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SEMIOSE VEICULADA POR ESPLENDOR E SIGILO

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Submitted: 26 April 2023

Accepted: 29 October 2023

Published: 17 November 2023

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José Pinto Casquilho¹

Abstract: The Braganza (Bragança) diamond – also known as the Great Diamond of Portugal – is considered a mystery, although it seems more accurate saying that it's a secret. In a strategy here called *ludibrium*, or a kind of dissimulation game, it appears that since the first news – concerning its discovery in Brazil around 1741 and delivery to King João V of Portugal in the following year – the stone was successively mentioned as being a white sapphire, then a white topaz and more recently an aquamarine, when in fact it was a dark yellow diamond with an oblong shape and about 1680 carats in weight with a specific mark. Being the largest known diamond in the world until the Cullinan's discovery in 1905, it was an object of desire, becoming dangerous in face of the wolfish greed of European powers. So, its existence is expressed in the tension between the exhibition as a royal adornment of undeniable aesthetic and symbolic value, and the omission from the records and inventories of the crown jewels. However, there is indelible iconic evidence that the stone was exhibited by the Prince of Brazil D. José and later by Queen Maria II of Portugal and, covertly, also by King João VI. There are also explicit reports that the diamond was pawned by King Carlos I in the early 20th century, presumably with a long-term contract. A plausible hypothesis is sketched relative to its possible fate, anchored in the compatibility of physical traits and a fetishist injunction.

Keywords: Braganza diamond; *Ludibrium*; Splendor; Secrecy; Fetish.

RASTREANDO O DIAMANTE BRAGANÇA: SEMIOSE VEICULADA POR ESPLENDOR E SIGILO

Resumo: O diamante Bragança – também designado como o Grande Diamante de Portugal – é considerado um mistério, embora pareça mais correto dizer que constitui um segredo. Numa estratégia aqui designada de *ludibrium*, ou um tipo

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<https://doi.org/10.53930/27892182.dialogos.8.139>

de jogo de dissimulação, verifica-se que desde as primeiras notícias – relativas à sua descoberta em 1741 no Brasil e entrega ao rei D. João V de Portugal no ano seguinte – a pedra foi sucessivamente mencionada como sendo uma safira branca, um topázio branco e mais recentemente uma água marinha, quando na verdade era um diamante amarelo-escuro de formato oblongo e cerca de 1680 carates de peso com uma marca específica. Sendo o maior diamante conhecido no mundo até à descoberta do Cullinan em 1905, constituía um objeto de desejo face à ganância lupina de outras potências europeias. Assim, a sua existência expressa-se na tensão entre a exposição, enquanto adorno real de inegável valor estético e simbólico, e a omissão dos registos e inventários das jóias da coroa. No entanto, há evidência icónica indelével de que a pedra foi exibida pelo Príncipe do Brasil D. José e depois pela rainha Maria II de Portugal e, dissimuladamente, também pelo rei João VI. Também existem notícias explícitas de que o diamante foi empenhado pelo rei Carlos I no início do século XX, presumivelmente com um contrato de longo prazo. Sobre o seu eventual destino esboça-se uma hipótese plausível, ancorada na compatibilidade de traços físicos e numa injunção fetichista.

Palavras-chave: Diamante Bragança; *Ludibrium*; Esplendor; Segredo; Fetiche.

(...) mas são Bens da Coroa, e Camara Real,
destinados ao Serviço do Rey,
e esplendor de Sua Pefsoa, e Real Família².
(Portugal et al., 1827/1941, p. 466)

INTRODUCTION

Adornments seem to be as old as modern humans, and a remarkable example is described by Graeber and Wengrow (2021, p. 109-110) concerning a cave burial on the coast of Liguria dated about 30,000 years ago when people were still hunter-gatherers, where bodies of young or adult men were found in striking poses, including one especially lavish burial known to archaeologists as *Il Principe* – bearing that name because he’s buried with what looks to the modern eye like royal regalia: a flint scepter, elk antler batons and an ornate headdress fashioned from perforated shells and deer teeth.

² Old Portuguese orthography – translation: (...) but they are Assets of the Crown, and Royal Chamber, destined to the Service of the King, and splendor of His Person, and Royal Family.

Whether the adornments are just status symbols or also talismans endowed with superstitious and fetishistic traits, remains an open question, but it seems inevitable advocating that there is also a kind of aesthetic values conveyed.

Talking about “values” is a difficult issue, since one could remind some large streams of thought concerning the subject, such as the following (Graeber, 2001, p. 2-3): i) values in the sociological sense, conceptions of what is ultimately good, proper, or desirable in human life; ii) value in the economic sense, considered the degree to which objects are desired, and measured by how much others are willing to give up to get them; and iii) value in the linguistic sense, which goes back to the structural conceptualization of Ferdinand de Saussure, and might be most simply glossed as “meaningful difference”.

As Urban (1926) had already mentioned, the origins and development of ideas and judgments of value lies in human desires and feelings, and ultimately in the impulses, instincts and tendencies which they presuppose, thus concluding that value is desirability. Values are cultural, there are no “intrinsic” values embodied in things and objects outside a human perception, but those can be perceived by humans as valuable, desirable, although there are contexts, epochs and fashions – and some emphasize that a work of art has a context but goes beyond it (Silva, 2021). Also, and like Graeber (2001, p. 115) clarifies, in fetishizing an object, one is mistaking the power of a history internalized in one’s own desires, for a power intrinsic to the object itself.

With a focus on attitude, Lopes (2022) states that aesthetic evaluations, which motivate action, represent aesthetic values and these are features of items that justify agents’ doings, figuring in normative reasons for acting in the context of aesthetic practices. Aesthetics, as a branch of philosophy, is considered be born as a fruit of European Enlightenment of the XVIII century and Westenberg (2021) clarifies that the etymology of the Greek word *aísthētikos* (αἰσθητικός) refers to the perception and experience of the senses.

This paper addresses an object, more precisely a gemstone – known as the Great Diamond of Portugal or, later, the Braganza diamond – whose existence is said to be a mystery but, as will be articulated, should more properly be classified as a secret. It was the largest diamond known in the world until the finding of the Cullinan in South Africa around 1905.

As will be highlighted, exhibiting unique and singular jewels and gemstones is an aesthetic vehicle for asserting and exercising power, namely in royal portraiture where splendor is sought, seeking for the ultimate apex of the sublime. However, at the other side of the coin, such assets may trigger envy and greed of more powerful agencies and, as such, a defensive strategy induces a trade-off between exhibition and secrecy. After all, secrecy can manage its own value: the information must also possess a certain degree of economic value attributable to the fact that it is being kept secret from others (Hrdy, 2022), and Colwell (2015) reminds us that the use of secrecy in museums is not an exception to the modern state, but representative of it.

ON EUROPEAN ROYAL PORTRAITURE: SEMIOTICS AND AESTHETIC VALUES

European royal portraits – in this paper mentioned with a main focus on the 19th century – embody narrative pictorial programs: they do not just represent persons, sovereigns or princes, either male or female, but become a dimension of effective power, since in addition to conferring identity to the portrayed(s) they imply an injunction stating the legitimacy of the ruler, and hence an inference to be respected and obeyed. Royal portraits are thus political tools and they are endowed with aesthetic concepts and values subordinated to an empowerment agenda, functioning as an ostensive act of communication.

One can remember that Relevance Theory – a cognitive psychological theory – claims that use of an ostensive stimulus may create precise and predictable expectations of relevance not raised by other stimuli (Wilson & Sperber, 2004), relevance therein being defined in terms of cognitive effects and processing effort: other things being equal, the greater the cognitive effects and the smaller the processing effort, the greater the relevance (Wilson, 2019), while every ostensive act communicates a presumption of its own relevance.

