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Rubies from the Niassa and Cabo Delgado regions of Northern Mozambique.

A preliminary examination with an updated Field Report Annex

Vincent Pardieu*, Jitlapit Thanachakaphad*, Stephane Jacquat, Jean Baptiste Senoble and Lou Pierre Bryl.

*GIA Laboratory, Bangkok

March 22nd 2009, latest update: September 13th 2009



Figure 1: Unheated faceted and rough rubies weighting from 0.9 to 5.4 carats for the faceted stones and believed to have been mined from Niassa province of Mozambique. The oval stone, first row, on the right might in fact originate from Winza, Tanzania. Stones courtesy: J&W Gems. Photo: V.Pardieu

Introduction:

During the past few months, new rubies reported as “Mozambique” appeared in the market in Bangkok and Chanthaburi: After some enquiries in Thailand, Tanzania and Mozambique it seems that this new material is coming from an area near the famous Niassa National Park in Northern Mozambique.

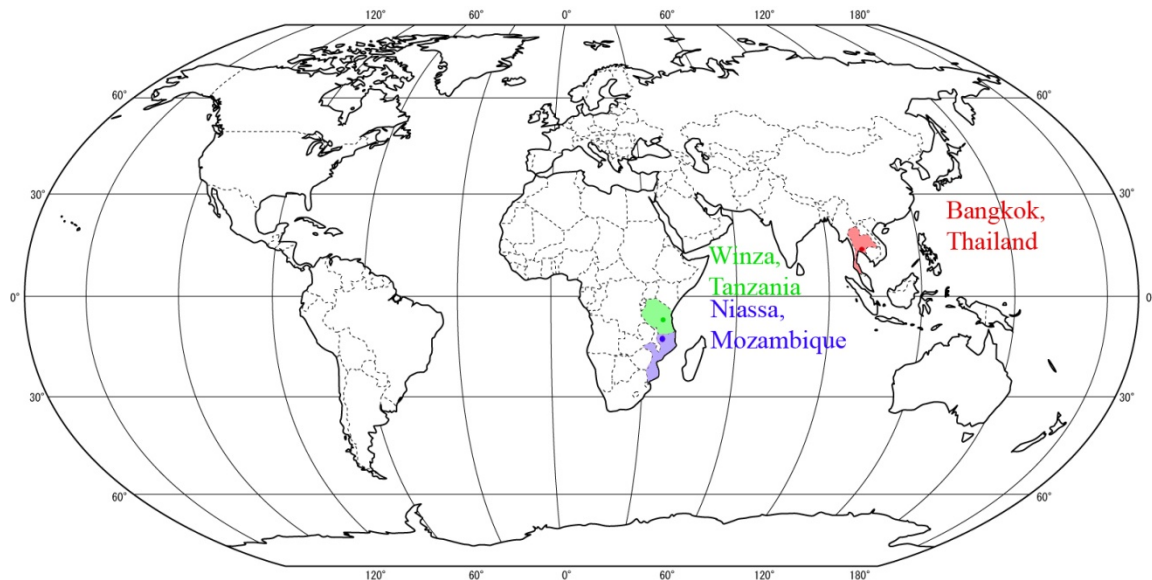


Figure 2: The Niassa province is located in the North West of Mozambique, close to the Tanzanian border. The new ruby deposit is expected to belong to the famous “Mozambique Belt” of East Africa, a complex geological region hosting many gem deposits producing rubies, sapphires, garnets, spinels, emeralds, tanzanite,... Many East African gemstones are then exported to Bangkok in Thailand where the author first saw some of them. Map: V.Pardieu/GIA Laboratory Bangkok, 2009

At the end of October 2008, Tanzanian broker Abdul M’sellem informed one of the authors (VP) that some new unknown material quite similar to the Winza stones but from another origin probably in the south of Tanzania started to be available in the Mpwapwa gem market, located near the Winza mining area in Tanzania. M’sellem reported that some Tanzanian gem dealers recently started to travel to Songea and Namtumbo to get these stones. After further enquiries, at the end of November, A. M’sellem was able to locate the new deposit in Mozambique near Lichinga, the capital of the Niassa province in the north of Mozambique in an area bordering the famous Niassa National Park.

As the ruby supply from Winza has reportedly become scarce, the new material was welcomed by Thai and Sri Lankan gem dealers that had buying offices in Mpwapwa. Within a few weeks VP was informed that many Winza miners moved to the new deposit while several important buyers moved their office from Mpwapwa to Songea in order to buy the new material but also more traditional Songea and Tunduru gems.

In December 2008 VP (who is *Supervisor of Field Gemology* at GIA Laboratory, Bangkok) visited the Chanthaburi and Bangkok gem markets to find and study the new rubies reported to him by A.M’sellem from Tanzania. Rapidly several ruby parcels of probable

Mozambique origin could be studied in market conditions and 10 unheated rubies reported as “Mozambique rubies” were taken to the GIA laboratory Bangkok for examination. The stones were provided by Wilarwan Thongtham from A&W Gems Company (www.winzaruby.com) in Chanthaburi, a company VP met in April 2008 in Tanzania while visiting the Winza ruby deposit. The current report is of a preliminary study on these rubies collected in the Thai market. These results will of course need to be confirmed by the study of samples collected on site, at the source, in the future. The GIA Laboratory Bangkok is currently preparing an expedition to the new Niassa mining area in Mozambique and other sources of interest in East Africa, in order to collect reference specimens.

On March 05, 2009, an article on Internet <http://allafrica.com/stories/200903050910.html> brought an official confirmation that ruby mining became important recently in the Niassa region of Mozambique: It reported (March 05th 2009) that illegal ruby mining in Niassa province was on the agenda at a meeting in Maputo organized by the *Mozambique Ministries of Mineral Resources and of the Interior* on "*Implementation of Mining Legislation and its Main Constraints*". It was also reported that the Mozambique government has sent a team from the *National Directorate of Geology* to undertake a survey at M'sawize to establish the size of the ruby deposit and that some stones had been seized from illegal miners and traders.

As the new mining area is located in the Niassa region, we decided to use in the present report the short-form “*Niassa ruby*” to describe these gems also commonly called in the trade “Mozambique ruby”. The fact is that Mozambique, as other in countries of the gem rich Mozambique belt, probably host several ruby deposits and thus the use of “Mozambique ruby” might be confusing in the future, on the other hand it is also interesting to associate a beautiful gem with the famous Niassa National Park using the name “Niassa ruby”.

Availability of Niassa rubies in Thailand gem markets

Rubies reported from the Niassa region in Mozambique are available in Bangkok and Chanthaburi as unheated stones, but also either as flux heated or lead glass filled material. Unlike the Winza stones it seems that the low quality Niassa material is suitable for heat treatment either using the flux or lead glass technologies depending on the quality of the rough. In both cases the results look promising as the treated stones seen by VP in the Thailand gem markets look attractive. Faceted unheated stones from 0.5 to about 3 carats and heated rubies up to 15 carats were seen in the market. Glass filled stones up to 20 carats were also available. Larger stones heated or not up to 50 carats were reported but the authors had no chance to study them. The fact that low quality material can be turned into attractive stones using Thai treatment technology (flux or lead glass) is something which can be seen as promising for the future of the deposit as it means that miners will find markets not only for the small percentage of high quality material, but also for the rest of their production thus miners might get more regular revenue and mining activity may

remain for a longer period. The conditions will then be present for exceptional stones to be found from time to time.

