blessed with the greatest availability of tanzanite since its discovery, stones of exceptional quality are not abundant. This is the time to take advantage of increased selection and lower prices; supply is tapering and consumer demand increasing. What does lower supply and higher demand equal? Higher prices!

**WHAT ELSE PROVIDES
SO MUCH COLOR FOR
THE PRICE?**

Gemstone prices are determined like those of many commodities: by supply and demand. Short supply and high demand equal high price; short supply and moderate demand equal lesser price, even for a gem that may be more rare and/or of finer quality. The colored gemstone market isn't controlled as the diamond market is. De Beers sets the diamond supply over a certain time period while stimulating demand through effective marketing, thus artificially determining price. By contrast, there is no centralized mining cartel controlling the supply of colored gemstones like tanzanite. So prices of colored gemstones accurately reflect supply and demand at any given time.



Cynthia R. Marcusson

Tanzanites, depending upon how they are oriented during cutting, can be pure blue or include the secondary and tertiary colors of purple and red. Some people prefer the pure blue tanzanites which most nearly resemble sapphire. Others are called by the violetish blue colors of tanzanite, feeling they heighten the stone's exotic allure. Which color is best for you is a matter of personal preference. In pricing, a rich, highly saturated color free from gray is the primary consideration. The blue and violetish blue colors command similar prices. Some tanzanites exhibit a shift of color under different lighting; the red color components can appear highlighted under incandescent light, which is rich in red light wavelengths.

Large fine-quality tanzanites over ten carats are available. Fine tanzanites weighing four to six carats and matched pairs totaling four to seven carats are the most difficult sizes to find. It would be nice if the smaller tanzanites could match the color of the larger, well-colored ones. Yet, as with many colored gemstones, larger size helps to concentrate the color. Think of the ocean. A cup of seawater is much lighter than the whole sea, isn't it? The mass of the sea concentrates the dark color. It's the same with tanzanite. Your Jeweler can get you the finest color available in a two-carat tanzanite, but it won't exactly match the color of the ten-carat one.

**PURE BLUE TANZANITES
MOST NEARLY RESEMBLE
SAPPHIRE.**

No gems, whether colored, diamond or pearl, come out of the ground looking like they do in a piece of jewelry. Faceting gems is a part of the enhancing treatment that goes into bringing unformed gems to market standards. Sometimes we go a bit further with this fashioning process and subject the gem to heating or other permanent color enhancement techniques. If not for heat treatment, violetish blue tanzanite would

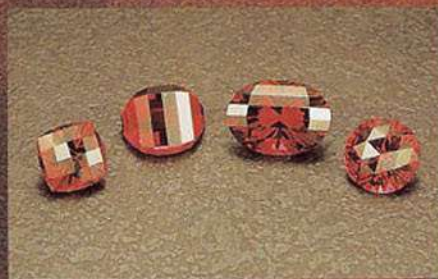
be limited to the rare shelves of collectors. While tanzanite can be violetish blue when unearthed, the overwhelming majority with this hue are produced through a permanent heat treatment creating a chemical reaction which converts the brownish color to blue. Have you ever seen a red sheep, white flax or a purple cow? I haven't either, yet we consider crimson wool, white linen and blue suede to be natural materials. Gemstones have been heated since Marco Polo's time, and this permanent process is considered standard within the international gem and jewelry trade.

Tanzanite makes a beautiful ring, but like emerald or opal, it requires a little extra care and attention. Behave as you do when wearing a nice silk blouse: you enjoy wearing it, while being mindful of your actions. Ring design also plays a part in your enjoyment of tanzanite; some designs provide more protection than others.

There is a difference between hardness and durability. Tanzanite is hard enough, but is susceptible to thermal shock, meaning it can crack when extreme heat is applied quickly. Don't drop your tanzanite ring into the hot water of the ultrasonic machine for cleaning, and take it off when you change your clothes after coming home from a hard day's work. With the right care, your tanzanite ring can be passed on for future generations to enjoy.

Tanzanite's powerful mix of exotic colors is entrancing. I have never found a gemstone that so universally enraptures. Though more rare and usually more beautiful, tanzanite is less expensive than a sapphire of equivalent quality. The big news is that these big blues are available now, at a price you will be able to look back on and say, "I remember when...." ■

Cynthia R. Marcusson is an expert on the subject of gems and gem promotion. Ms. Marcusson is a popular speaker/educator and conducts marketing/training seminars. For information, please contact Cynthia Renée Co., Tel: 619-728-5150, Fax: 619-728-2636.



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