

Ruby – Forever in the Spotlight

By Ioannis Alexandris*

The name *ruby* comes from the Latin word *ruber*, which means *red*. To the ancients, ruby was known as the *king of gems*. In ancient Sanskrit, the word for ruby, *Ratnaraj*, translates to *King of Precious Stones*.

For thousands of years, ruby was an important stone, considered the gem of love, energy, passion and power. It was also known as the stone of courage, and legend tells us that a person possessing a ruby can walk through life without fear of evil or misfortune.

In China, a Mandarin's rank was indicated by the color of the stone in his ruby ring. A red jewel stone meant he was a key figure among the greats. In the Middle Ages, rubies were viewed as a stone of prophecy. It was thought that the stone darkened when danger was near. Ivan the Terrible of Russia stated that rubies were good for the heart, brain and memory. A 13th-century prescription to cure liver problems called for powdered ruby. In the 15th and 16th centuries, rubies were thought to counteract poison. When rubbed on the skin, they were also thought to restore youth and vitality.

French jewelers called ruby the *gem of gems* or the *dearly loved stone*. It was the stone of choice for the British Crown Jewels, following a tradition dating back to the 13th century, with notable examples being the Stuart Coronation Ring (c. 1660) and the 19th-century Queen Consort's Ring.

Among the world's historical rubies are such remarkable gems as: a 400-carat Myanmar rough that yielded 70- and 45-carat gems; a rough of 304 carats found about 1890; the Chhatrapati Manik ruby; and the 43-carat Peace Ruby. Among some of the other notable rubies are: the 138.7-carat Rosser Reeves star ruby (red, Sri Lanka); the 50.3-carat (violet-red star ruby, Sri Lanka); the 33.8-carat (red star, Sri Lanka), all housed in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington DC; and a Burmese ruby crystal of 690 grams in the British Museum of Natural History in London.

Today, the ruby continues to grow and even expand its popularity. Antique jewels featuring important rubies demand high prices and contemporary gems are seeing prices break records year after year. On these pages is a selection of ruby jewels, both antique and modern, which demonstrate that ruby is still forever in the spotlight.



This parure is a beautiful replica of the magnificent jewels made with Burmese rubies and diamonds that were crafted from a parure executed in 1811 by the Maison Nitot for the Empress Marie-Louise (1791-1847). When Louis XVIII (1755-1824) took the throne, he had the imperial jewels unmounted to adapt them to current fashion. In 1816, Pierre-Nicolas Menière reset the rubies and diamonds of Marie-Louise for the Duchess of Angoulême in 1816 (1775-1851). The necklace sold once with its original pendant, but also with a drop-shaped pendant that was likely added later. The replica was crafted in garnet and white sapphire and is now in the Chaumet Museum.



The Regal Ruby, a 13.21-ct untreated Mogok ruby. (Photo: Christie's)

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In 1874, the *Ruby Lotus* parure was made for Grand Duchess Maria Alexandrovna by the jeweler Bolin. Tsar Alexander II and his first wife Tsarina Maria Alexandrovna gave it to their only surviving daughter the year she married Prince Alfred, the second son of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert.

The parure consisted of a tiara, necklace, and *devant de corsage*. The tiara has a lotus flower motif made of Burmese rubies, surrounded by diamonds.

The Grand Duchess left the parure to her daughter, Princess Alexandra of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha, who passed it to her daughter-in-law Princess Margarita of Greece (the oldest sister of the current Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Philip).

Princess Margarita wore the tiara to several royal weddings, including the wedding of Princess Sofia of Greece and Juan Carlos of Spain in 1962. When she passed away in 1981, the tiara was presumably left to her children who sold it at auction in 1989.

Right: Maria Alexandrovna wearing the necklace and deviant de corsage. (Photos: Christie's)



The *Queen Maria-José* ruby ring, an exceptional ruby and diamond ring, late 19th century. It is set with an oval ruby stated to weigh 8.48 carats, framed with cushion-shaped diamonds. It was a gift from Tammaro de Marinis (1878-1969), scholar and bibliophile, to Queen Maria-José of Italy.

Known as "The Queen of May" for her short reign throughout the month of May, Maria-José was the last Queen of Italy.

The ring first appeared at auction in February 1997 at Sotheby's St. Moritz, and later at Christie's Geneva in May, 1999. In Sotheby's in 2015, it was again put up for auction but did not meet the reserve price. (Photos: Sotheby's)

The *Patiño Ruby*, a 32.08-ct Mogok Burmese "pigeon blood ruby" and diamond ring by Chaumet. Previously owned by Luz Mila Patiño, the Countess du Boisrouvray and daughter of Bolivian tin-mine owner, Simón Patiño. Known originally as *The Patiño Ruby*, it was later renamed *The Hope Ruby*. It sold for US\$6.74 million to Amer Radwan of Dubai in 2012 at Christie's Geneva. (Photo: Christie's)



The *Jubilee Ruby* is a 15.99-ct, oval cut, untreated Burmese ruby. When the ruby was offered for sale at Christie's, New York in 2016, it was the finest example to be offered at auction in the United States for over 25 years and the sale price (US\$13.9 million) broke the record for the amount paid for a colored gemstone in the USA. (Photo: Christie's)



A buckle from the Iranian Crown Jewels set with 84 Burmese cabochon rubies, up to 11 cts in size, and diamonds.