The study of rough samples in the market was interesting. The rough reported from Niassa was composed mainly of fractured crystals with rare crystal faces visible, most of the stones were heavily fractured, and no stones were presenting the water-worn or dissolved aspect respectively typical of alluvial and basalt related type deposits. A Thai dealer reported to VP that the new deposit in fact consists of several different areas and that the deposit is not really new; he said that it was known for many years but it seems that the recent interest for Winza rubies could be the reason for the “rediscovery” of these rubies from the Niassa region. At first glance, the stones look quite similar to the Winza material.



Figure 3: Lead glass filled rubies reported from Mozambique (Niassa) origin seen in Bangkok market, the stones range from 7 to 15 carats. Stones courtesy: Mahiton Thondisuk, Photo: V.Pardieu

Gemological description of the Niassa ruby material:

Gemological studies on the 10 unheated rubies provided by A&W Gems Company were performed at the GIA Laboratory, Bangkok by the authors. The unheated nature of the stones was confirmed by microscopic examination and spectroscopy.

The material used for the study was from pink to red and dark red and were representative of the Niassa rubies seen in the Thai market. They are often dark in tone but some stones were a very attractive bright red and clean. Compared to the Winza rubies (which are sometimes mixed with Niassa rubies) Niassa rubies are often less transparent; probably due to their silk inclusions. Blue color zoning, a common feature in Winza material, was not noticed in the current Niassa samples.

Generally speaking, the visual appearance of Niassa rubies is reminiscent of Thai-Cambodian gems and of other iron rich rubies from East Africa; like those from Winza and Uмба in Tanzania, from Baringo and Simba in Kenya, and from Madagascar and Malawi.

Thus rubies from the Niassa area can be easily be separated from the iron poor marble type ruby deposits from East Africa like those of the Tsavo area in Kenya or the Mahenge and Matombo areas of the Morogoro province of Tanzania and from the other marble type rubies resulting from the Himalayan Orogeny like those from Burma, Vietnam, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal.

Chemistry

The chemistry of the rubies from the Niassa area was analyzed using EDXRF (Energy Dispersive X-ray fluorescence). The instrument employed was the Quant'x by Thermo Electron, using fundamental parameters (Theoretical) and in-corundum elemental standards; only Ti, V, Cr, Fe, and Ga were analyzed.

The quantitative data obtained provides some insight on their source type and helps regarding the origin determination of these Niassa rubies. Their chemistry is characterized by high levels of iron and low levels of Ga, Ti and V; quite similar to what is established for rubies from Winza in Tanzania .

Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 set out the determined Ti, V, Cr, Fe and Ga concentrations for three reportedly Niassa rubies of slightly differing colors from pink to pinkish red and bright red.

Table 1: Pink Niassa ruby, 2.326cts

Units	Ti	V	Cr	Fe	Ga
oxide wt %	0.07	bdl*	0.125	0.336	0.005
elemental ppmw	41	bdl*	855	2618	38
elemental ppma	17	bdl*	335	955	11

* bdl-below detection limit



Table 2: Dark pinkish red Niassa ruby, 2.28cts

units	Ti	V	Cr	Fe	Ga
oxide wt %	0.0077	0.000	0.371	0.282	0.004
elemental ppmw	46	0.0	2540	2191	29
elemental ppma	19	0.0	996	800	8

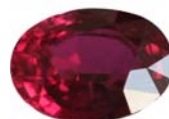


Table 3: Bright red Niassa ruby, 0.956cts

Units	Ti	V	Cr	Fe	Ga
oxide wt %	0.009	0.000	0.484	0.296	0.004
elemental ppmw	54	0.0	3314	2304	30
elemental ppma	23	0.0	1299	841	8



UV Fluorescence

The 10 rubies were observed under both short wave and long wave ultra violet light using a UVP, UVLS-28 EL series, 8 watt, UV lamp with both 365 and 254nm radiation. Their reaction was found to be similar to known iron rich rubies from other known deposits like Thailand/Cambodia, Madagascar, Malawi, Kenya and Tanzania (see Table 4).

Table 4: Long-wave and short-wave ultraviolet fluorescence

SWUV (253nm)	Inert to weak red to orangy-red
LWUV (365nm)	Weak to moderate red to orangy-red

UV-Vis-NIR Spectrometry

The UV-Vis-NIR spectra were collected on the 10 samples studied at GIA laboratory, Bangkok using a Perkin Elmer Lambda 950 UV/Vis Spectrometer and its appropriate accessories. The spectra are dominated by Chromium and Iron absorptions (Figure 4) with Cr³⁺ absorption bands around 405–410nm, 465/480 nm and 560 nm. The absorptions at 468, 475 and 476 are known as the "B" lines (Emmett, 2009). They result from absorption from the ground state of Cr³⁺ to the 2T_{2g} level that is split into three components by the spin orbit interaction and the trigonal field (Figure 5).

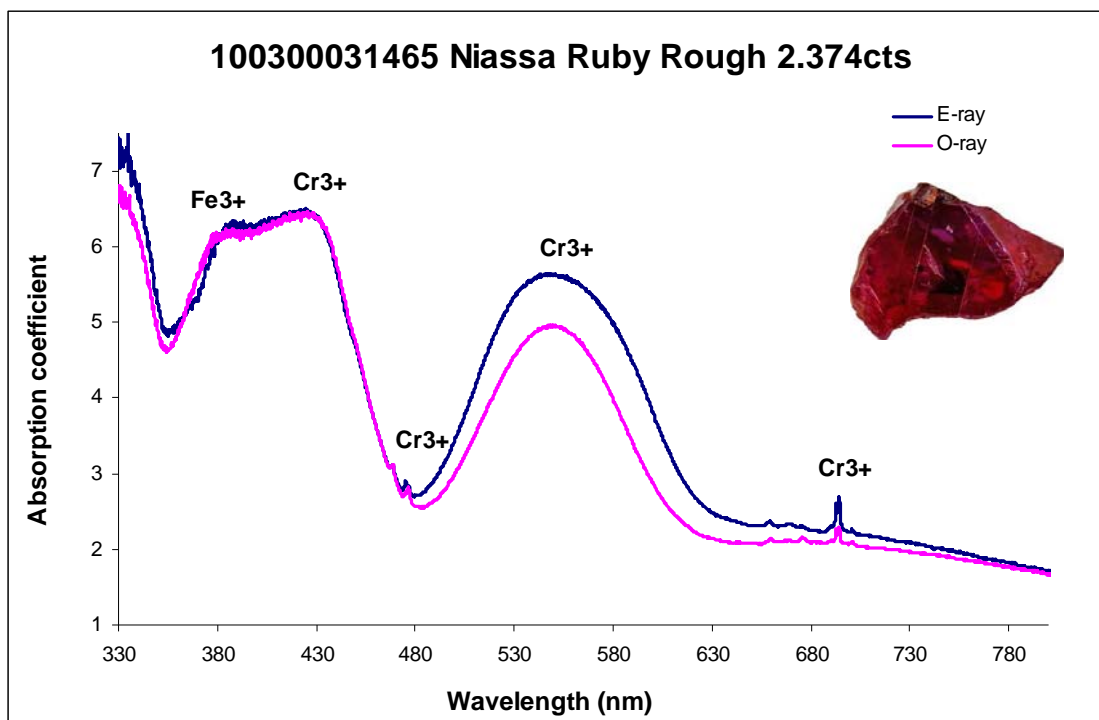


Figure 4: A typical UV-Vis spectrum of rough ruby from Niassa, Mozambique.