Concerning the subject of aesthetic value, Matravers (2021) highlights that any theory of aesthetic value should characterize it in a way that allows for the existence of two arguments about the relation between aesthetics and ethics, ranked against each other in terms of importance.

Portraiture embodies a pictorial language in the general sense of the term “language” addressed by Morris (1938, p. 35), defined like a particular kind of sign system which is any intersubjective set of sign vehicles whose usage is determined by syntactical, semantic, and pragmatic rules; he also mentioned that *semiosis* is the process in which something functions as a sign, following Charles Sanders Peirce who stated that *semiosis* is the action of signs or, more precisely, a process which involves a cooperation of three entities, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant – the last term being a concept shared by a community of interpreters.

Still in semiotic terms – and using Peircean typology of the ten classes (Peirce *apud* Buchler, 1955, pp. 116-117) – a royal portrait can be classified as a *dicent symbol (legisign)* which is a sign connected with its object by an association of general ideas, in the sense that the intended *interpretant* is a composite, as necessarily involves an *iconic legisign* to express its information and a *rhematic indexical legisign* – like a demonstrative pronoun – to indicate the subject of that information. In the case, the *iconic legisign* addresses the person portrayed as a sovereign, while the *rhematic indexical legisign* indicates the paraphernalia that legitimates the statute of the object, herein a singular person: throne chair, regalia, specific jewelry, etc.

For instance, when discussing meanings emerging from portraits of King Louis XVI of France, Kim (2011) concluded that the main values conveyed by signs expressed in the portraits – and, in particular, in the costumes – were omnipotence, activity, nobility, openness and benevolence, then exemplifying: authority was represented through wearing necklaces of the Order of the Holy Spirit and Order of the Golden Fleece, and also shoes with splendid jewel buckles. Yuval Harari (2015, p. 168-170) outlines an illuminating exercise on the pictorial language associated with the representation of figures of power in different times and contexts, comparing the official portraits of Louis XVI of France and of President Obama.

Hutter and Shusterman (2006) provide a noticeable and extended revision of the subject of value in economic and aesthetic theory; therein, they point out that one main difference between Antiquity and Modernity concerning arts and aesthetics is that, in ancient philosophical theories, properties of value like beauty or utility were conceived as real properties of things rather than a product that depended on the subjective experience – in fact intersubjective – as one would say today.

European influence in the art of portraying royalty extended beyond. Ikeda (2019) discusses that trait concerning images of Maharaja Ranjit Singh – named the “Lion of the Punjab” – concluding that the portraits of Ranjit Singh represent increasing European influence on Sikh art.

However, in Figure 1 one can see that iconographic programs concerning Eastern and Western royal portraiture are not exactly equal – even if sharing some common attributes – when the time was about the same, the first half of the 19th century.

In either case, the sovereigns depict elements such as jewelry and weapons, but with a different syntax and emphasis: Maharaja Ranjit Singh is seated on the throne chair, supporting the sword in his left hand and an arch in his right, wearing a turban with a jeweled headband like a diadem; while King João VI of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves, is standing with regalia by his side, grabbing the scepter in his right hand and leaning on it, and holding the sword in the left, with naked head and the hat behind his left arm, using a prominent royal cloak secured by a jeweled clasp and various insignia.



Figure 1 – Left: Excerpt of an illustration of Maharaja Ranjit Singh by Colonel James Skinner, ca. 1830³; right: an illustration of King João VI of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves, by Debret ca. 1820 (see Figure 15).

Jewelry is a common theme – and, one might say, a necessary feature – in official royal portraits, though there are inductions and rules of the fashion of the time. From about 1840 on, European men used less jewels, except for insignia, and the dominant adornments became gold embroidery in the costumes and the novel golden epaulets – while royal women used diamonds sparkling everywhere, mainly in tiaras, but also in necklaces, bracelets and other jewels.

³ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Maharaj_Ranjit_Singh.jpg

In Figure 2 one can see a portrait of Queen Victoria of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland; she was crowned queen since 1837, but in 1876 she also became nominated Empress of India; in this portrait, painted in the meantime (1859), besides the diadem and large diamonds in her necklace and earrings, she is using ostensibly the *Koh-i-Noor* – Persian designation for “Mountain of Light” – which was not only a symbol but also becomes an index: it points out that she reigned over India and had annexed the Punjab (since 1849), as the diamond was previously in possession of Maharaja Dalip (Duleep) Singh (e.g. Login, 1916, p. 73) the youngest son of Maharaja Ranjit Singh mentioned in Figure 1. I would say that in the case of this portrait the splendor aims to reach the apex of the sublime.



Figure 2 – Queen (Alexandrina) Victoria of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, excerpt of a painting by Winterhalter, 1859⁴.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Victoria#/media/File:Queen_Victoria_-_Winterhalter_1859.jpg

DIAMONDS AS ROYAL ATTRIBUTES

The highest potentates of the earth esteem them as their choicest treasures, and kingdoms have been at war for their possession [...].
(William Pole, 1861, p. 3)

Since immemorial time, large gemstones have been considered symbols of status and indices of power, also frequently mentioned with supernatural characteristics. Large diamonds are salient features for their rarity, as well their optical and other physical properties, such as being the hardest mineral on the Mohs scale, from what derives its designation rooting in the Greek etymon *adamas* (αδάμας) meaning invincible, unconquerable.

The art of cut and polishing diamonds in India comes from ancient times, though associated with irregular shapes, and seems to have started in Europe in the fifteenth century (Murray, 1839, p. 33), being mentioned that about 1475 the nobleman Louis Berghem of Bruges discovered that a stone could be worked with diamond dust and then proceeded into polishing and trimming the gems (Crider, 1924, p. 179).

After all, trimmed diamonds sparkle – and the brilliance is reflected light – so those who can wear large diamonds become legitimized by the splendor of radiance, representing a victory over darkness and gravity.

Concerning stones over 100 carats present in Europe in the 19th century, besides the *Koh-i-Noor*, Cattelle (1911, p. 20) mentioned that there were two each in the crown jewels of Russia and Portugal, along with the Austrian *Florentine* and also the *Regent* of France.

A necessary condition for a gemstone being considered famous is having a proper name. The name is one of the six types of signs considered by Sebeok (2001, p. 59), indexing reference and identity. In Portugal, since the end of 15th century and until the last quarter of the 16th century, it is known that royalty had some famous Indian diamonds like those named the *Mirror of Portugal* and the *Sancy* (e.g. Casquilho, 2005).

The same diamond can be renamed as it changes ownership and thus, along history, it can hold different names: for example, the *Hope* diamond is the ancient *Bleu-de-France* or *Diamant Bleu de la Couronne*; the *Florentine* was also known as the *Grand Duke of Tuscany* and, later, the *Austrian Yellow*, and many more examples could be given. Also, since a famous gemstone changes ownership it is not only the name of the stone that may be modified, but the gem is also recut, so that the new owner leaves its own imprint as a token, also obscuring the previous origin because famous gemstones frequently change hands through secret transactions, often illicit or illegal, and dishonorable, mainly for those who sell or pawn crown jewels dropping out ancient legacies.

A paradigmatic example is the *Hope* diamond's history which was revisited by Farges *et al.* (2009), the identity of the stone being carefully hidden for a long time: it weighted ca. 69 carats and was heart-shaped when it was part of the crown jewels of France included in the Golden Fleece, and then, more than a century and half later, appeared re-cut into its present oval form with about 45.5 carats of weight in possession of Sir Thomas Hope, owner of the Dutch bank of Scottish origin Hope & Co.