When the 15.04-ct, cushion cut, untreated "pigeon blood" Burmese ruby and diamond ring, *Crimson Flame*, sold in December 2015 at Christie's for US\$18.3 million, it became the most expensive ruby per carat, beating the record set earlier in 2015. It has been said that the *Crimson Flame* is the finest ruby to ever be sold. (Photo: Christie's)

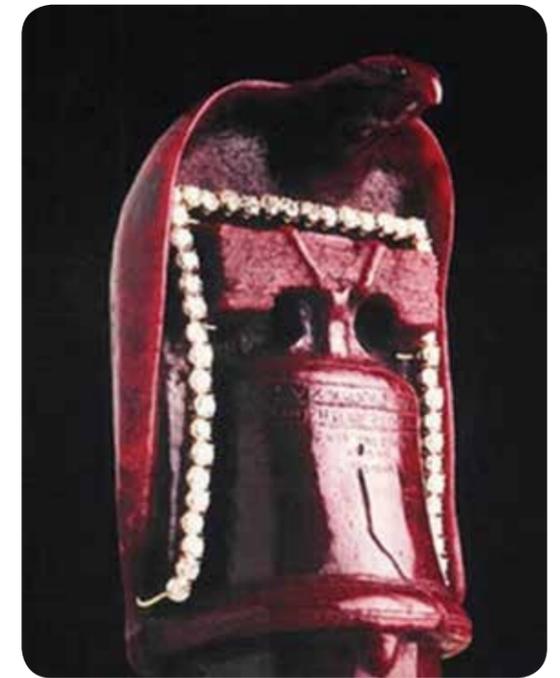
The 25.59-ct Burmese *Sunrise Ruby* holds the record of the most expensive ruby ever sold (US\$30.4 million in 2015) and, for just over six months, it also held the title of highest price per carat, before being beaten by the *Crimson Flame*. It is an untreated "pigeon blood" ruby. (Photo: Sotheby's)



Named after its owner, Edith Haggin DeLong, the 100.32-ct *DeLong Star Ruby* was uncovered in Burma in the 1930s. In 1937, the owner of the gemstone donated it to the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH). This gemstone was among the precious gems stolen during a notorious heist in 1964. Although some of the other gemstones stolen during this robbery were recovered, a massive ransom had to be paid to retrieve the *DeLong Star Ruby*. The amount was paid by a wealthy businessman from Florida.



The Graff Ruby, an 8.62-ct Mogok ruby and diamond ring by Graff, sold for US\$8.6 million at Sotheby's in 2014. (Photo: Sotheby's)



The world's largest ruby, the *Liberty Bell Ruby*, was discovered in the 1950s in eastern Africa. The 8,500-ct stone was sculpted to represent a miniature version of the Liberty Bell and is accented with 50 diamonds. The ruby was created in 1976 for Beverly Hills-based Kazanjian Brothers Jewelry Company by sculptor Alfonso de Vivanco for the United States Bicentennial.

This 29.62-ct untreated Mogok ruby and diamond ring, mounted by Cartier, sold at Sotheby's Hong Kong in 2014 for US\$7.4 million. (Photo: Sotheby's)



The Queen of Burma, a 23.66-ct Burmese ruby and diamond ring in platinum, 1937, signed Cartier London, sold for US\$6.1 million at Christie's Geneva in 2014. (Photo: Christie's)



A 30.20-ct Burmese ruby and diamond ring in platinum, sold for US\$4.3 million at Sotheby's Geneva in 2011. (Photo: Sotheby's)



This 10.10-ct Mogok ruby and diamond brooch by Cartier sold for US\$8.4 million (\$834,468 per carat) at Christie's Hong Kong in 2014. (Photo: Christie's)



A no-heat ruby from Afghanistan set with diamonds. (Photo: Gemolithos)

A 8.99-ct Mogok ruby and diamond ring in platinum and gold, by Harry Winston, sold for 3.9 million at Christie's Hong Kong in 2013. (Photo: Christie's)



The 1,370-ct *Neelanjali Ruby* holds the record of being the world's biggest ruby with a double star. The precious gemstone was worshiped for centuries by a family in India who owned it. It was believed to represent the lingam of the Hindu god Shiva.