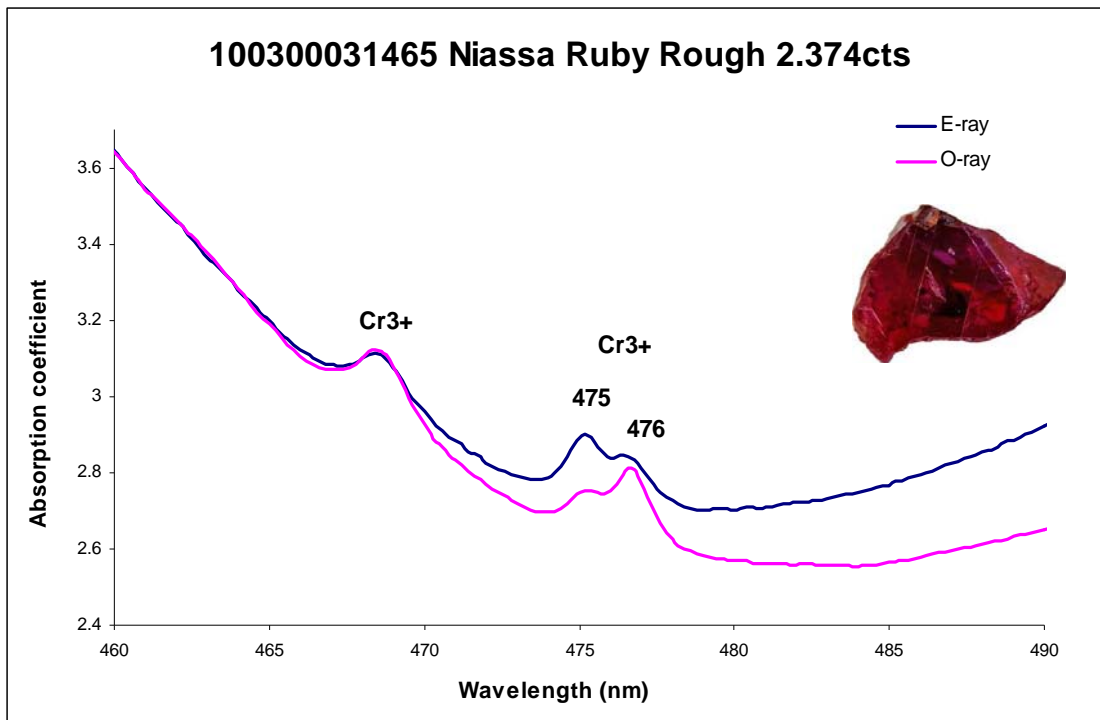


Figure 5: UV-Vis: Details on the Cr³⁺ related peaks around 475-476nm showing some good dichroism.

The absorption peak around 388nm is related to the absorption of single Fe³⁺ ions. In addition, the spectra generally displayed a strong “background absorption” starting around 600 nm and increasing toward the UV edge as it was also observed for the Winza material (Schwarz D., 2008). The Cr “doublet” at 694 nm was visible in all spectra.

Infrared spectroscopy

Infrared spectra were collected using a Thermo Nicolet 6700 FTIR¹ and appropriate accessories.

In most of the unheated Niassa rubies we studied two large absorption bands around 3081cm⁻¹ and 3312cm⁻¹ were present (Figure 6). These may be attributed to the boehmite present within the intersecting tubes associated with twinning in the Niassa rubies examined. The presence of such a boehmite related IR spectrum is a good indication that the stone has not been heated. However, in clean material only a small peak at 3309cm⁻¹ was recorded (Figure 7).

¹ FTIR: Fourier Transformed Infra-red spectrometry

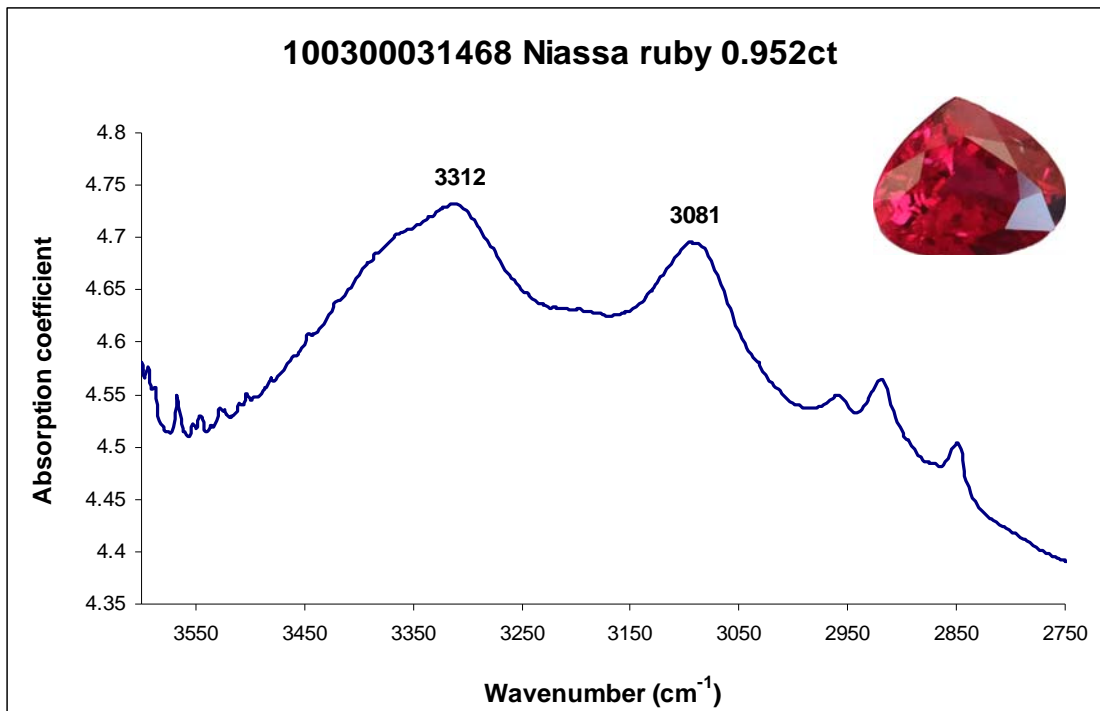


Figure 6: FTIR spectrum of a Niassa ruby with Boehmite filled intersection tubes associated with twinning type inclusions.