ON DIAMONDS FROM BRAZIL

The first diamond of well-ascertained water brought to light out of India was, it is said, accidentally discovered by a miner in Brazil, in the commencement of eighteenth century. Previous to this, the only known diamonds had been found in Borneo and Hindoustan. (Jones, 1880, p. 252).

As far as the last quarter of 16th century there were already reports mentioning stones identified as possible diamonds (Svisero *et al.*, 2017) and one can read that at least since 1714 was acknowledged the existence of diamonds in Tijuco (Pires, 1903, p. 99) even if only about 1729 the news were officially communicated to the king of Portugal by the governor Lourenço de Almeida (Rabello, 1997, p. 23). It is also said that the first man who sent diamonds into the reign was Sebastião Leme do Prado in 1725, yet it is

mentioned that they found no sale and the same happened to Bernardo da Fonseca Lobo in 1727 (Jones, 1880, pp. 252-253).

A letter from Jacob de Castro Sarmiento dated from 1731 reports the occurrence of alluvial diamonds at Serro do Frio, near Arraial do Tijuco⁵, specifically at the places named by the natives Caythé Merin and a small river called Milho Verde; he tells that people were digging for gold in the banks of the river and found crystals that they didn't value at first, until when one of the miners deemed them to be diamonds in 1728 (Sarmiento, 1731).

But maybe the best account is the one by Jeffries (1751, pp. 69-73) saying that the production of Brazil was so high that the traders were very apprehensive of the Brazil mines producing an inexhaustible store, “judging from thence the world would scarcely think diamonds worth any consideration”, then adding that the Brazil people had long carried on a secret trade with the India people at Goa for diamonds, a strategy to enhance the value of the stones since Indian diamonds were considered more valuable and out of suspicion.

It was alleged that the Brazil fleet of 1732 had brought to Lisbon 300,000 carats of diamonds worth five millions *cruzados*, while the fleet of 1733 had brought about the same quantity, “which is four times the amount that usually comes from India” (Boxer, 1962, p. 224). Yet, the total of carats that was hidden and smuggled is obviously not known, but Oliveira Lima (1908, p. 747) tells that by the time the Portuguese court was in Brazil, it was known the English warships returning England took more diamonds from particulars than from the government.

Concerning the shape, Andrada⁶ (1797, p. 25) said that the figure of the diamonds of Brazil varied, some being octahedral formed by the union of two tetrahedral pyramids while others were almost round and some oblong, those being found in the beds of rivers, their shape being derived by water erosion. Also, Vandelli (1898, p. 281) wrote that the most frequent coloration of the diamonds in Brazil was a yellowish green derived from the presence of iron. Notwithstanding, large diamonds found in Brazil were rare, and in the old Diamantina field, which had been worked continuously since 1728,

⁵ Later named Diamantina in 1831.

⁶ José Bonifácio de Andrada e Silva.

a stone of an octave (*oitava*)⁷ was considered such a rarity, that in the days of slave labor it entailed that liberty was given to the finder (Derby, 1911), and also clothes and a pension.

Such an influx of wealth had consequences. Portugal was a small country with a small army, and the greed of other European powers managed to seize a large volume of diamond transactions. Rosas Júnior (1954, p. ix) tells us that in 1801 the Portuguese crown took out a loan of 12 million florins with the companies Hope in the Netherlands and Baring in London, giving Brazil's diamonds as the main guarantee. That loan is a result of the episode named the War of the Oranges, between the alliance of Spain and France on one side and Portugal on the other, where further negotiations led to the Treaty of Madrid signed on September 29th, 1801, and for Portugal the price of peace included keeping her ports closed to British ships until a final settlement in Europe was negotiated and the payment to France of a war levy of ten million *cruzados*, the equivalent of more than 11 million guilders (Buist, 1974, p. 384).

A few years later and facing an eminent arrival of the French troops commanded by general Junot, the royal family and most of the nobility and others embarked for Brazil in November 1807, then installing the government of Portugal therein – a concept that had been previously addressed since the 17th century as the promotion of a Catholic empire with headquarters in South America, but this was different: an escape.

In the years 1809 and 1813, the Prince Regent D. João de Bragança ordered to be sent into London a total of 27,000 carats of trimmed diamonds, which had already come from Lisbon's diamond cutting factory (Portugal *et al.*, 1941, p. 463).

In 1821, King João VI and the royal family returned to Portugal and Brazil declared independence in 1822, which would be recognized by Portugal in 1825. King João VI died in the following year (March 10, 1826) poisoned. From March to May of that year, he was succeeded by his son King Pedro IV of Portugal also Emperor Pedro I of Brazil. Pedro then abdicated the throne of Portugal to his daughter Maria da Glória who was only 7 years old, while the regent of the kingdom became Infanta Isabel Maria until 1828.

⁷ An octave weighted about 17.5 carats.



Figure 3 – *The departure of the royal family of Portugal to Brazil (detail), attributed to Nicolas-Louis-Albert Delerive. National Coach Museum (Museu Nacional dos Coches), Lisbon*⁸.

A news item in *Richmond Enquirer* of September 12, 1826 – which also appeared, for instance, in *Phenix Gazette*, September 09, 1826 – said that a great treasure of six millions sterling in gold, and also the crown jewels, had arrived at Rio de Janeiro in a ship named after the deceased king.

The Portuguese 84 gun ship John 6th, had arrived from Lisbon, with a great treasure, said to be six millions sterling in gold, and the crown jewels.— The Infant of Portugal, was a passenger, who came to offer his homage to the emperor. A frigate of 48 guns was to be launched at Rio on the 6th of September.

Figure 4 – *News item from the Richmond Enquirer, September 12, 1826.*

⁸ [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Embarque_da_Fam%C3%ADlia_Real_para_o_Brasil_-_Nicolas-Louis-Albert_Delerive,_attrib._\(Museu_Nacional_dos_Coches\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Embarque_da_Fam%C3%ADlia_Real_para_o_Brasil_-_Nicolas-Louis-Albert_Delerive,_attrib._(Museu_Nacional_dos_Coches).png)

THE BRAGANZA DIAMOND

(...) the mines of Brazil had already given birth, among other great stones, to the most bulky diamond in the world, popularly known as the “King of Portugal’s diamond”. It was found in the Brazils in a place named Cay de Merin, near the little river Malhoverda, and weighs, so say Mr. Ferry, 1730 carats, or, following Mauwes, 1,680 carats. It must be as large as a hen’s egg, slightly oblong, of a deep yellow colour. (...).
(Turgan, 1873, p. 148)

A first remark should be made relative to the name of the stone, as noticed in the epigraphic citation: before being named the Braganza diamond (in Portuguese: *diamante Bragança*) – a name taken from the last royal house of Portugal – the gemstone was previously known as the Great Diamond of [the King or the Queen of] Portugal or simply “The King of Portugal”.

Retrieving information from the Portuguese manuscripts located in the British Museum, concerning a report written and signed in February 2, 1741, relative to the large diamond of the King of Portugal, it is mentioned the weight of 1680 carats or 6400 grains, valuing 36 millions of pounds sterling (Figanière, 1853, p. 280), then also telling that the diamond was found in Brazil and sent to Portugal.

In a news item that appeared in *The Daily Gazetteer*, January 23, 1742, shown in Figure 5, it is reported that, two days before, from London, it was said (updating orthography):

They write from Lisbon, that the Great Diamond which the King expected by the Brazil Fleet is come safe to Hand, and that it weighs above 17 Ounces; but that some Lapidaries to whom the King has shown it say it wants a certain Degree of Hardness.



