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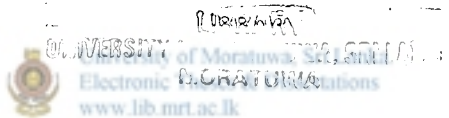
# MINERALOGICAL, TEXTURAL AND FLUID INCLUSION STUDIES OF CORUNDUM AND SPINEL IN SRI LANKA

A THESIS PRESENTED

BY

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**To my Parents,**

*Whose lifelong ambition was to educate their children*

*to reach the pinnacle of their desired path*



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## DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work reported in this project report/ thesis was exclusively carried out by me under the supervision of Prof. P.G.R. Dharmaratne. It describes the results of my own independent research except where due references have been made in the text. No part of this project report/ thesis has been submitted earlier or concurrently for the same or any other degree.

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Date : 26/02/2003



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## **ABSTRACT**

Corundum and spinel are the most prominent gem minerals found in Sri Lanka that account for more than half its gem exports. Further, Sri Lanka is a major supplier of top quality sapphire.

The main objective of this study was to (i) identify as many properties as possible of Sri Lankan corundum and spinel, not recorded so far and (ii) list the properties supposed to be unique to certain terrains such as alkali magmatic terrains in other countries, which were helpful to understand the origin of corundum and spinel of Sri Lanka.

For this study samples representative of the Precambrian metasedimentary terrain of Sri Lanka were collected. For detailed investigations, samples from only Balangoda and Kallota were chosen, because these areas were underlain by different gem-bearing source rocks.

Several features unique to alkali magmatic terrains such as plagioclase crust around the crystal, surface features resembling needle - like patterns, radial cracks around zircon inclusions and inclusions of zircon clusters were observed in relation to Sri Lankan corundum.

Chemical fingerprinting, a methodology adopted to determine the origin of corundum, was carried out for a limited number of selected samples of which, two were identified as magmatic.

Several microscopic and macroscopic reaction textures provided evidence for the confirmation of metamorphic growth. These reactions were also confirmed by EPMA analysis.

Fluid inclusions representing the Precambrian rocks of Sri Lanka were scrutinized using petrological microscope, Raman microprobe and thermal stage microscope.

During this study it was possible to confirm the theory that Sri Lankan fluid inclusions contained more or less pure CO<sub>2</sub>, and also the theory that the most common daughter minerals were graphite and diaspore. Necking too was observed and the process was similar to what was mostly observed in the corundum of Malawi.

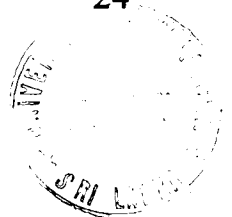
A classification of corundum on the basis of fluid inclusions was formulated based on the shape, size and composition of fluid inclusions. The classification led to four categories.

Sapphirine too was found as an inclusion, in contact with spinel, in corundum. Hence it was possible to calculate the sapphirine/spinel thermometry. The calculation revealed that the crystallization temperature of Sri Lankan corundum was 761 °C (Fe<sup>2+</sup> calculation).

Finally the features unique to corundum found in other alkali magmatic terrains of the world, which are now identified in Sri Lanka too are taken into consideration. These features were plagioclase crust around corundum, surface features of needle-like pattern, zircon clusters and radial cracks around zircon inclusions in corundum. Two instances found by chemical fingerprinting to be of magmatic nature indicated the origin as such, while the reaction textures associated with the corundum bearing rock indicated metamorphic origin. These findings proved that the corundum of Sri Lanka displayed a combination of both magmatic and metamorphic properties. Hence the origin of corundum could not be attributed to metamorphism alone with certainty.

## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Figure 1.1 :</b> Distribution of gem minerals in Sri Lanka (after Gunaratne and Dissanayake, 1995)	3
<b>Figure 1.2 :</b> Schematic cross section showing different modes of occurrences of gemstones (after Dahanayake, 1980)	4
<b>Figure 1.3 :</b> Distribution of gem deposits in Sri Lanka (Source: Dissanayake and Rupasinghe, 1993)	9
<b>Figure 1.4 :</b> A polyhedral model of the structure of corundum (after Hughes, 1990)	12
<b>Figure 1.5 :</b> Various crystal habits of corundum (after Themelis, 1992)	13
<b>Figure 1.6 :</b> Atomic structure of spinel (after William and William, 1988)	16
<b>Figure 1.7 :</b> Common habits of spinel (modified after Webster, 1994)	17
<b>Figure 1.8 :</b> Distribution of corundum and spinel deposits in the world	19
<b>Figure 2.1 :</b> Geological subdivision of Sri Lanka based on rock type and metamorphic grade (after Cooray, 1984)	23
<b>Figure 2.2 :</b> Geological subdivision of Sri Lanka (After Kröner et al., 1991 and Cooray, 1994)	24