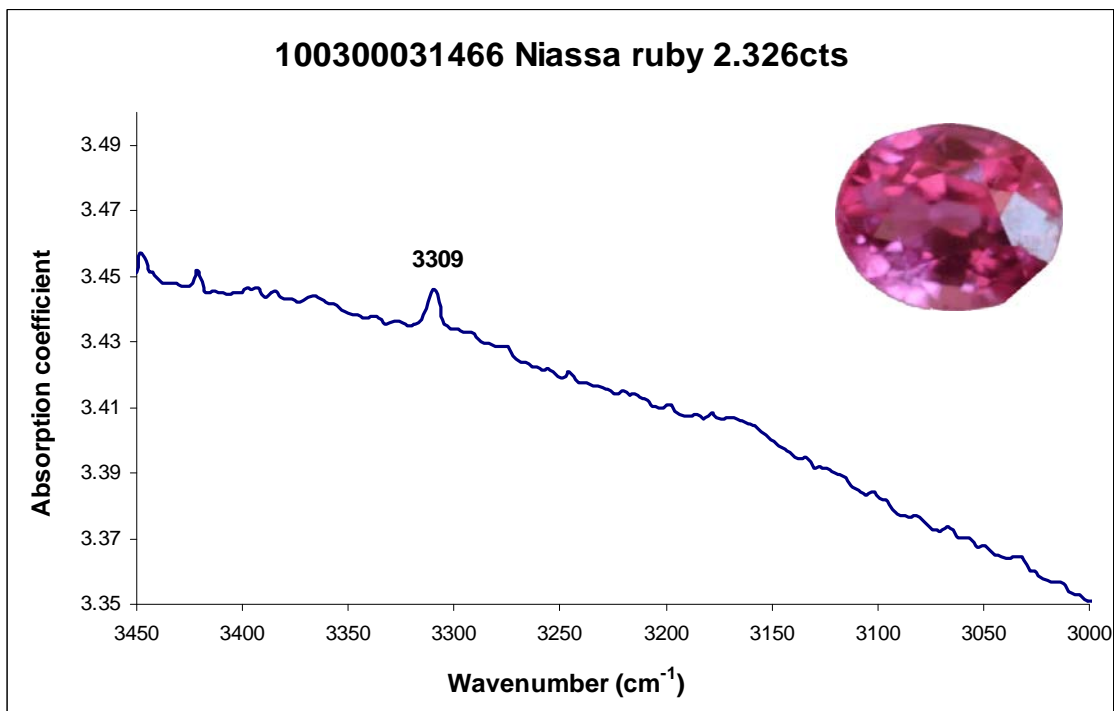


Figure 7: Details on FTIR spectrum of a 2.326 cts unheated pinkish Niassa ruby.

It is interesting to note that in one bright red stone with a peak at 3160cm^{-1} , commonly seen in unheated Winza material, was found (Schwarz, 2008). The stone (see Figure 1) had no visible inclusions and its chemistry fell within the Winza ruby range. As both Winza and Niassa rubies are purchased in the same trading centers in Tanzania and then sorted and faceted in Thailand, the presence of a Winza ruby in a parcel reported to originate from the

Niassa region in Mozambique should not be surprising. The stone owner: Wilarwan Thongtham, from A&W Gems Company, confirmed that in the Tanzanian trading centers the gems were purchased by her father from many miners/brokers coming from different areas and then commonly sorted by appearance and type more than based on their actual origin. Thus, she was not surprised when VP reported to her that GIA gemologists suspected that one of the stones supplied to the lab was probably from Winza and not from Niassa.

This illustrates the difficulty gemological labs face when collecting specimen to study from gem markets: It is not without risks and in fact a visit to the mining area is still the best solution to build a reliable reference collection.

Microscopic examination

Microscopic examination was performed in Chanthaburi and Bangkok markets using a 10x GIA instruments dark field loupe and at GIA laboratory Bangkok using various GIA Gemolite microscopes at between 10 and 65x magnifications. The inclusion photos presented in this study were done using a Nikon Coolpix 4500 digital camera adapted on the GIA Gemolite microscope.

The first global characteristic which can be reported so far for Niassa rubies are that the stones looks very different from the Asia and African iron poor marble related rubies and quite different from the traditional iron rich basalt related rubies like those from Thailand, Cambodia and Kenya, but Niassa rubies share some similarities with rubies of metamorphic origin from other known East African deposits like Winza and Uмба in Tanzania and Chimwadzulu in Malawi.

The stones presented in the Thai market as “Mozambique rubies’ and which probably origin from the Niassa region present an even color distribution, silk and unhealed fissures are very common, but so far no star rubies from Niassa were seen or studied by the authors. The silk observed in Niassa rubies is interesting (see Figure 8, Figure 9 and Figure 10) as it is different from the silk seen in marble type rubies from Asia or African deposits, and quite similar to what can be seen in some other iron rich rubies: The needles orientated in a 60/120 degrees pattern usually look incomplete, broad, long or short, commonly looking like well formed elongated weakly iridescent hexagonal platelets reminiscent of the thin films present in some basalt related rubies.

The numerous unhealed fissures were usually clean and the classic iron stain seen in many gems from alluvial type deposits was not observed, twinning (see Figure 18) was very commonly found, usually associated with intersection tubules filled with boehmite. Crystal inclusions were very rare and while present in two samples studied we were not able to identify them using Raman spectroscopy (see Figure 17, Figure 11). Secondary healed fissures (see Figure 13, Figure 14) were also present in some samples associated in some case with tabular type negative crystals in planes. The secondary healed fissures were mostly perpendicular to the c axis reminiscent of the rosette like structures seen in rubies

from Tajikistan or in sapphires from Kashmir. It was interesting to see negative crystals (see Figure 16, Figure 17) containing a multiphase probably polycrystalline substance.

As microscopic examination seems then be a useful resource to separate Niassa rubies from iron rich rubies from other deposits like Winza. A photo gallery (Figure 8 to Figure 19) concludes this initial description of Niassa rubies, *further and more comprehensive data will be published once verifiable material from this locality is obtained and examined.*

Unheated Niassa Rubies Inclusion Photo Gallery:

