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Ilakaka Madagascar (Sapphire rush)

By Alain Darbellay GGGems

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ILAKAKA

· The plateau of Ilakaka in 1992.

Ilakaka is located on the road to Tulear, south-west of Madagascar. The discovery of sapphire in the current of 1998 transformed the area.

· Ilakaka in 1999.

It is in the accesses of the downwards brook named Ilakaka that the first sapphires were found in 1998. The existence of gemmiferous minerals, including corundum was known for a long time in the sandstones of Isalo. French geologists having undertaken research in 1946 in particular. If their discovery did not cause particular interest at the time, several reasons can be advanced : the political instability which reigned after the second world war in the colony, and the fact that the majority of corundums coming from the area of Ilakaka must be

heated to be marketed, indeed, a blue stone, but cloudy, could not inevitably let suppose to its discoverers that it would become pure and transparent after a suitable heat treatment. Moreover, knowledge in this field remained summary at that time. In Ilakaka, the arrival of merchants coming from Thailand and from Sri-Lanka changed things, because this group of purchasers became experts in "the

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" Tsy misy mandronono, tsy misy prix" enhancement of corundum." Thus, the cloudy stones of This sentence is none by everyone in better quality will be often sold as (untreated Sri–Lankan Ilakaka. sapphires) on the international market, this because of It means that : " if the stone is not milky, the difficulties in detecting heating treatment in a stone its owner will not get price for it." from Ilakaka not containing other inclusion only one haze of fine titanium drops, reabsorbed after heating.
(Note: that true untreated Sri–Lankan sapphires are rare.)

The excavations follow the gravel deposits which the Impressing holes bore the sandstones of Madagascans call lalam' bato, (the way of stones.) Ilakaka testifying to the fever of sapphire.

Ankaboka, one of the many gemmiferous places of the area.

- Maromiandry is located
The sivany (sifting of gravels) in Maromiandry. 40 kilometers north of the Seldom practiced dry as in this place distant trunk road between from a river. Ilakaka and Sakaraha.

The sifting of gemmiferous gravels in river close to Maromiandry.

- VOHIMENA VAOVAO, 25 kilometers far from Ilakaka. One of quote headlight of the sapphires production.

The higher edges of the rivers abound in sapphires, chrysoberyls, etc. Here in the area of Vohimena vaovao.

The sandstones, fragile, have been knife cut by the river.

SANDSTONES of ISALO

The base of the group of Isalo is entirely continental. Sometimes significant marine incursions and of long duration were introduced into the medium and higher parts. The group of Isalo begins at the top from lower Triassic and continues until the end of the Jurassic means.

One separates there:

Isalo I, at the base, especially sandy, continental.

Isalo II, argilo – sandy with some marine intercalations.

Isalo III, argilo – sandy with side passage to great marine formations. The essential characteristic of the Isalo formations is their main constitution of soft sandstones, very permeable, badly cemented which disaggregate easily on surfaces

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by giving thick siliceous sand coverings.

The porous nature of the sandstones constitutes an excellent tank which stores the water of the rains to restore it during the dry season.

· Sakalama, 60 kilometers south from Ilakaka. MADAGASCAN CORUNDUMS
At the back, ruiniform sandstones of the Isalo range.

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Madagascar gem safari

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MADAGASCAR GEM SAFARI 2

Sapphire from Maromby in a metamorphic limestone. (Andranondambo area.)

Looking for sapphire on the ground in 1992.

Sapphires from Andranondambo, discovered in 1991. (South–East of Madagascar)

In 1658, Flacourt, the governor of Fort–Dauphin mentions sapphires in the south of Madagascar.

In 1808, Barthélemy Hugon writes that in the valley of Ambolo there is a so beautiful stone and so rare that lapidaries have not been able to recognize it and it was above of all that is not diamond. ... In 1991, at the time of the great dryness in the south, sapphire samples are found, several centuries after their first discovery. The son of Mrs. Dauphine, innkeeper in Tranomaro, main village of the valley, was among the prospectors.

Actually, one of the most beautiful quality in the world is just leaving ground.

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The area of Tranomaro is characterized by an extreme calcic and magnesian paragneiss abundance: gneiss with diopside, plagioclases, pyroxenites, wernerites, wollastonite limestones, with varied leptynites, generally with garnet, kinzigites, quartzites. One finds there rather frequently syenitic gneisses or lamboanites. Gneisses of injection are very frequent. The typomorphic minerals are: basic diopside, scapolite, calcite, plagioclases, wollastonite, garnet, cordierite and corundum. East of Tranomaro, artieritic and eyesys injections assign gneisses at leptynites. Cordierite gneiss bands are deeply injected bed by bed, the injection has introduced magnetite in abundance. Wollastonites form ptymatic lenses with Marohotro, 18 km. south from Andanondambo. folds very tortured at the middle of the limestone. Note:

The sapphire on the left comes from Ambandanira, and aluminous anorthites or sakenites. that on right–hand side from Maromby

(area of Andranondambo)

Sapphire from Behataza plateau (Andranondambo area)

Sapphires from Ilakaka. One of the various holes in sandstone forming (South–West of Madagascar) the deposit of Ilakaka discovered in to 1998.

Blue sapphires , pink and violet, Ilakaka area.

SANDSTONES OF ISALO.

The white sandstones of Isalo present imposing stratifications intersected with gravel beds and small conglomerates.

These soft sandstones resisted to erosion and taken a ruiniform relief because the presence of braces siliceous veins.

The mineral–bearing deposits include : a deposit of generally classified gravels, the richest part and larger elements being at the base of the bed – rock.

MORE ABOUT ILAKAKA

The far–south of Madagascar, semi–desert, does not present Polychromatic sapphires from Iankaroka discovered in 1990. any asphalt road yet, dust and trepidations are the daily

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lot of any traveller. Sunsets and the natural life of its inhabitants offer an appreciable compensation.

Rubies from Ianavoha. (South of Madagascar.)

Ruby from Andranomilitsy (Vohitany) Syenitic–nephelinic vein of rubies in Andranomilitsy.

In Soamiakatra, rubies were sold with sunglasses.
The Mayor of Soamiakatra in 1989, (East of Antsirabe.)

Rubies from Soamiakatra in the high plateaus.

Here, rubies are always found in alluvium.

MADAGASCAN CORUNDUMS

BLUE SAPPHIRE NATURAL COLOR

Sapphire from Analafady (Ambondromifehy) North.

The alluvial deposit of Ambondromifehy is exploited since

1996. It is located in a Jurassic limestone, but the origin of sapphires is in alkaline basalts from the close volcanic zone.

Mahatsara (Ambondromifehy)

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