Figure 5 – The news item from *The Daily Gazetteer*, January 23, 1742, about the Great Diamond of the King of Portugal.

About one week later, in the same newspaper, one can read in Figure 6 (updating orthography below):

They have at Dublin a Model of the great Diamond which the King of Portugal has lately receiv'd from the Brasils. 'Tis represented to be in the Shape of a Turkey Egg, but much larger, and valued at 379166 Moydores. But they write from Lisbon, that the more that Diamond is examin'd by the Connoisseurs, the more it suffers in its Valuation; insomuch that they are ready to give it out to be no Diamond, tho' they have not yet agreed by what Name to call it. Perhaps, say they, it will turn out at last to be but a White Sapphire, which it resembles both in Hardness and Weight.

Figure 6 – The news item from *The Daily Gazetteer*, February 1, 1742, about the Great Diamond of the King of Portugal..

They have at Dublin a Model of the great Diamond which the King of Portugal has lately received from the Brasils. It's represented to be in the Shape of a Turkey Egg, but much larger, and valued at 379166 Moydores. But they write from Lisbon, that the more that Diamond is examined by the Connoisseurs, the more it suffers in its Valuation; insomuch that they are ready to give it out to be no Diamond, though they have not yet agreed by what Name to call it. Perhaps, say they, it will turn out at last to be but a White Sapphire, which it resembles both in Hardness and Weight.

Yet, the ambivalence concerning the nature of the stone – not only a white sapphire but also a white topaz – was raised still in the 18th century, as one can read in Romé de l’Isle (1783, p. 208) that: the most extraordinary stone coming from the mines in Brazil is a diamond owned by the King of Portugal, though some think it is a white topaz, weighing 1680 carats. The suspicion that the stone could be a white topaz was previously raised by l’Abbé Sauri in 1778.

Also, in a news item dated from July 1751 at *Journal Economique* (pp. 141-144) one can see, written in French, a report concerning the diamond mines in Brazil, referred to a letter from London, mentioning Serro do Frio, *Cay de Merin* and the rivulet *Milho Verde* and it is said that Portugal’s treasure has a diamond weighing 1680 carats, whose shape and dimensions are shown in a sketch.

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Extrait d'une Lettre de Londres, touchant les Mines de Diamans du Bresil.

Vous sçavez, Monsieur, qu'aux trois fois on ne trouvoit des Diamans que dans les Indes Orientales, & principalement dans la partie inférieure de l'Indostan. En 1677 on travailloit dans vingt-trois mines de Diamans au royaume de Golconde, & dans quinze à celui de Visiapour. On en travailloit aussi dans l'île de Borneo.

Mais aujourd'hui c'est du Bresil appartenant aux Portugais qu'on tire la plus grande partie des Diamans. Dans la Province de Serro do Frio, dans le même gouvernement où sont les Mines d'or, & proche la capitale, il y a un endroit appelé par les habitans *Cay de Merin*, & une petite rivière nommée *do Milho Verde*, au fond de laquelle on avoit depuis long tems trouvé de l'or parmi le sable. En ramassant cette poudre

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Mines de Diamans.

d'or on rencontroit souvent des petites pierres qu'on avoit coûtumé de jeter comme n'étant d'aucune valeur; lorsqu'en 1728 les habitans les reconnurent pour être de vrais & bons Diamans. Tout le monde accourut pour en chercher, & bientôt après on découvrit les Mines précieuses. On établit en 1734 une Compagnie pour les exploiter; & en même tems pour empêcher que le prix des Diamans ne diminuât trop, il fut défendu aux particuliers d'en chercher davantage. On régla qu'il ne seroit employé dans ces Mines que cinq ou six cens esclaves au plus, & que l'on n'en tireroit ou vendroit qu'autant de Diamans qu'il conviendrait de repandre dans le public à la fois, pour ne point courir le risque d'en faire tomber le prix. Il fut ordonné à tous les particuliers qui possédoient de ces Diamans de les porter à la Monnoie pour en recevoir la valeur, selon l'estimation, soit en Actions de la Compagnie, ou en argent comptant; & en cas de désobéissance leurs Diamans étoient déclarés fu-

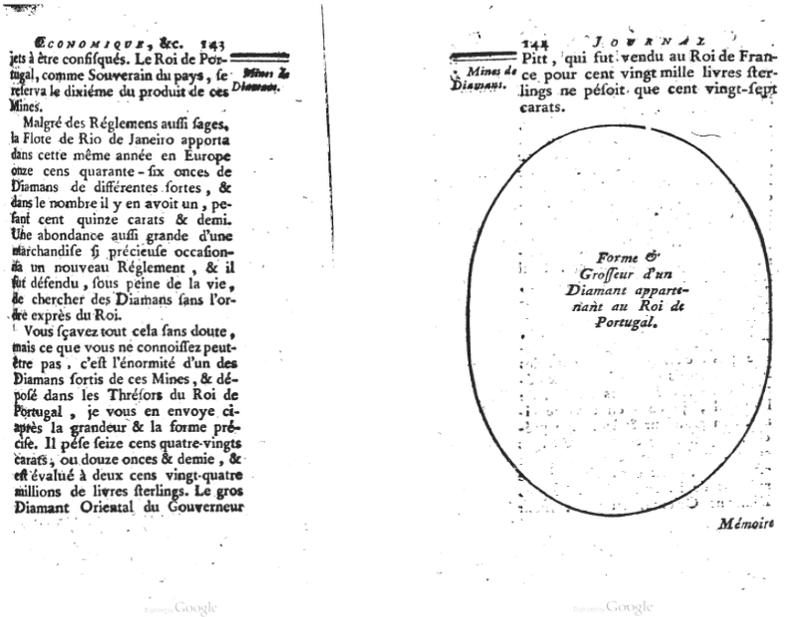


Figure 7 – The news item (*Mémoire*) in *Journal Economique* July 1751, pp. 141-144.

However, another sketch of the stone is the one given by Fonseca Benevides (1879, p. 149), who consulted directly the manuscript at the British Museum and reproduced the drawing, mentioning that it was named the Great Diamond of Portugal, weighing 1680 carats, with an oval figure and 11 cm of length by 5.3 cm of diameter and a value estimated at 36 million of pounds sterling.

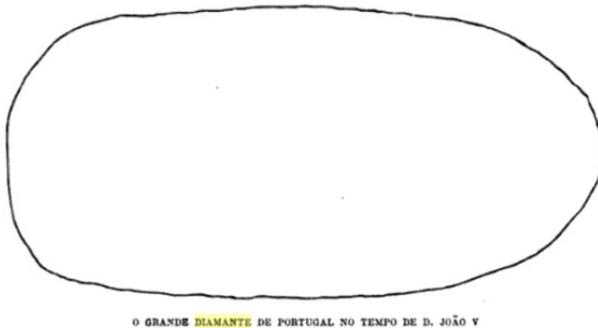


Figure 8 – The sketch by Francisco da Fonseca Benevides of the Great Diamond of Portugal.

It should also be noticed the remarks made by the mineralogist and academician Alfredo Bensaúde (1893, pp. 181-83) telling that it was during the reign of King João V that a peasant found a huge diamond and the man decided to offer the gem to the king in 1741. Bensaúde also mentions that it was written in the manuscript that it could be a white sapphire, by resemblance in the hardness and weight, in a noticeable similitude with the news item previously reported (Figure 6), and that he could not obtain at the time any other clue to clarify this obscure matter, either in the National Library or in the Palace d’Ajuda library. Last, he concludes that a diamond of 1680 carats, after cut, should be reduced to a stone of about 500 carats.