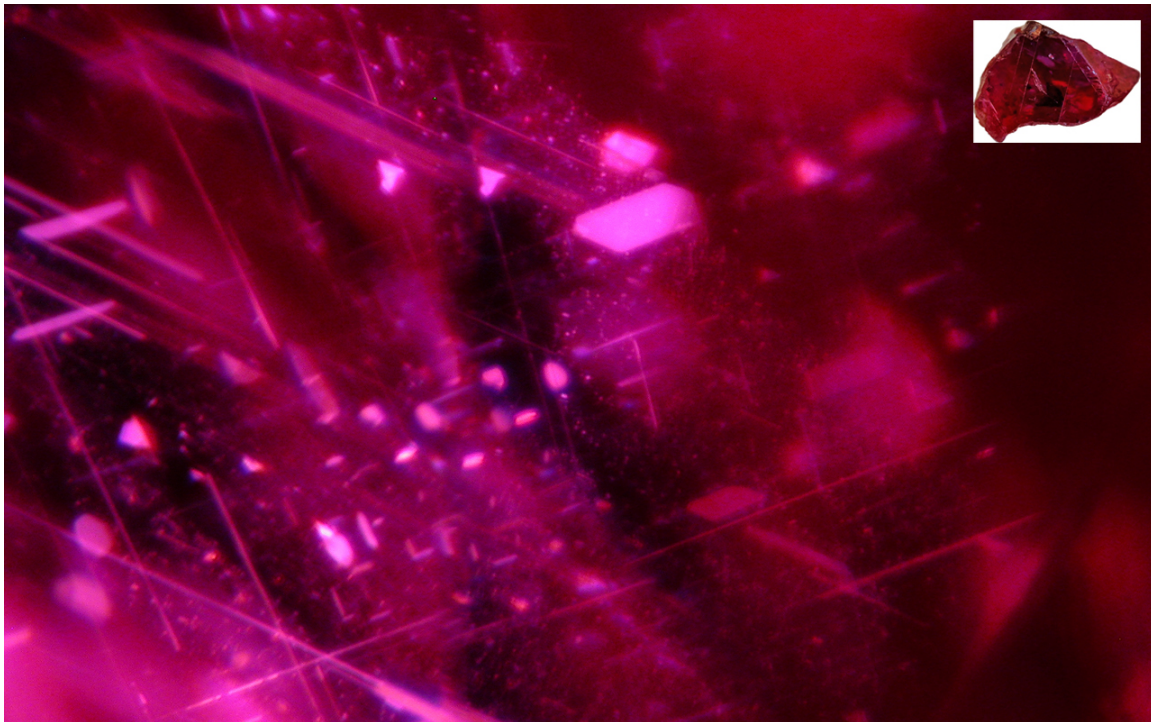


Figure 8: Silk in Unheated 2.374cts Niassa ruby (Dark field illumination, 64x). Photo: V. Pardieu



Figure 9, 2009: Silk in 1.054cts Niassa unheated ruby associated with unhealed fissures partially filled with dry foreign substance, probably of natural origin (Dark field illumination, 40x) Photo: V. Pardieu



Figure 10: Silk in unheated 2.326cts Niassa ruby: It is clearly composed of elongated or short broad hexagonal like platelets and of long or short needles (Dark field illumination, 50x) Photo: V. Pardieu

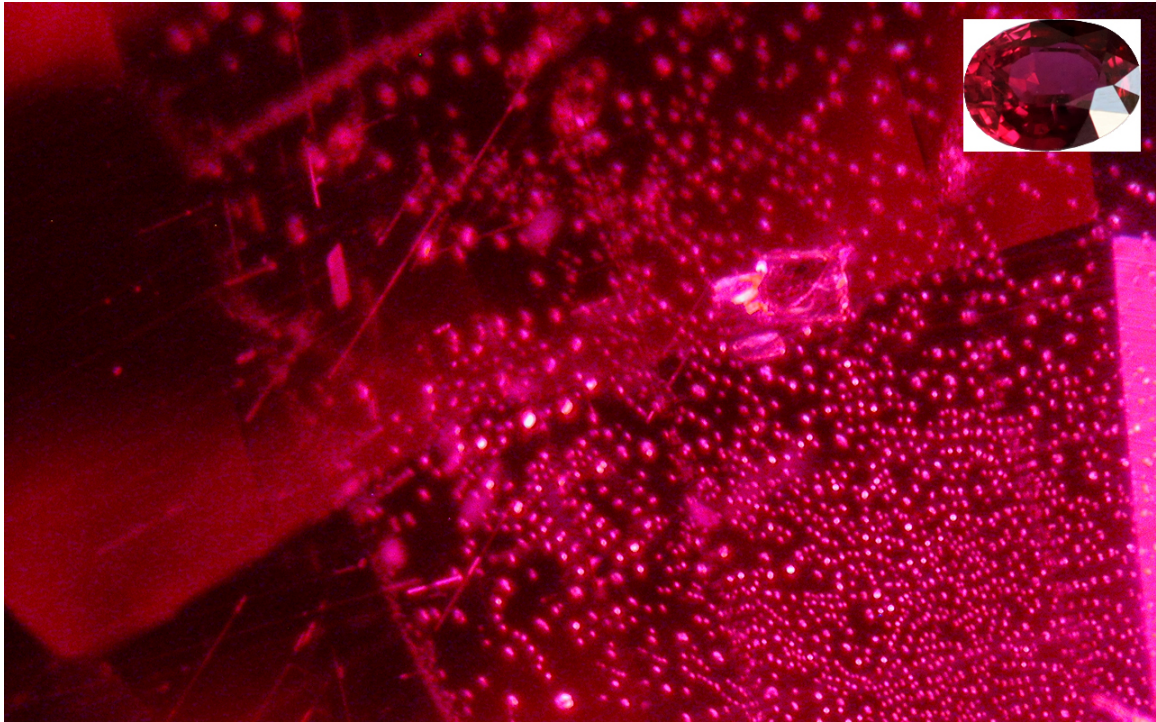


Figure 11: Two colorless, transparent, euhedral crystals of unknown nature associated with silk and a healed fissure in a 2.280cts Niassa unheated ruby. (Dark field illumination, 30x) *Photo: V. Pardieu*

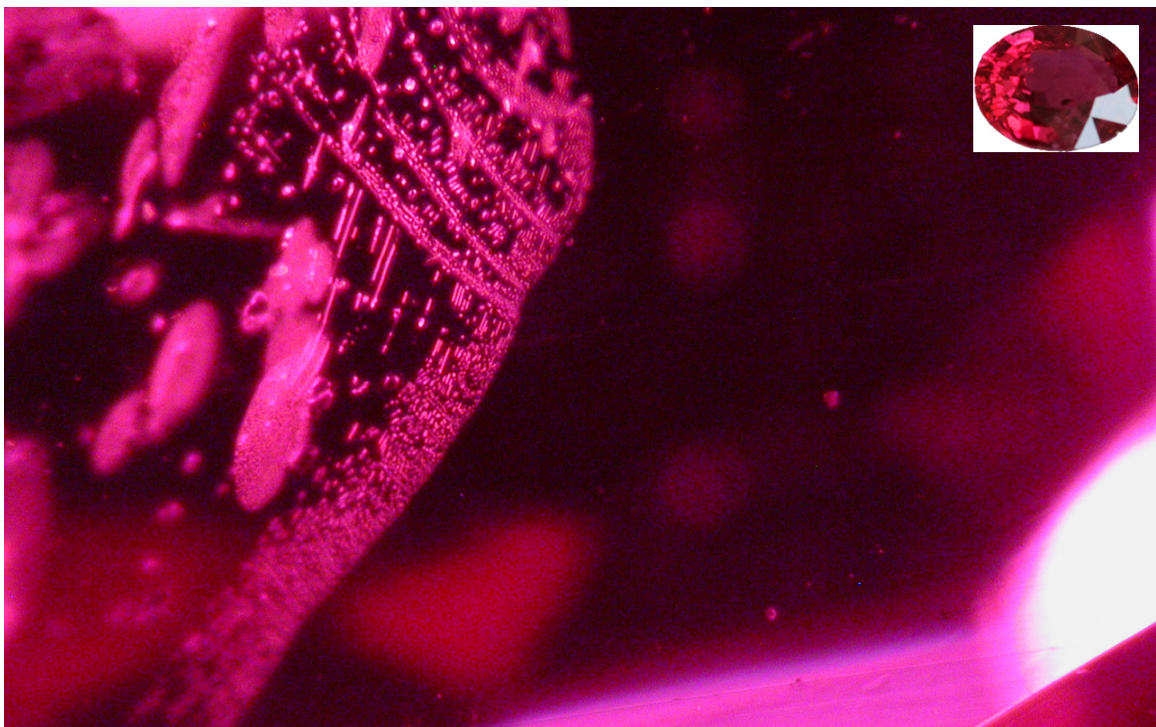


Figure 12: Healed fissure in 1.510cts unheated Niassa ruby seen under dark field illumination (30x), note the negative crystals associated with secondary healed fissures on the left. *Photo: V. Pardieu*