<b>Figure 2.3 :</b>	Regional distribution of maximum temperatures and pressures within Highland Complex, using core composition of garnet, orthopyroxene and plagioclase (after Hartey, 1984, Newton & perkins, 1982)	29
<b>Figure 2.4 :</b>	Literature related to corundum deposits in Sri Lanka	35
<b>Figure 4.1 :</b>	Geological map of the Heramitiyagala area (Source- GSMB 1:100,000 map of Nuwara Eliya-Haputale)	41
<b>Figure 4.2 :</b>	Geological map of the Kaltota area (Source- GSMB 1:100,000 map of Nuwara Eliya-Haputale)	42
<b>Figure 4.3 :</b>	Highly weathered corundum-bearing granulitic gneiss	46
<b>Figure 4.4 :</b>	Fresh granulitic gneiss, embedded with K-feldspar coated corundum	46
<b>Figure 4.5 :</b>	Hypersthene mineral present in the corundum bearing granulitic gneiss	46
<b>Figure 4.6 :</b>	Comparison of the composition of four calc-silicate samples collected from Kaltota and Heramitiyagala areas	48
<b>Figure 4.7 :</b>	Gray coloured industrial quality corundum crystals embedded in rock. The composition of the rock somewhat resembles that of metasyenite	49


<b>Figure 4.8 :</b>	Corundum and spinel, which was confined to hexagonal shapes embedded in the calc-silicate rock from Kaltota area	50
<b>Figure 4.9 :</b>	Corundum, approaching the quality of geuda embedded within a soft micaceous rock	51
<b>Figure 4.10:</b>	Calc-silicate rocks containing corundum. Spinel is not found in these rock types	52
<b>Figure 4.11:</b>	Corundum bearing calc-silicate rock (type-4) doubly polished to facilitate the EPMA analysis. Spots to be analyzed are also indicated	53
<b>Figure 4.12:</b>	Element (Al) map of a section of the sample is illustrated. The lighter colours indicate the Al richer minerals while the darker portions indicate minerals deficient or completely lacking in Al	54
<b>Figure 4.13:</b>	Pure marble containing blue spinel	56
<b>Figure 4.14:</b>	Soft micaceous rock containing blue spinel	57
<b>Figure 4.15:</b>	Impure marble embedded with red spinel	57
<b>Figure 4.16:</b>	Fe and trace element variation of spinel vs locality	62
<b>Figure 5.1 :</b>	Scenario explaining the plagioclase covering of corundum in the ascending basalt, protecting the stone partly from corrosion (after Krzemnicki et al., 1996)	66

<b>Figure 5.2 :</b>	Scenario explaining the plagioclase shielding effect of corundum, where the corrosion of partly exposed section of the crystal reduced in to a shape similar to “dog’s tooth” ( after Coenraads, 1992)	66
<b>Figure 5.3 :</b>	Muscovite and magarite rims around corundum (source: Australian Gemmologist, Vol.21, 2001)	66
<b>Figure 5.4 :</b>	Green tourmaline growth as a crust around the corundum on a specimen found at Elehera	66
<b>Figure 5.5 :</b>	Schematic illustration of textures in Trapiche ruby (after, Sunagawa et al., 1999 and Schmetzer et al., 1996,1999)	67
<b>Figure 5.6 :</b>	Trigon marks on the surface of spinel, developed due to the effect of twining	69
<b>Figure 5.7 :</b>	Location map of the insitu corundum (granulitic gneiss) (Source: Survey Dept. 1:63,360 topographic map of Ratnapura)	71
<b>Figure 5.8 :</b>	Corundum bearing granulitic gneiss, along with its corundum wrapped around with K-feldspar rims	71
<b>Figure 5.9 :</b>	Translucent/opaque corundum crystals	71
<b>Figure 5.10:</b>	Corundum bearing calc-silicate rock	73
<b>Figure 5.11:</b>	Microphotograph illustrating the corundum, which is surrounded by re-crystallized plagioclase grains	73



