

SRI LANKA'S GEM/GEUDA TRADE AND THAI INVOLVEMENT

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This study examines the changes that have occurred in the traditional society of gem miners due to the demand for geuda by the Thai gem businessmen an immature state of the blue sapphire, the most valuable stone in Sri Lanka. This stone is also equal in weight and density to the blue sapphire and therefore it could be converted into blue sapphire by heat treating at a very high temperature. Today the treated geuda has brought a considerable transformation in Sri Lanka's gem industry.

Thai gem traders were in possession of the science of heat treating of geudas and other semi precious stones which helped to convert them into precious stones. Therefore, Thai dealers became an important factor in the life of the miners as the geuda trade became an important part of the gem trade. One result was that the entire traditional pattern of the gem trade in Sri Lanka was changed. There is an upliftment of the economic conditions in the gemming areas by thrusting money in the hands of miners and other people engaged in the industry.

Thai influence on the local economy and sections of society in which they operated has been both harmful and beneficial. However, today there are two lobbies consisting of pro Thai and anti Thai operating in the gem trade.