Figure 13: The same stone in the same position but this time using fiber optics illumination (30x): a galaxy of particles and needles, orientated perpendicular to the c axis, is now clearly visible. *Photo: V. Pardieu*



Figure 14, 2009: Plane of negative crystals associated with secondary healed fissures in a 1.510cts Niassa unheated ruby. (Dark field illumination, 30x) *Photo: V. Pardieu*

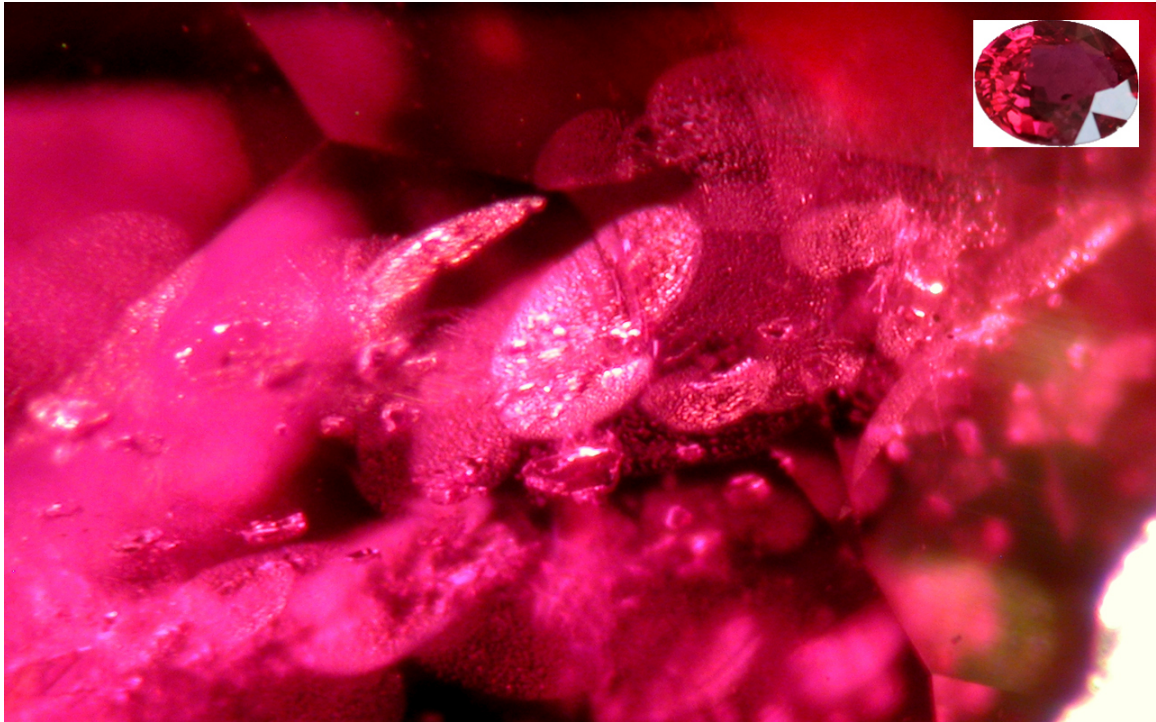


Figure 15: Negative crystals associated with healed fissures orientated more or less perpendicular to the C axis (Dark field illumination, 30x) in 1.510cts unheated Niassa ruby. *Photo: V. Pardieu*

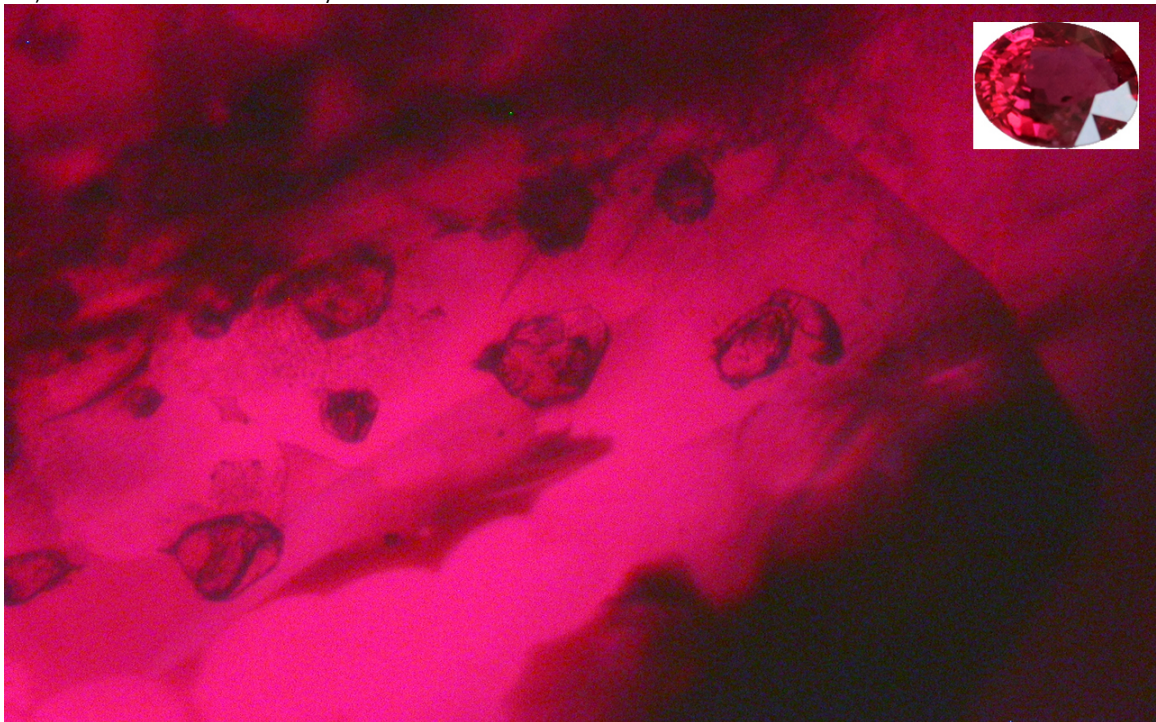


Figure 16: Negative crystals in unheated 1.510cts Niassa rubies seen under bright field illumination (64x) *Photo: V. Pardieu*