<b>Figure 5.12:</b>	Microphotograph illustrating the corundum, which is partially surrounded by re-crystallized plagioclase grains in the process of forming phlogopite mica	74
<b>Figure 5.13:</b>	Schematic illustration of the plagioclase shielding effect on corundum	74
<b>Figure 5.14:</b>	Corundum crystals having a thin spinel crust	77
<b>Figure 5.15:</b>	Eroded corundum crystals having thick spinel rim	77
<b>Figure 5.16:</b>	Schematic illustration of the non-uniform enlargement of the spinel rim due to the reaction of corundum and phlogopite (after Francis and Dharmaratne, 2002)	78
<b>Figure 5.17:</b>	Comparison of spinel composition before and after the reaction (Observation-1)	82
<b>Figure 5.18:</b>	Schematic illustration of corundum/spinel, (corundum $\rightleftharpoons$ spinel) transformation described in observation-2 (after Francis and Dharmaratne, 2002)	85
<b>Figure 5.19:</b>	White coloured rim surrounding the corundum crystal	88
<b>Figure 5.20:</b>	Element distribution maps for the white coloured rim surrounding the corundum crystal shown in Figure 5.19	89




<b>Figure 5.21:</b>	Element distribution maps for the white coloured rim surrounding the corundum crystal (enlarged portion of Figure 5.20)	90
<b>Figure 5.22:</b>	Surface features of a needle-like pattern, developed due to the residue of former plagioclase coating	91
<b>Figure 5.23:</b>	Needle-like surface features radiating from one central point, sort of a duck's foot	91
<b>Figure 5.24:</b>	Microphotograph illustrating a zircon inclusion within the corundum with its affiliated radial cracks (source rock is granulitic gneiss)	92
<b>Figure 5.25:</b>	 Photograph of an EPMA specimen, illustrating a zircon inclusion within the corundum with its affiliated radial cracks (source rock is calc-silicate)	93
<b>Figure 5.26:</b>	Schematic illustration showing the effect of zircon inclusion with respect to the quality of the corundum crystal	93
<b>Figure 5.27:</b>	Zircon cluster with aspect ratio (1.4 to 2.3)	94
<b>Figure 5.28:</b>	Mole% MgO+FeO, Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> + Fe <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub> , SiO <sub>2</sub> chemical variation diagram, showing the composition of sapphirine with respect to the ideal composition of sapphirine (2:2:1). The composition is (7:9:3) and agrees with the other recorded compositions	97

(Kriegsman, 1991). This diagram is based on a diagram after Sutherland and Coenraads (1996).

<b>Figure 6.1 :</b>	Shapes of the observed fluid inclusions	105
<b>Figure 6.2 :</b>	Percentage of primary and secondary fluid inclusions out of the samples investigated	106
<b>Figure 6.3 :</b>	Percentage of primary types out of the primary fluid inclusions investigated	106
<b>Figure 6.4 :</b>	Fluid inclusions (primary type-1), shapes include circular square, oblongly square, angulate circle (Figure 6.4a) circular square, tabular tubes, angulate circle, amorphism (Figure 6.4b) tabular tubes (Figure 6.4c),	107
<b>Figure 6.5 :</b>	Fluid inclusions (primary type-2), shapes include polygon, circular square (Figure 6.5a), oblongly square, elongate square (Figure 6.5b), triangular shapes (polygon) (Figure 6.5c)	108
<b>Figure 6.6 :</b>	Fluid inclusions (primary type-3), shapes include hexagons with either solid inclusions or gas bubbles or both within the same void	109
<b>Figure 6.7 :</b>	Fluid inclusions (secondary type-1), shapes include oblongly square, polygon and amorphism	110

<b>Figure 6.8 :</b>	Classification of fluid inclusions of Sri Lankan corundum on the basis of morphology, size and composition	111
<b>Figure 6.9 :</b>	Photograph depicting all varieties of fluid inclusions including necking	113
<b>Figure 6.10:</b>	Two generation of fluid inclusions, in this instance both are primary inclusions	113
<b>Figure 6.11:</b>	Highly deformed fluid inclusion reported in the Balangoda region	113
<b>Figure 6.12:</b>	Highly deformed fluid inclusion, containing number of growth zones. Black solid inclusion present is graphite	113
<b>Figure 6.13:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum depicting sulphur and graphite peaks	118
<b>Figure 6.14:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum depicting diasporic peaks	119
<b>Figure 6.15:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum depicting sulphur peaks	120
<b>Figure 6.16:</b>	Frequency distribution histogram of homogenization temperatures	123

