

# The Story of Macedonian Ruby

By Dean Skartov



Macedonian ruby and filigree jewellery



Cross with Macedonian ruby set in gold by Vlado Gava presented to Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 by a Macedonian delegation

Many countries have their national precious stone: Chinese jade, Australian opal, Czech garnet, Columbian emerald, Baltic amber. This is the story of the Macedonian ruby – the national precious stone of Macedonia!

The story started in the early 1990s when many young men had to leave Macedonia in order to avoid being drafted and sent against their will to the battlefields of former Yugoslavia. One of them was Deko, agricultural engineer and keyboard player who in the 1980s ruled rock'n'roll venues with his groups Badmingtons, Aleksandar Makedonski and Klerzo (<http://youtu.be/y8Jj7UftbZc> , <http://youtu.be/sYrqdSUPJkw> , and <http://youtu.be/btapEcLX98w>). He went to live with his aunt Tanja in Trieste in Italy.

Only a couple of months after finding himself in a new environment he met comm. Primo Rovis, a coffee magnate who at that time was starting his private collection of rare specimens of crystals and fossils from around the world. Having commenced his first part-time job with Primo Rovis, Deko never stopped wondering how little we know about the magic world of minerals and crystals. After almost 10 years in Italy Deko returned home in 2001 with a huge experience and the idea to set up a small

mineral exhibit which could develop it into a successful business.

Thus started the small DEKO shop near the Greek Liaison Office in Porta Bunjakovec. DEKO quickly became popular thanks to the manner in which it presented the minerals. Since that was the period when many were actively looking for new authentic Macedonian values, visitors would often ask if there were any minerals from Macedonia.

I thought that as Macedonia was so small it could not be on the par with Brazil, Russia or China but I was wrong. One day someone told me that such a specialized store must have Macedonian ruby! "How is that possible that there is a Macedonian ruby and I do not know about it?" I was asking myself. I would understand if it were some other stone, but ruby was one of the most sought after gems. Had there been a Macedonian ruby, it would have been already studied and promoted.

But it turned out that there had been no successful efforts to promote this stone.

So, I decided to equip a workshop to cut it! Every gemstone gets its full price on the market only if it is well cut. We invested a few years into research and our very first silver ring with Macedonian ruby exhibited at the artisan bazaar in

Hotel Arka (organized by the Macedonian Artisan Trade Association) in the spring of 2006 got the Best New Product Prize. From then on the knowledge about this new unique Macedonian product slowly began to spread among our people as well as foreign visitors.

Macedonian ruby has a characteristic raspberry pink colour, and it is not transparent. Usually on the world market inexpensive rubies are violet red and almost all of them come from Asia and Africa. In that context Macedonian ruby occupies a unique place as a European mineral. It is especially important since we know that the majority of European gemstone mines have long been exhausted. Macedonian ruby is exhibited, among other places, in the Natural History Museum in London. Now thanks to all the efforts to muster our creative resources to procure new artisan products from Macedonia this gemstone has become a kind of a joker of our artisan economy!

### UNIQUE SOUVENIR AND KEEPSAKE

Imagine a tourist who had already visited many countries and many jewellery shops. When such a person comes to Macedonia and sees the beautiful pink coloured local Macedonian ruby, he or she cannot resist buying at least a small piece for a few bucks. Accounting for over 80% of DEKO's income, the sales of ruby give a big impetus to our business and educational activities. The ruby brings together many creative individuals and provides work for several otherwise unemployed persons. The young designer Ivana Sojanovska has been creating the most popular filigree designs for setting the ruby. The idea of the now famous Macedonian ruby filigree star originally came from art historian Veneta Iljovska.

Since last year, when the President of the Republic of Macedonia Dr. Gjogje Ivanov included it in the catalogue of state gifts, Macedonian ruby has been serving the



country's diplomatic needs. The Minister for European Integration Mrs. Teuta Arifi uses it too.

Today, many young people are still looking for new values to identify with. Especially in smaller countries where so many goods are imported and symbols copied, one has to look hard for domestic symbols. That's why we felt great satisfaction when a young couple came in to order their wedding rings with a brilliant cut Macedonian ruby. Macedonian emigrants wanting to take back overseas a precious piece of their original homeland are our frequent customers. Some say that they promote Macedonian ruby in the hope that those who remain at home will take care of the country's natural resources.

### THE POWER OF PINK

Ruby is the second hardest stone having the value "9" on the Mohs hardness scale only behind diamond that is placed at "10". According to the Vedic medical tradition, pink gemstones influence the heart chakra, the energy centre of love and human effort. That's why Macedonian ruby became the symbol of power of LOVE as well as an effective healing stone for all the sorrows we had to overcome during our past.

For more information on Macedonian ruby visit: [www.mkrubin.com](http://www.mkrubin.com).

Translated from Macedonian by Lyubov Gurjeva