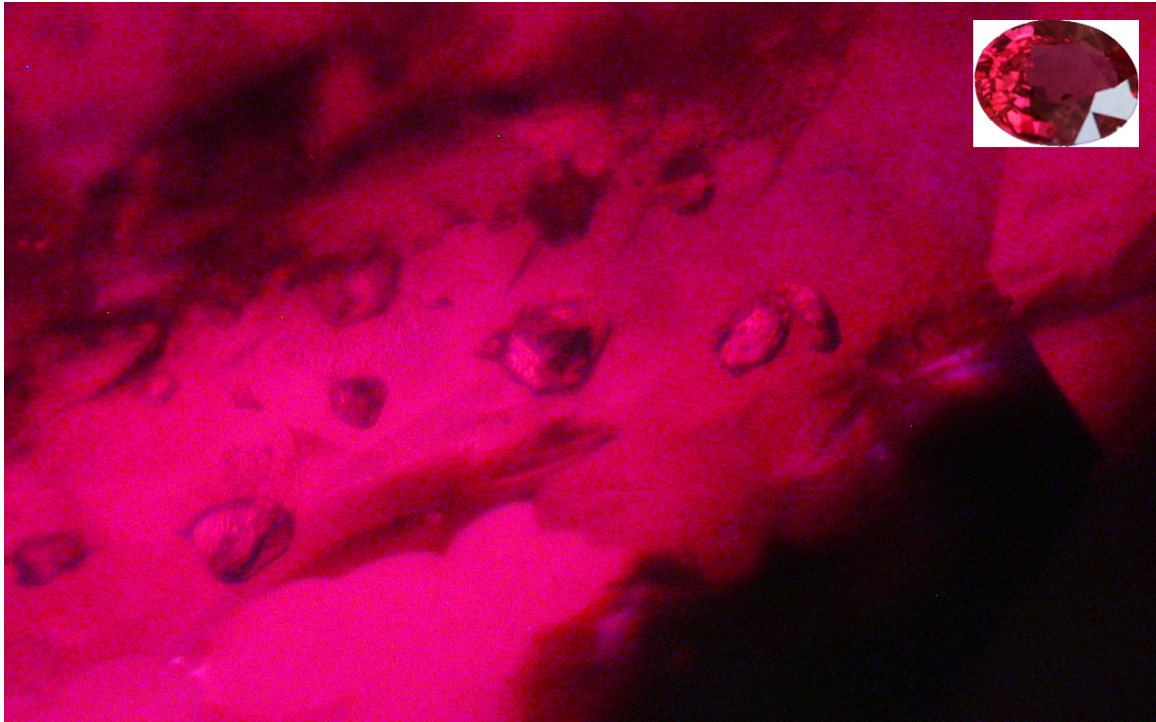


Figure 17: The same stones as in the previous photo but seen using cross polars (64x). The negative crystals appear then filled with a polycrystalline substance. *Photo: V. Pardieu*

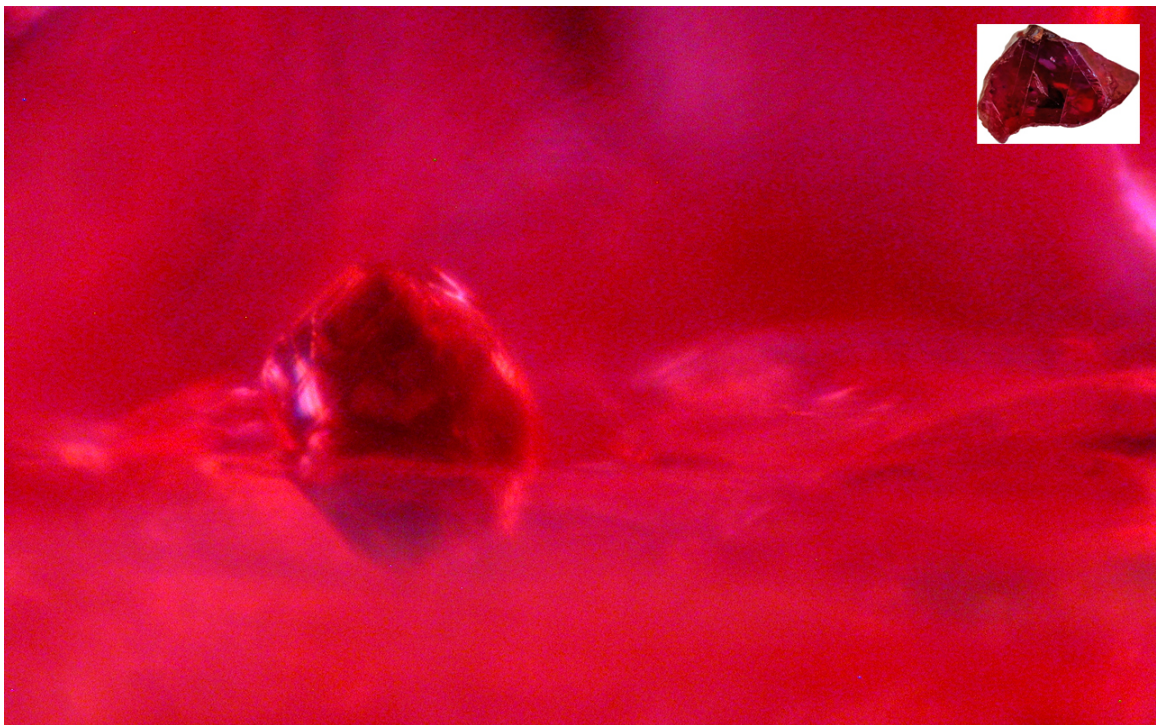


Figure 18: A Black opaque rounded crystal inclusion in an unheated 2.374cts Niassa ruby (Dark field illumination, 64x). *Photo: V. Pardieu*

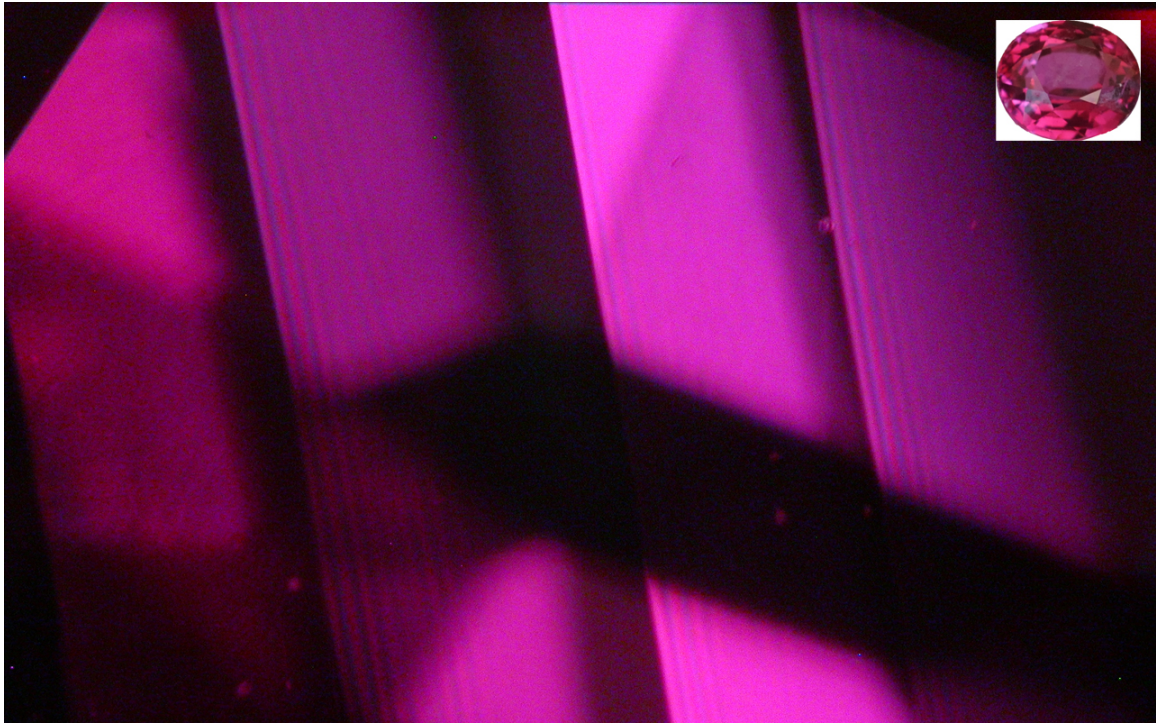


Figure 19: Twinning seen in a 0.989cts Niassa ruby (Cross polars illumination, 40x): *Photo: V. Pardieu*