<b>Figure 6.17:</b>	Frequency distribution histogram of melting temperatures	123
<b>Figure 6.18:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum having only the CO <sub>2</sub> peaks (f-emc5a)	124
<b>Figure 6.19:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum having only the CO <sub>2</sub> peaks (f-rac31b)	124
<b>Figure 6.20:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum having only the CO <sub>2</sub> peaks (f-khc9a)	125
<b>Figure 6.21:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum having only the CO <sub>2</sub> peaks (f-rac14a)	125
	 <small>University of Moratuwa, Sri Lanka Electronic Theses &amp; Dissertations www.lib.mrt.ac.lk</small>	
<b>Figure 6.22:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum having only the CO <sub>2</sub> peaks (f-Kuc4a)	126
<b>Figure 6.23:</b>	Raman spectrogram of corundum having only the CO <sub>2</sub> peaks (f-rac27b)	126
<b>Figure 6.24:</b>	Fluid necking sequence (after Grubessi and Marcon, 1986)	128
<b>Figure 6.25:</b>	Necking down process, during this stage two inclusions connected by a tiny tube can be seen	129



- Figure 6.26:** Necking down process, during this stage fluid inclusion breaks. A hump-like feature can be observed in the fluid inclusions which are just broken 129
- Figure 6.27:** Final stages of necking down process, single inclusion can be seen surrounded by tiny fluid inclusions just like a galaxy in the sky 129
- Figure 6.28:** Schematic illustration of fluid inclusions in relation to the formation of corundum in Sri Lanka 132



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## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Pages</b>
<b>Table 4.1 :</b> Abbreviations for mineral names used in the text	44
<b>Table 4.2 :</b> Some mineral assemblages recorded from the study areas	44
<b>Table 4.3 :</b> Some oxide percentages of the calc-silicate rocks of the areas (four samples)	47
<b>Table 4.4 :</b> Spot analysis of the corundum-1 (Figure 4.12)	54
<b>Table 4.5 :</b> Spot analysis of the corundum-2 (Figure 4.12)	55
<b>Table 4.6 :</b> Spot analysis of the calcite (c1) (Figure 4.12)	55
<b>Table 4.7 :</b> Spot analysis of the Feldspar-1 (Figure 4.12)	55
<b>Table 4.8 :</b> Spot analysis of the Feldspar-2 (Figure 4.12)	56
<b>Table 4.9 :</b> Empirical element classification (after Sutherland et al., 1988)	58
<b>Table 4.10:</b> Quantitative EDXRF analyses of selected corundum samples	59
<b>Table 4.11:</b> Fe and trace element variation of similar spinel collected from different areas	61
<b>Table 5.1 :</b> Spot analysis of the plagioclase rim (Figure 5.11)	75



<b>Table 5.2 :</b> Spot analysis of the spinel rim (Observation-1, Figure 5.14)	80
<b>Table 5.3 :</b> Spot analysis of corundum (Observation-1, Figure 5.15)	81
<b>Table 5.4 :</b> Spot analysis of the spinel rim (Observation-1, Figure 5.15)	81
<b>Table 5.5 :</b> EPMA analysis of the included minerals (inclusions) (Observation 1, Figure 5.15)	82
<b>Table 5.6 :</b> Spot analysis of corundum (Observation-2, Figure 5.18a and 5.18b)	86
<b>Table 5.7 :</b> Spot analysis of spinel (Observation-2, Figure 5.18c and 5.18d)	86
<b>Table 5.8 :</b> Spot analysis of the rim-matrix (Figure 5.18a)	87
<b>Table 5.9 :</b> Spot analysis of sapphirine as an inclusion (Observation-1, Figure 5.15)	96
<b>Table 6.1 :</b> Fluid inclusion data of the corundum	115

