

Is there a difference between "Russian" and "Brazilian" Alexandrite gemstones?

The mining of alexandrite in Russia lasted less than 100 years from the time it was discovered in 1833 to the early 1900's. It was George Kunz, the gemologist/gemstone buyer for Tiffany & Co that probably did the most to popularize this unique gemstone. Kunz was the supreme marketer of gems and minerals of his day. He was so captivated by alexandrite that he traveled all the way to Russia in search of it. As a result of his travels, almost half of the all the early Russian alexandrite jewelry was said to have been made by Tiffany & Co. The pieces are dated in the 19th century and feature alexandrites as center stones. They are considered to be collector items and are occasionally available at some of the high end jewelry auctions.

From a historical perspective, it is clear that Russian alexandrites are the most valuable of all the alexandrites if their origin can indeed be proved. In terms of quality however, Brazilian alexandrites may be better. With better clarity and a strong color change from rich blue green to strong purple red, the beautiful color change of the Brazilian alexandrites is highly prized and the stones are always in strong demand.

Experts in late 19th century antique jewelry acknowledge strong color resemblances between Brazilian and Russian alexandrites but the Russian stones are said to be slightly darker and less clean than their Brazilian cousins. There are many gemologists that can distinguish between natural and synthetic alexandrites but few have ever had the opportunity to study any Russian stones. Gemological data about Russian alexandrites is limited and few labs are experienced enough to actually confirm the Russian provenance of a stone.

With so few Russian alexandrites available anywhere, their quality is nearly impossible to compare with alexandrites from later discoveries. Some fine alexandrites have been found at every important alexandrite deposit and the qualities of the best stones, as evidenced by the high prices they have fetched must surely rival even the very best Russian stones.

See Alexandrite Tsarstone collectors guide, Is there a difference between Russian and Brazilian Alexandrite gemstones?, <http://www.alexandrite.net/viewpage.html?id=GG-0120> (The mining of alexandrite in Russia lasted less than 100 years from the time it was discovered in 1833 to the early 1900's. It was George Kunz, the gemologist/gemstone buyer for Tiffany & Co that probably did the most to popularize this unique gemstone. Kunz was the supreme marketer of gems and minerals of his day. He was so captivated by alexandrite that he traveled all the way to Russia in search of it. As a result of his travels, almost half of the all the early Russian alexandrite jewelry was said to have been made by Tiffany & Co. The pieces are dated in the 19th century and feature alexandrites as center stones. They are considered to be collector items and are occasionally available at some of the high end jewelry auctions.) (as of).