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himself, was the first European to record the stone's usefulness as something other than a gemstone: "When an Adamas is successfully broken, [it is] much sought after by engravers and [is] inserted into iron tools for making hollows in the hardest material without difficulty." The Chinese, however, had by the time of Pliny been using industrial diamonds for centuries; they were commonly used as bits for finishing and polishing jade and for drilling holes into pearls for stringing.

With the fall of the Roman Empire, the usefulness of diamonds waned rapidly, and by the fourteenth century the diamond's popularity and deemed mystical powers rated well behind those of the ruby, red spinels (balas rubies), pearls, and sapphires.

Yet in the East, the diamond remained the king of gemstones, highly valued from prehistory for its economic and social importance as well as for its mystical powers. ~~The~~ ~~Artha~~ ~~Shashtra~~ (The Science of Profit), written in ancient Sanskrit by Kautilya in the fourth century B.C., was concerned with details of the economic, political, and legal system of India. In the chapter "The Examination of Precious Articles to Be Received in the Treasury," Kautilya described the most valuable diamonds as "big, crystalline, and brilliant." The less valuable diamonds are devoid of angles and are uneven, such as diamond splinters and those of various colors "like cat's eye or the urine or bile of a cow." He also laid out the importance of strict control over the trade of all gemstones.

But the spirituality of the diamond is best captured in the world's earliest printed text written in Sanskrit, the ~~Diamond Sutra~~ ~~the~~ most profound sutra in Buddhist teachings. From the Sanskrit, literally means the "string upon which jewels are threaded," ~~and~~ ~~the~~ ~~Diamond Sutra~~ is the perfection of wisdom, which "cuts like the diamond thunderbolt and is thus able to cut through earthly illusion." Great wisdom, in Buddhist thought, is characterized by its indestructible nature and enduring truth. The diamond, and in particular all large diamonds, were considered to be sacred by the Buddhists.

The word diamond, from the Greek ~~adamas~~ means invincible. Gem-quality diamonds were the most highly prized of all precious stones, from the moment they were first discovered, for their rareness, pure color, brilliance, transparency, and apparent indestructibility.

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The *Brhatsamhita* states that the purest, flawless gems, blessed with perfect octahedron shapes and bearing certain surface markings, called *lakshana*, were considered to be beneficial. Buddhabhata, a sixth-century lapidary author, believes this to be true as well when he writes, “He who has a pure body, and who carries on his person a diamond that is sharp-pointed, without blemish and entirely flawless, shall daily increase his worth in happiness, prosperity, children, wealth, crops, cows and livestock, to the end of his life.”

The Sancy diamond fits this description perfectly. If one is to believe in the mystical power of the diamond described in this ancient text, the Sancy would become a source of evil for those owners who did not thoroughly authenticate its provenance. For those who came by the diamond honestly, it would have been a *lakshana*, daily increasing the owner’s prosperity and power. This is the basis of the Sancy’s curse, and explains why some of its owners met cruel and bloody endings while others remained wealthy and healthy. While I personally do not believe in curses, this explanation does hold true throughout the Sancy’s history.

The Sancy is a pure white and transparent diamond. Its weight, estimated by gem valuers in the fifteenth century to be 106 carats, and color would have destined it to ownership by the Indian king. It was found in the oldest area of diamond extraction near Golconda, but the date of its cutting is unknown. Somehow it reached Europe in the late fourteenth century, making it the largest white diamond in Christendom for well over two hundred years.

According to the legendary diamond cutter Gabi Tolkowsky, the cut is definitely Indian, a forerunner of the briolette cut. He can tell this simply from the fact that like many old Indian cut stones, the Sancy’s size was more important than its brilliance: there are fewer facets in the old Indian style, rather than more facets, as in newer European cuts. Further, one side is more flat, and the other side convex. In the fifteenth century, the cutter would have cut his hands off if it had been done in any other way. Tolkowsky says the Sancy was “cut long ago, and most likely in India, and most probably by a Venetian cutter and merchant who would have known its value in Europe.”

Tolkowsky explains that it was extremely fortuitous that the Sancy was spared from being smashed with a hammer, as this was the cus-