In summary, one can state that since the news reported in 1742 there was already a model of the diamond in Dublin, and from Lisbon were raised doubts about the true nature of the stone, then being mentioned that it could be instead a white sapphire and, later, a white topaz. A photo of a model of the gem can be seen in Emma Foa (1997, p. 110), referred to the De Beers collection: if it is accurate, the stone would be a little less oblong than shown in Figure 8, and whether the major axis is 10 cm, the minor axis would be ca. 5.8 cm.

Thus, one can conclude that, since its earliest reports, there was a strategy of disputed ambiguity, concerning the nature and color of the stone – presumably originating from the Portuguese government in Lisbon – what is plausible, since it would be dangerous dealing with the largest known diamond in the world. I name this strategy the *ludibrium*, a game of uncertain meanings.

PICTORIAL EVIDENCE OF THE BRAGANZA DIAMOND

The next figure shows an engraving – dated from 1788 and authored by Gaspar Fróis Machado – of the Prince of Brazil D. José de Bragança, son of the Queen Maria I and, at that time, heir of throne. On the ribbon – as if it were the center of gravity of the portrait – one can see the large oblong stone set in an elaborated jewel.

After the death of the prince, Queen Maria I, his mother and the first undisputed reigning queen of Portugal, became psychologically unstable until she was deemed mentally insane in 1792 and the new Prince of Brazil D. João, younger brother of D. José, became *de facto* prince regent, though he only adopted that title *de jure* in 1799.

Returning to the diamond, in Figure 10 one can see the general conformity between the drawing by Fonseca Benevides, previously shown in Figure 8, and the shape of the stone portrayed in the jewel at the center of the ribbon of Prince José, even if it is already a little polished.

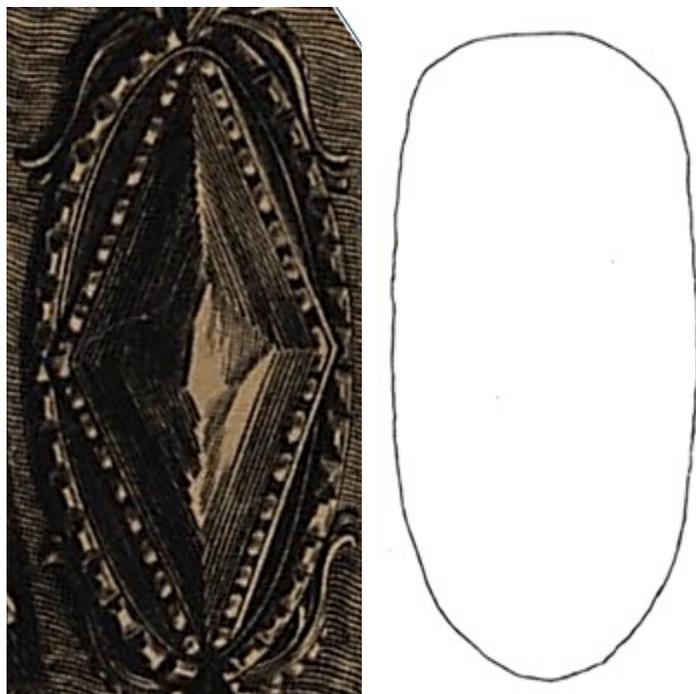
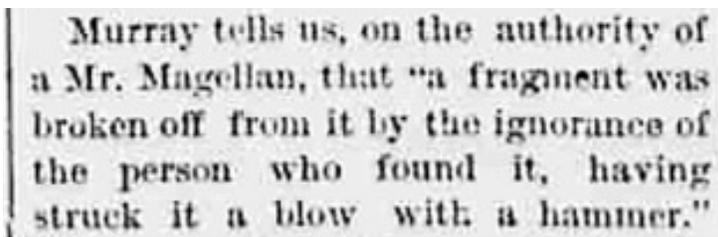


Figure 10 – Comparing the sketch drawn by Fonseca Benevides (Figure 8) and the Braganza diamond in the ribbon of the Prince José (detail from Figure 9).

Looking into detail to the jewel used by the prince one can find the comments made by Wood (1809, p. 186) saying that the greatest diamond ever known is one belonging to the King of Portugal and that Mr. Magellan (Magalhães)¹⁰ had told him that it was once of a larger size, but a piece was cleaved by the ignorant countryman who chanced to find the gem and tried its hardness by a stroke of a large hammer upon an anvil. Magalhães is mentioned as describing this diamond resembling a darkish yellow pebble, rather oblong and concave on one side with a fragment broken off from it, as we can also see in a news item depicted below.



Murray tells us, on the authority of a Mr. Magellan, that "a fragment was broken off from it by the ignorance of the person who found it, having struck it a blow with a hammer."

Figure 11 - The Middlebury Register and Addison County Journal, January 19, 1883

Concerning the nature of the stone, Svisero et al. (2017) state that the Braganza stone should be a diamond – and not a topaz or an aquamarine, as later claimed by others – based on geological arguments concerning the region of origin. About the same was stated almost a century before by Leonardos and Saldanha (1939), saying that the stone was dark yellow and in the region where it was found there was no notice of yellow topazes, then concluding that the finding of a large number of brown diamonds in the region strengthened the opinion that the Braganza was in fact a legitimate diamond.

¹⁰ João Jacinto de Magalhães (1722-1790), a Portuguese from Aveiro and mentioned as “a Portuguese savant living in London”, also known as Jean Hyacinthe de Magellan, was previously a scholar at University of Coimbra. He left Portugal in 1756 and never returned. He was a member of several Academies such as the Royal Society, the Académie Royale des Sciences in Paris, the Academy of St. Petersburg, the Royal Academy of Sciences in Lisbon, the Academy of Madrid, the Académie Royale des Sciences, des Lettres et des Beaux-Arts in Brussels, American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, among others.

QUEEN MARIA DA GLÓRIA OF PORTUGAL

One large glittering yellow stone is clearly evident in a portrait of Queen Maria da Glória (Maria II of Portugal). Though the portrait authored by Maurício José do Carmo Sendim is not dated, it must have been concluded ca. 1834, when the young queen regained the throne being about 15 years old.

But one can see that she asserts her authority with a proper and strong iconographic program, including the throne chair and regalia, and holding the scepter upwards in her right hand. This seems appropriate after the civil war and the defeat of the troops of her uncle King Miguel, and his subsequent dethronement and exile.



Figure 12 – Queen Maria II of Portugal by Maurício José Sendim, *Palácio da Ajuda*¹¹ (ca. 1834).

¹¹<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/maria-ii-of-portugal-maur%C3%ADcio-jos%C3%A9-do-carmo-sendim/MQHrHt4DfFHOnw?hl=pt-pt>



Figure 13 – detail: the Braganza diamond.

And, as we can see in the picture, the gem is being used simultaneously as an ornament and an index of sovereignty, a weighted pendant on the ribbon of the military and honorary orders. Considering the interpupillary distance (IPD) of the queen as the average value of 62 mm (e.g. Dodgson, 2004) one can reckon that the diamond has about 63 mm long (major axis) and concerning the minor axis it should be noticed that the gem does not appear frontally in the portrait, as it is lying slanted on the throne chair.

In another portrait of the same sovereign, which belongs to the collection of Banco de Portugal, also authored by Maurício Sendim, the queen is some years older, yet she is using the same jewelry set – namely, the diamond tiara and hair clips and also the same bracelets – and there appears again the yellow gem encircled by white diamonds, suspending from the diagonal ribbon as a weighted pendant; however, now it is half hidden by the coat of arms hold by the dragon in the left arm of the throne chair.

Once again the dimensions are not clearly visible but, inferred by symmetry, it is noted that the gem is elliptical with an estimate of the ratio of the major to the minor axis of ca. 1.25.