Annex A

An update on the ruby and sapphire mining in Northern Mozambique received from the current expedition to the area lead by Vincent Pardieu dated Sept 12, 2009

Rubies are known in Mozambique for many years (Koivula, 1991) but very little information has been published about them with the production being small and with most of the stones produced being of cabochon quality. Nevertheless recently, the gem markets in Bangkok and other places started to see an increase in rubies coming from Mozambique. Most of the stones seen were heavily fractured and mainly used as base material for the lead glass treatment but some stones seen at the GIA Laboratories in Bangkok, New York and Carlsbad were fine enough to be faceted and used in jewelry without any treatment. After some enquiries it became obvious that there were several sources and a GIA Field Expedition to the different ruby mining areas in Northern Mozambique is currently ongoing.

Rubies and sapphires in Northern Mozambique have been mined in the recent years from 4 different deposits, 3 of them located in the Niassa province and one in the Cabo Delgado province:

Niassa (Ruombeze) deposit

The oldest Northern Mozambique ruby deposit is the Niassa (Ruombeze) deposit. The deposit is located between Marrupa and Mecula in the Niassa province. The deposit was reported by local people to have been discovered more than 20 years ago and is producing dark red (appears orangy or brownish) cabochon grade material sometimes suitable for lead glass treatment (Figure 20). Local people also reported that the deposit never produced a large volume as it is very remote: *After leaving the Marrupa – Mecula road, a 60 km drive on bush tracks only suitable for motorbikes is necessary to reach the deposit.* Nevertheless, the expedition was also informed that production in Ruombeze increased after 2006 in line with the period the material entered the market in Bangkok and possibly with to the arrival and the trading of the lead glass treatments.

Rubies were reported to be collected there in deep holes sometimes up to 30 meters deep. The expedition had no time to visit this deposit, which is possibly located in a private hunting block and mined mainly by illegal miners. Nevertheless, we could study some samples in Lichinga from some licensed gem dealers and at the Lichinga mining office. These gem dealers usually foreigners from West or East Africa will typically take the stones to Songea (Tanzania), Bangkok (Thailand) or Hong Kong (China). Note: Most of the parcels we saw in Lichinga were in fact a mix between stones from Ruombeze and M'sawize. A microscopic examination of the samples using a GIA dark field loupe enabled members of the expedition to see that the material had only a few mineral inclusions (usually colorless

zircon like crystals). The most common inclusions are twinning planes and their associated intersection tubes. Healed fissures are also common but the material is usually heavily fractured with many open fissures filled with what is possibly limonite (which may explain the orangy or brownish appearance of the crystals).



Figure 20: Rubies from Niassa (Ruombeze deposit) Photo: JB Senoble, 2009

Niassa (M'sawize) deposit

The Niassa (M'sawize) deposit is located in "L2 hunting block" about 43km east of M'sawize village also in Niassa province. Reportedly, a local hunter who was trying to catch an animal, which was hiding underground, discovered the deposit in Sept 2008. While digging to catch the animal the hunter found a stone. He sold that stone to a Tanzanian trader who received a lot of money for it in Tanzania and came back to get more. Rapidly many people (possibly up to 3,000) from Mozambique and all over Africa (Tanzania, Kenya, Congo, Nigeria, Guinea, Mali, Senegal, Somalia, Burundi etc.) started mining there and trading in M'sawize and Lichinga.

This was not without creating problems with the people from the Niassa reserve. While trying to visit the area on September 9, 2009 the expedition was stopped by Park Rangers as a result of what seems to have been a communication problem between the people from the Mining Department who were taking the expedition to visit the ruby deposit and the Park Rangers. Though not able to visit the mining site, the expedition gained interesting information about the conflict between the illegal miners and the hunters. The local rangers reported that the arrival of the illegal miners in that area had created many problems including poaching and destruction of the natural environment. Some local Rangers also

reported that they had to send a force to deter the illegal miners a few months earlier. It seems that as a result most miners have left to go to the new ruby find near Montepuez (in Cabo Delgado province). Nevertheless, as people were still coming to the area a joint force between the “*Forca Guarda Fronteira*” policemen and the Niassa Reserve Rangers are working together to discourage all illegal miners. Currently it seems that all ruby mining has stopped in Niassa (M’sawize) because of this conflict.

Regarding the stones produced in this area (Figure 21); after checking some samples collected from different independent and trustable sources in Niassa province with field equipment it appears that this is where the stones studied in GIA Laboratory Bangkok in Feb 2009 (Figure 1) came from, i.e., iron rich rubies usually with a purplish secondary color.

Regarding the inclusions, the examination of the rough in the field using a 10x dark field loupe revealed few mineral inclusions but many twinning planes and their associated intersection tubes (Boehmite) and a few healed fissures. Some stones seem also to host some low-density rutile type needles or particles. Nevertheless, to confirm if this material is the same as the stones studied in Bangkok, it will be necessary to study the reference samples collected in the field at the GIA Laboratory in Bangkok after the expedition returns from the field.



Figure 21: Rubies from Niassa (M’sawize deposit). Photo: J.B. Senoble 2009

Niassa (Ngauma) deposit

The Niassa (Ngauma) blue sapphire mining area was reportedly discovered about one year ago southwest of Lichinga between Lione (an area known for many years for its aquamarine) and Itepela. It produces large dark blue sapphire crystals with many fissures and twinning (Figure 22).



Figure 22: Sapphires from Niassa (Ngauma deposit). Photo: J.B. Senoble 2009

Cabo Delgado (Montepuez) ruby deposit

The Cabo Delgado (Montepuez) ruby deposit is located near Namaunbiri village between Montepuez and Pemba in the province of Cabo Delgado. It was discovered in February 2009 and its production increased rapidly as many illegal miners chased by the Rangers from the M'sawize ruby mining area (see above) and by the police from the Mavuco tourmaline mines moved to this new area. As with the ruby deposit in M'sawize it is located in a private hunting block and rapidly the illegal miners were in conflict with the local hunting block rangers who called the police. A police operation was launched in July 2009 but as the expedition prepares to visit the deposit it seems that the local situation is still not completely under control.

Many stones from this area are available in Nampula. The overall average quality of the stones produced appears to be higher compared to those produced in M'sawize. Large faceting quality stones of up to 20 carats have been reported from the area. The

Montepuez material usually seems to be slightly purplish red to red but less pink than the M'sawize material. It visually appears to be iron rich (not yet analyzed). Most of the material looks to be slightly milky and needle inclusions are common.

Currently a field expedition lead by GIA Laboratory Bangkok's Supervisor of Field Gemology, Vincent Pardieu, is still underway and a visit to the Montepuez deposit is scheduled in the next few days. More information will be published upon Vincent's return from East Africa.

Acknowledgements

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