

# An Historical Alexandrite from the Mineralogy Museum of Paris School of Mines

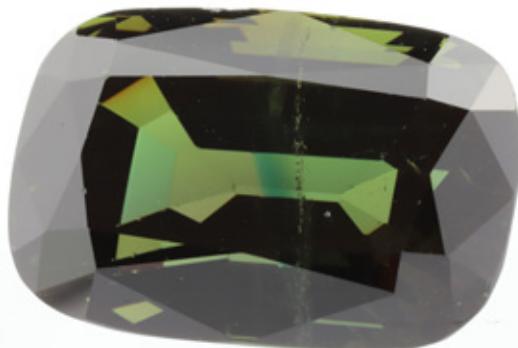
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**ABSTRACT:** A spectacular 42.54 ct faceted alexandrite belonging to the collection of the Mineralogy Museum of Paris School of Mines was non-destructively characterised for this report. This historical gem was exhibited in at least one exposition in Paris during the late 1870s and/or in 1880 before it was donated to the museum by lapidary Henri Garreau in 1882. However, its geographic origin was not stated, and its gemmological properties have not been examined until now. Our study reveals that the gem's microscopic, chemical and spectroscopic characteristics are similar to those of alexandrite from Sri Lanka.

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A 42.54 ct alexandrite belonging to the Mineralogy Museum of Paris School of Mines (Mines Paris – PSL; Figure 1) is exceptional in several ways: it is historical, very rare, shows a distinct change of colour and is quite large for its species (particularly with this colouration). The only larger faceted alexandrites that we know of in other museums are two stones in the collection of the Smithsonian Institution (Washington DC, USA) weighing 48.20 and 65.70 ct, and a 43.18 ct alexandrite in the Natural History Museum, London. All three of these gems are reportedly from Sri Lanka. To the best of our knowledge, no scientific studies have been published on any of them.

Until recently, the 42.54 ct stone that is the subject of this article was stored in the vault at Mines Paris – PSL since its donation in 1882, but it is now on public display in a temporary exhibit titled 'Collectible Minerals' (6 September 2023–9 March 2024; see *The Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 7, 2023, p. 644). For this occasion, Mines Paris – PSL partnered with the Laboratoire Français de Gemmologie



**Figure 1:** This 42.54 ct alexandrite (23.15 × 15.95 × 12.31 mm) belongs to the collection of Paris School of Mines (Mines Paris – PSL). It was donated in 1882 by French lapidary Henri Garreau, with the only note of its origin being the 'Indies'. It is shown here under 5500 K illumination. Photo by E. Gaillou; © Mineralogy Museum, Mines Paris – PSL (sample no. ENSMP 69873).