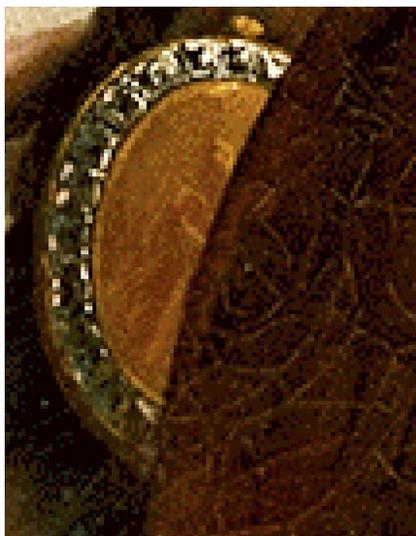


Figure 14b - detail: the pendant in the ribbon

Figure 14a - portrait of Queen Maria II of Portugal by Mauricio José do C. Sendim, Banco de Portugal¹² (ca. 1845, presumed).

Combining both estimates it can be considered that the gem depicted in the portraits would be about 63 mm × 50 mm, but those numbers are highly dependent of the actual IPD of the queen which was presumed to be the average, and this statement also presupposes that the artist was accurate.

As terms of comparison the Star of Africa with 530.3 carats – the major piece of the Cullinan diamond after cut – has dimensions of 45.4 × 40.8 (mm).

Queen Maria II died young with 34 years in 1853 of complications from childbirth. Her firstborn succeeded as King Pedro V enthroned in 1855, but he also died with 24 years old and without descent, in what was mentioned as a resurgence of the “Braganza curse”.

¹²[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Retrato_de_D._Maria_II_Maur%C3%ADcio_Jos%C3%A9_do_Carmo_Sendim_\(1786-1870\).png](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Retrato_de_D._Maria_II_Maur%C3%ADcio_Jos%C3%A9_do_Carmo_Sendim_(1786-1870).png)

GOING BACKWARDS: KING JOÃO VI

However, the identification of the diamond as a pendant in the diagonal ribbon in the portraits of Queen Maria II allows us to go back to her grandfather, King João VI, and rediscover the stone, after all present but disguised or covered.

That will also help elucidating one of the spurious facets of the stories concerning the Braganza diamond; for instance, Goddard Orpen (1888, pp. 93-94) or Murray (1839, p. 54) said that D. João VI had a hole drilled through the stone and used it suspended to his neck on gala days. But, as will be seen, the king used the gem as a pendant on the diagonal ribbon, and it would have already been polished and trimmed when compared with Figure 10.

The statements made by John Latouche¹³ are interesting, as he wrote, mentioning the Braganza diamond, that it was found in 1741 at Caethé Mirim in Brazil and was frequently used by King João VI; then, Latouche claims that a person who had the opportunity to examine it closely, told him it was as big as a hen's egg and that it was badly cut, having only a few facets but had no doubts that it was a true diamond, and then the author concludes:

The Braganza diamond, from its unusual size, has been suspected to be nothing more than a fine Brazilian white topaz; but the fact that it has been publicly worn by the king, at a court whose frequenters are particularly good judges of diamonds, must go some way to make us believe it to be what it professes (Latouche, 1875, p. 71).

Those statements from Latouche were reproduced as news items in several newspapers at the time, for instance *The Chicago Tribune*, October 16, 1875, page 2.

The next figure shows King João VI in a famous portrait dated 1817 by Jean-Baptiste Debret, and also an engraving by Charles Simon Pradier made after the painting, ca. 1820 (see also Figure 1).

¹³ Said to be the pseudonym of O.J.F Crawford, presumably a clerk at the Foreign Office of the United Kingdom about 1862.

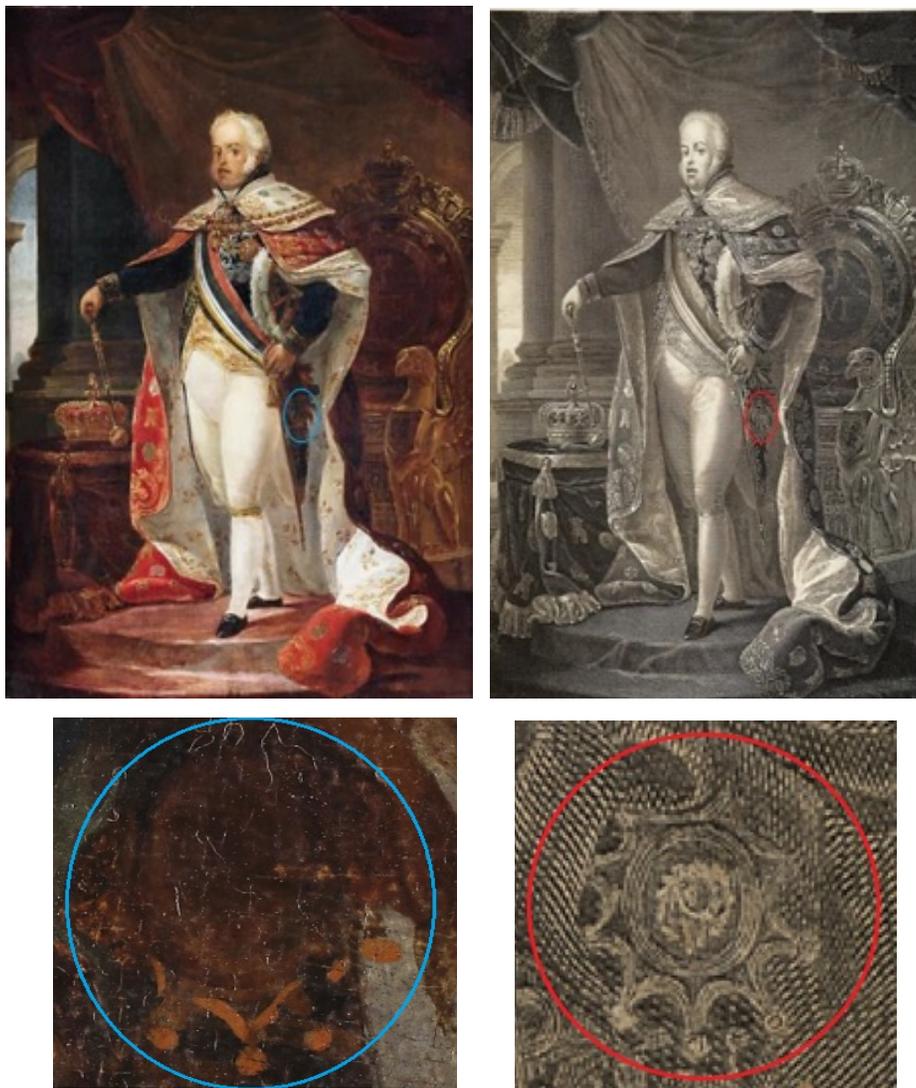


Figure 15 – King João VI of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves. At left, above: the portrait in acclamation costumes by Jean-Baptiste Debret, 1817, Museu Nacional das Belas Artes¹⁴; at right, above, engraving by Charles Simon Pradier after Debret's portrait, ca.1820¹⁵; below: details, concerning the object embedded in the star as a weight pendant for the diagonal ribbon.

¹⁴https://pt.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ficheiro:Jean-Baptiste_Debret_-_Retrato_de_Dom_Jo%C3%A3o_VI_%28MNBA%29.jpg

¹⁵https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Simon_Pradier#/media/Ficheiro:Jo%C3%A3o_VI_de_Portugal_por_Charles_Pradier.jpg

The iconographic program of the painting by Debret is ascribing the higher legitimacy of the king, standing with regalia, throne, and jeweled insignia; and, pending from the diagonal ribbon, is a golden star with a brown object embedded, which becomes clearer from the engraving done by Charles Pradier that it must be a gemstone.

