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STATE AND PERSPECTIVES OF POLISH GEMOLOGY

Gemology is “a science of gemstone investigation” (Maślankiewicz 1982, Sachanbiński 1996), “a science of gemstones and decorative stones” (Heflik 1996), “a science of jeweler’s stones” (Gunia 1996), “a science of gemological materials” (Łapot 1999).

Prof. Kazimierz Maślankiewicz (1902 – 1981) can be considered the creator of Polish gemology. He started his work in the twenties of the last century. That work had both a practical (Regional Assay Office in Kraków) and scientific character (the initiation of the Gemological Center in Wrocław).

STATE

A marked development of Polish gemmology started in the seventies of the twentieth century. The investigations of gemological questions at Wrocław University, at the Academy of Mining and Metallurgy in Kraków, by the former Polish Standardizing Committee in Warsaw, at the University of Silesia in Katowice, at Warsaw University (inclusion studies), at the Museum of the Earth in Warsaw (amber studies), in the Marine Geology Division of Polish Geological Institute (investigation and documentation of the Baltic amber deposits), in the Geological Enterprise in Warsaw (documentation of amber deposits in the Parczew delta area), in the Geological Enterprise in Wrocław (deposits of decorative stone in Poland) are a measure of this development. Scientific conferences about, for example “The occurrence and utilization of Polish gemstones and decorative stones” (Wrocław 1975), “For Polish decorative stones” (Kraków 1984), “For gemstones” (Warsaw 1988) were a direct result of this activity as were many gemological publications by Polish authors in both national and foreign magazines.

Further evidence of the increase in gemmological interests was the gradual broadening of publication activity (Heflik 2003). Significant contributors in this context have been W. Heflik, B. Kosmowska-Ceranowicz, W. Łapot, M. Sachanbiński, N. and T. Sobczak. Special mention should be made of the initiation and development of journals that publish papers on gemological problems. Among

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these, the most important are “Mineralogica Polonica” and “Polish Jeweler”.

A very important indication of the increase in the significance of gemology was the creation of associations by those worked in the field. The leading associations are the Polish Gemological Association (PTGem) created in 1988 and the Association of Jewelry Experts (SRJ). In 1996, the Association of Amber Experts (SBP) in Poland was formed. These organizations became members of the Forum of Polish Jeweler’s Craft, the agreement representing the interested environments for state authorities.

With the increasing interest in gemological questions, various possibilities in gemological education began to develop. The first regular courses were initiated by Prof. K. Maślankiewicz. The experiences gained led to the opening of a center of gemological training in Polanica Zdrój (under the auspices of the Association of Jewelry Experts) and the School of Gemology (at Wrocław University). A few years later, the Polish Gemological Association also started courses in the field of gemology and, recently, the Association of Amber Experts in Poland has done likewise. A majority of Polish gemological practitioners operating today in Poland – were trained in these courses. The most motivated gemologists completed their education in foreign training centers; most of them in the Center of the German Gemological Association in Idar-Oberstein and a few in other foreign centers (European and American). Totally new possibilities for gemological training arose with the introduction of a gemological specialization within geological studies at Wrocław University (from 1991). At that time also, in other academic centers, there were many initiatives involving the introduction of gemology in programs of academic education, for example, as a subject taught during geological studies (AGH, University of Silesia). All of these developments contribute to the fact that those working in Polish gemology today have had variable levels of general and professional preparation.

Exchanges, exhibitions and mineralogical-, amber-, jeweler’s stone- and jewelry markets, both amateur and professional, national and international, are another indication of the increase in interest of gemology. The International Markets of Amber, Jewelry and Jeweler’s Stones “Amberif” in Gdańsk are among the largest and best known. This is considered to be the largest market of amber in the world and the largest jewelry market in Middle- and East Europe.

Legal questions are another field of increasing activity in the gemological environment. In the nineties, Problem Standards Commission No. 239 for jewelry affairs was formed within the Polish Standards Committee. Its main task was the elaboration and implementation of standards regulating the practice of gemology. Unfortunately, a lack of agreement within ISO and EN made agreement on the national level impossible.

PERSPECTIVES

Within recent years, the gap separating Polish gemology from that of more advanced countries, for example the USA and the European Union, has both increased and decreased. The gap decrease relates mainly to scientific groups. It is a reflection of increasing international contact. The existing gap results from the permanent lack of the financial means to develop the present potential further. It is also influenced by the failure of some decision making bodies to appreciate gemological problems. Unfortunately, the gap in applied gemology is increasing alarmingly as a result of the inability of Polish gemological practitioners to keep pace with fast world-wide progress in the field of material engineering and in methods for improving gemological materials. The use of up-to-date knowledge and the application of more and more expensive research methods is required. Unfortunately, the workplaces of most Polish gemological practitioners are obsolete. Further development of the Polish jewelry market will not be possible without reliable professional evaluation of gemological materials. This will require an increase in highly qualified gemological staff able to cope with international competition. In the coming years in Poland, it can be expected that:

- The number of people working in the field of gemology, both professionally and as amateurs, will increase. Graduates from geological studies with a gemological and mineralogical / petrographical specialization should be a natural source of gemological staff. These will have the preparation necessary to become qualified gemological practitioners. At the same time, they will have an additional opportunity for employment in an environment of decreasing demand in the traditional branches of geology.
- The rules and standards of the European Union in gemological activity will be implemented.

The effective realization of these tasks could be ensured by a Center of Gemology. It does not have to mean the relocation of existing equipment and expertise. The effective use of equipment and the expertise could be facilitated by, for example, the appointment of a management board working to a plan developed by a consulting council. The consulting council would oversee the realization of programmed tasks in the existing centers through, for example, the allocation of grants. The main aims of the Center of Gemology would be:

- The development of possibilities for education and the awarding of gemological qualifications ranging from the technological to the academic levels
- The verification and certification of qualifications of gemologists already working
- The provision of temporary help in solving problems.

The creation of a Center would involve costs. Only funding from the State could ensure its proper operation as financing from management would lessen its authority due, for example, to suspicion about its independence. In the future, when firmly established, the Center could be an institution financed from its own income, as is the case in many countries of the world.

CONCLUSION

In the presence of growing international competition, the creation of a Center of Gemology is the most urgent task and unique opportunity for Polish gemology. It should ensure the favorable realization of the urgent tasks which will have to be faced in the coming years.

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