## LIST OF APPENDICES

	<b>Pages</b>
<b>Appendix 1:</b> Raman spectrograms of corundum having only the CO <sub>2</sub> peaks	143
<b>Appendix 2:</b> Raman spectrogram of corundum depicting sulphur and diaspore peaks	144
<b>Appendix 3 :</b> Element distribution map illustrates the formation of spinel as a byproduct of the reaction between phlogopite mica and corundum. Red and yellow within the K map, indicate K rich areas, probably contain phlogopite	145



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

PPL	= Plane polarized light
CPL	= Cross polarized light
AAS	= Atomic absorption spectrophotometry
EPMA	= Electron probe micro analyzer
XRMF	= X-ray micro fluorescence
EDXRF	= Energy dispersive x-ray fluorescence
WDS	= Wavelength dispersive spectrometer
EDS	= Energy dispersive spectrometer
SEM	= Scanning electron microscope
NA	= Not analyzed
GSMB	= Geological Survey and Mines Bureau

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## CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
DECLARATION	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	II
ABSTRACT	IV
List of figures	VI
List of tables	XVI
List of appendices	XVIII
List of abbreviations	XIX
 <b>CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION</b>	
<b>1.1 Gem deposits of Sri Lanka</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1.1 Historical aspects	5
1.1.2 Present aspects	7
<b>1.2 Corundum</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>1.3 Spinel</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1.4 World occurrences</b>	<b>18</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	
<b>2.1 Introduction to the geology of Sri Lanka</b>	<b>20</b>
2.1.1 Structural and tectonic setting	25
2.1.2 Thermal and baric evaluation	26
<b>2.2 Previous work on corundum and spinel</b>	<b>30</b>
 <b>CHAPTER 3 - OBJECTIVES</b>	
<b>36</b>	
 <b>CHAPTER 4 - GEOLOGY AND GEOCHEMICAL STUDIES</b>	
<b>4.1 Geological setting of the corundum and spinel deposits</b>	<b>38</b>

4.1.1	Geology of the Kaltota and Heramitiyagala areas	38
4.1.2	Rock sampling	43
4.1.3	General lithology of the areas	43
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Description of corundum bearing rocks of these areas</b>	
4.2.1	Corundum bearing granulitic gneiss	45
4.2.2	Corundum bearing clac- silicate rock	47
4.2.3	Spinel-bearing rocks	56
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Chemical fingerprinting</b>	58
4.3.1	Results	60
<b>4.4</b>	<b>Chemical differences of spinel locality-wise</b>	61
<b>4.5</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	63

## **CHAPTER 5 - TEXTURAL STUDIES**



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<b>5.1</b>	<b>Introduction to reaction rims/textures and surface features of corundum</b>	
5.1.1	Introduction to reaction rims	65
5.1.2	Introduction to reaction textures	67
5.1.3	Introduction to surface features	68
5.1.4	Methodology of studying reaction rims/textures and surface features	69
<b>5.2</b>	<b>Reaction rims of corundum (Sri Lanka)</b>	
5.2.1	Reaction rims of corundum (granulitic gneiss)	70
5.2.2	Reaction rims of corundum (calc-silicate)	72
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Reaction textures of corundum (Sri Lanka)</b>	
5.3.1	1 <sup>st</sup> Observation	76
5.3.2	EPMA confirmation of Observation-1	79
5.3.3	2 <sup>nd</sup> Observation	83

5.3.4	XRMF study of rim matrix surrounding the corundum	87
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Surface features, radial cracks and zircon clusters of Sri Lankan corundum</b>	
5.4.1	Surface features on corundum (Sri Lanka)	91
5.4.2	Radial cracks	92
5.4.3	Zircon clusters as an inclusion in corundum	93
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Sapphirine/spinel thermometry</b>	95
<b>5.6</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	98
<b>CHAPTER 6 – FLUID INCLUSION STUDIES</b>		
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	101
6.1.1	Methodology	102
6.1.2	Classification of fluid inclusions	104
6.1.3	The classification of Sri Lankan corundum on the basis of fluid inclusions	106
6.1.4	Microscopic analysis of fluid inclusions	112
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Microscopic, Raman and thermometric methods</b>	114
6.2.1	Description of daughter minerals	117
6.2.2	Results	121
6.2.3	Necking of fluid inclusion	127
6.2.4	Fluid inclusions in relation to the formation of corundum	130
<b>6.3</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	133
<b>CHAPTER 7 - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS</b>		
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Appendix</b>	143
<b>7.2</b>	<b>References</b>	146