Also, in another painting by Domingos Sequeira of Prince Regent D. João, dated about 1802-06, one remarks that the pendant of the ribbon also shows an indented star with a brown object embedded encircled by smaller gems, and hidden by the ties.



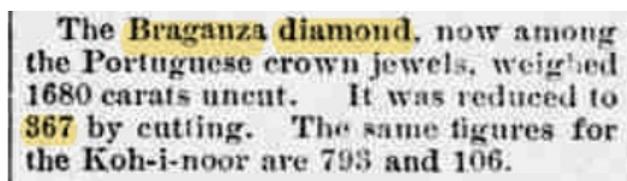
Figure 16 – Prince Regent D. João de Bragança by Domingos Sequeira, ca. 1802-06, Museu de Arte de São Paulo¹⁶, Brazil.

The portrait is particularly curious because seems rather provocative, as the prince is smiling mischievously and pointing down, thus indexing: could

¹⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_VI_of_Portugal#/media/File:Retrato_de_D._Jo%C3%A3o_VI,_Rei_de_Portugal.jpg

it be the sword or the diamond, or both? At the time, Portugal was paying the huge amount to France due to the Treaty of Madrid previously mentioned after the War of the Oranges. It is known that when General Junot arrived in Lisbon in late 1807 – claiming in name of Napoleon that the Braganza house had ceased to reign – he asked for the whereabouts of the diamond.

Also, one can be elucidated that by the time of King João VI the gem was already trimmed, not being anymore the oblong rough stone depicted in the portrait of Prince José and the sketch by Fonseca Benevides, what conforms with the report that a diamond cutting factory was installed in Lisbon since 1801 (e.g. Portugal *et al*, 1827/1941). Following the news item depicted in next Figure 16, it is mentioned a weight cut of 867 carats and stating explicitly “now among the Portuguese crown jewels”.



The Braganza diamond, now among the Portuguese crown jewels, weighed 1680 carats uncut. It was reduced to 367 by cutting. The same figures for the Koh-i-noor are 793 and 106.

Figure 17 – *The Londonderry Sifter*, (South Londonderry) October 02, 1890.

ON THE FATE OF THE BRAGANZA DIAMOND

Since the first news about its discovery, dated 1741/42 as reported, there has been a strong ambiguity regarding the true nature of the stone and its color, what I named a *ludibrium* strategy, a kind of game of uncertainty concerning the identity of the gem: was it a diamond, a sapphire, a topaz – and later, an aquamarine? And the color: white or yellow?

There is another dimension of misidentification, which Streeter (1882, p. 43) elucidates in the following statement relative to the Braganza diamond:

It is obvious that two stories, relating to two distinct gems have got mixed up together by careless writers, copying from each other, each repeating or adding to the errors made by his predecessors, and all carefully avoiding the trouble involved in the consultation of the original authorities.

I would say that it is not two stories, but more. As clarified elsewhere, the Braganza diamond is not the Abayté or Regent of Portugal diamond found around 1795, the famous Portugal diamond mentioned by Laura Junot, and the Portuguese Diamond that today is in the Smithsonian Institution (e.g. Casquilho, 2022). Even Manutchehr-Danai (2009, p. 106), makes a misleading distinction between the “Braganza diamond” with 144 carats – which in fact is the Abayté or the *Regent of Portugal* diamond with a slightly different reckoning of the carat measure (e.g. Farrington, 1929, p. 3) – and the “Braganza topaz” the stone with 1680 carats addressed in this paper, and considered a yellow diamond.

John Mawe, who is one of the main references concerning the history of diamonds in Brazil, having been invited by D. João to visit the treasure, stated in a book dedicated to his highness the Prince Regent: “In this list I have not enumerated the supposed great Diamond of Portugal, because it is now the general opinion, both of mineralogists and jewelers, that this stone is a white topaz”, then saying in a footnote “This stone I did not see when in Brazil” (Mawe, 1815, pp. 35-36).

One cannot find any report on the big diamond neither in the inventory of the assets of King João VI done after his death nor in the court decision¹⁷ relative to sharing of these assets signed in May 11, 1827, while the *Regent of Portugal* diamond is mentioned therein: a rough diamond of 135 carats found in Abayté rivulet (Portugal *et al.*, 1827/1941).

Is it possible that the Braganza diamond went back to Brazil with some crown jewels as reported in the item news depicted in Figure 4? Maybe, but it is also possible that the stone was used by King Miguel I (reign: 1828-34), as seems in the portrait below, once more as a weight pendant of the diagonal ribbon, but not clearly exhibited. Yet, one should be aware that some say that royal portraits can be faked, as a political artefact, and the diamond is not mentioned in the inventory of the jewels and assets handed over by the dethroned king to the authorities.

¹⁷ But it should be noted that the event reported in Figure 4 would have escaped to the inventory.



Figure 18 – At left: portrait of King Miguel I by an unknown author, dated from the second quarter of the 19th century¹⁸; at right: detail of the pendant in the diagonal ribbon.

What seems certain is that the stone was in Portugal when Queen Maria da Glória was enthroned in 1834, as is evident in Figures 12 and 13, where the young queen displays the gem unambiguously like a sparkling trophy.

However, in the transition to Figure 14, the queen shows the stone half-hidden, what can be meaningful. As Mata and Valério (1998) report, the external public debt of Portugal only became significant after 1830, because the previous debt to France derived from the Treaties of Madrid and Badajoz (1801) was paid with the indemnities of the Treaty of Vienna (1815) and the debt to England was the price that Brazil would pay for the recognition of independence (1825) – even if dampened by the “treasure” mentioned in the news item depicted in Figure 4. Correlatively, Cattelle (1911, p.46) writes that when D. Pedro paid the interest on the Brazilian debt in diamonds, the price of them in London fell nearly half. In Portugal, the civil war with a peak in the period 1832-34 made both sides borrowing money abroad: millions, in loans with a high interest rate; and, as the “rebels” – the liberals supporting the queen’s claim to the throne – won, the absolutist debt was repudiated by the queen, but that had consequences.

¹⁸https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rei_D._Miguel_%282.%C2%BA_quartel_s%C3%A9c._XIX%29.png

In the years that followed the war, three new loans in a total of 2,9 million pounds were made, but this was not enough to avoid the suspension of payments in 1837, then resumed in 1841; a new suspension occurred in 1846, the year in which Banco de Portugal was founded. A new conversion and resumption of payments were achieved in 1852, the year before the queen passed away, although the initial plan for the conversion had to be modified in 1855 and taking out a new loan in 1856 was the start of a second debt cycle.

However, in a list entitled “Portugal’s crown diamonds”, published a few years after, although many jewels and precious stones are mentioned and prized, one can’t see a reference to the big diamond¹⁹. There are news – for instance in the Daily National Republican, April 09, 1864 – mentioning that at the time of King Luís I of Portugal, enthroned after his brother passed away, great quantities of diamonds of the crown treasure were sold to the French government. Following the convoluted history of Portugal’s external public debt²⁰ and abbreviating reasons, in 1891 a financial crisis led Portugal to abandon the gold standard previously adopted in 1854 and the country went into partial default by cutting interest payments on domestic and foreign debt and, as a consequence, the country was banned from borrowing in international financial markets until an agreement with foreign bondholders was reached in 1902 (Lains, 2008), making the previous loans being converted into a single loan, redeemable up to 2001 (Mata & Valério, 1998).

In 1893, a news item published in Blackfoot News, November 25, announced that the crown of the king of Portugal was in danger of being pawned, and, in 1895, one can see an item news in The Anaconda Standard, November 29, entitled “Royal Crown to Pawn”, mentioning that Portugal is bankrupt and the king’s civil list has been unpaid for two years.

At the time the king of Portugal was Carlos I, son of King Luís I and grandson of Queen Maria II, married to consort Queen Maria Amélia, daughter of the Count of Paris. In fact, it was stated that the crown of Portugal had been in the keeping of the Rothschilds (London branch) since 1894, as the news item below shows.

¹⁹ Archivo Pittoresco, 1860, p. 22.

²⁰ The interested reader on this subject should consult the authors mentioned above: Maria Eugénia Mata, Nuno Valério, Pedro Lains, and also José Luís Cardoso.

As to the crown of Portugal, it has been in the keeping of the Rothschilds, London branch, since 1894, when the King borrowed 5,000,000 francs on it, about one-eighth of its real value. Here follows a description of this priceless bauble, furnished by an official of Dom Carlos's court:
The jewels in the crown consist of diamonds, pearls, rubies, sapphires and emeralds, set in solid gold. Its weight is three pounds five ounces troy.

Figure 19 – News item in Hilo Tribune, October 31, 1902.

Still, in 1902, several news items – for instance, the one mentioning “King of Portugal Pawned Crown Jewels” published in The St. Louis Republic, September 03, 1902, or another entitled “Troubles of a King” in The River Press, October 22, 1902 – stated that King Carlos I of Portugal has pawned the crown jewels, including Dom Pedro IV’s scepter and the Braganza diamond, said to be the largest in the world. Interestingly, those news items still say that no expert was ever authorized to examine this diamond, which is still repeated by Cattelle (1911, p. 89) at the beginning of the 20th century.

TROUBLES OF A KING.
Carlos I. of Portugal. Who Is Said to Have Pawned His Crown.
Hard pressed by debt, King Carlos I. of Portugal, it is alleged by the press of Lisbon, has pawned the crown jewels. Included in the jewels hypothecated are the scepter of Dom Pedro IV., valued at millions of dollars, and the Braganza diamond, said to be the largest in the world.
No expert has ever been allowed to examine this diamond, and this fact has given rise to the report that it was not genuine. Perhaps the truth or falsity of the report may be settled if the facts about the pawning prove true.

Figure 20 – The River Press, October 22, 1902.

There are no doubts that several crown jewels disappeared from the vaults of the royal treasury. King Carlos I and his firstborn Prince Luís Filipe were assassinated on February 1, 1908, a murder carried out by members of the *Carbonária*, a revolutionary secret society (Fernandes *et al.*, 2003), in what could be considered as announcing the epilogue of the monarchy in Portugal (Silva, 2019). The throne was immediately occupied by the young King Manuel II, brother of Luís Filipe and the last king of Portugal.

Then, several news items appeared stating that the new king had ordered an inventory, and confirmed that jewels worth about \$750,000 in \$2,000,000 were missing from the vaults – although the Braganza diamond was not explicitly mentioned. The “magnificent belt studded with diamonds and rubies” does not seem to be mentioned in previous inventories of the crown jewels.



Figure 21 – *The Sun*, April 25, 1908, p.3.

CODA

The very identity even of the most famous historical gems
is often an open question.
(Edwin W. Streeter, 1882, p. 32).

In the *veridictory square* (e.g. Hébert, 2020, p. 57) the attribute *secret* is defined at what is [true] but doesn't seem to be. I would say that a strategy of secrecy – which I named the *ludibrium* – was enabled since the first news on the Braganza diamond, saying that it could be else a white sapphire, and then, some years later, a white topaz. Also and finally, it has been recently referred to as an aquamarine (e. g. Foa, 1997, p. 110; Carvalho, 2006).

Neither white, nor a sapphire or topaz, still less an aquamarine, it was a dark yellow diamond (e. g. Barbot, 1858, p. 255; Fanales, 1890, p. 81), as clarified by one expert who was known to have examined it: Magellan (João Jacinto de Magalhães), previously reported in this paper. That stone is clearly shown in the portraits of Queen Maria II (Figures 12 and 13), about fifty years after the engraving of Prince José, dated 1788 (Figure 9).

The news also made clear that the diamond was pledged by King Carlos I in 1902.

Now, one can ask; what happened to the Braganza diamond?

I can only make a conjecture, let's say a research hypothesis: the Braganza diamond was pledged to a long-standing contract – about 75 years or more – and could have become the diamond now known as the Golden Jubilee.

Obviously, I know that the official story tells that a stone called the “Unnamed Brown” weighing “in rough” ca. 755 carats, was found in the Premier Mine, South Africa, about 1985/86 (e.g. Vleeschdrager, 1998, pp. 29-30; Dennis, 1999, pp. 51-52), then owned by De Beers corporation. But I also know that the Portuguese Diamond is said to have come from that very same mine ca. 1910, and however it is clear that the stone belonged to King José I of Portugal in the 18th century (Casquilho, 2020), and Harry Winston insisted on that proper name when delivering the gem to the Smithsonian Institution.

One aspect that makes me emphasizing the conjecture – besides the apparent compatibility of physical properties and the implausibility that a stone like the Braganza would disappear from sight – is a *symptom*, a kind of non-arbitrary sign (Sebeok, 2001, p. 64): before being delivered to the King of Thailand about 1997, with a cut weighing 545.65 carats – which is a figure according to Bensaúde’s educated guess previously reported – the diamond was blessed by Pope John Paul II and the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch, and also the Supreme Imam.

Why would a newly discovered stone – a virgin “Unnamed Brown” – need a blessing from the Pope when it was to be delivered to a Buddhist King? It seems strange, except if that was supposed to lift some negative fetishist injunction – a kind of exorcism – like the “Braganza curse”, a legend that gained relevance in Brazil (e.g. Ferreira, 2006; Rezzutti, 2017, pp. 47, 51).

Still, one could remember that the sovereigns of the Braganza house had received the title of *Rex Fidelissimus*²¹ from Pope Benedictus XIV, since King João V in 1748. Also, it was said that the diamond would be set either in the royal sword, or in the royal scepter and then the royal seal of Thailand, but it remained alone – maybe a less critical option? It is still the largest faceted diamond in the world, and when it came into Thailand the news reported the stone as being else a golden topaz...



Figure 22 – The Golden Jubilee diamond²²

²¹ *Majestade Fidelíssima* in Portuguese, translated into English: Most Faithful Majesty.

²² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Golden_Jubilee_Diamond.jpg

As time goes by, the *Florentine* diamond was stolen about a century ago, and its whereabouts are still unknown from common people. Yet, it will be shining somewhere, and its historical name will be whispered by the owner, because history adds value. Also, the *Regent of Portugal* diamond was stolen in The Hague in 2002 with several other quite valuable crown jewels of Portugal, in a very suspicious story, and guaranteed by a derisory amount decided with the agreement of the Portuguese government of the time.

If it is true that the Great Diamond of Portugal became the Golden Jubilee diamond, at least it had a noble destiny: the dark yellow color being considered a defect in Europe, however it is the color of royalty and sacred attributes in Asia, and that is nice. If it is not the case, other brown diamonds²³ are still shining somewhere...

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the suggestions of an anonymous reviewer. In addition to Wikipedia, I also thank the Internet Archive, the National Library of Portugal and the Torre do Tombo National Archive, for all the digital materials made available. Last, I would like to dedicate this work to the memory of the following Portuguese scholars: Alfredo Bensaúde, Francisco da Fonseca Benevides e João Jacinto de Magalhães.

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²³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brown_diamonds

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