

many such Palabanda specimens for the past couple of years, but it seems that Mike Keim got hold of an excellent lot of them too, for a November 7 update on his *Marin Minerals* website (marinmineral.com) features 11 specimens “...from the initial 2021 find at the Palabanda quarry...plus three specimens from the more recent 2022 find...offered for sale here now for the first time.” These gorgeous specimens vary in size from large-thumbail to small-cabinet, and here I show you one of the latter: a profligate strewing of smallish but brilliant blue veszelyite crystals over a 7-cm matrix expanse, priced by Mike Keim at \$3,000.



Veszelyite, 7 cm, from the Palabanda quarries, M’Fouati, Bouenza Department, Republic of the Congo. Marin Minerals specimen and photo.

In my last online report I recommended the website of the *Jinan Chinese Mineral Trading Company, Ltd.* (chinesemineral.cn) as a well-stocked source of contemporary Chinese minerals in fair to very fine specimens. This website, with almost no text (and thus, refreshingly, no “hype” either) but plenty of pictures, is time-suckingly fun to scroll through, and you can even think of it as a primer in what some major Chinese localities are producing (or not) these days. A September 25 update on *Jinan* has six pages full of nothing but **sphalerite** specimens from the Shuikoushan mine, Songbai, Hunan Province. This lead-zinc mine—not to be confused, though it frequently is, with the Shizhuyuan tungsten mine in Hunan—ceased ore production for good in the mid-2000s, but it has given up excellent sphalerite specimens of the “ruby jack” variety since the 1990s. These should not to be confused with the more recent and much more common ruby-jack

sphalerites from the nearby Rucheng lead-zinc mine. The *Jinan* website does not tell us when the numerous cabinet-size Shuikoushan pieces it offers for sale were collected, but anyway this is lovely material, with lustrous, red-orange to red-black, semi-gemmy sphalerite crystals to 2 cm perched in high relief on gray-white matrix plates of cherty-looking quartz, in some cases with sharp, lustrous galena crystals coming along for the ride. The 9.1-cm specimen shown below is priced at a modest \$145.



**Sphalerite, 9.1 cm, from the Shuikoushan mine, Songbei, Hunan Province, China.
Jinan Chinese Mineral Trading Co., Ltd. specimen and photo.**

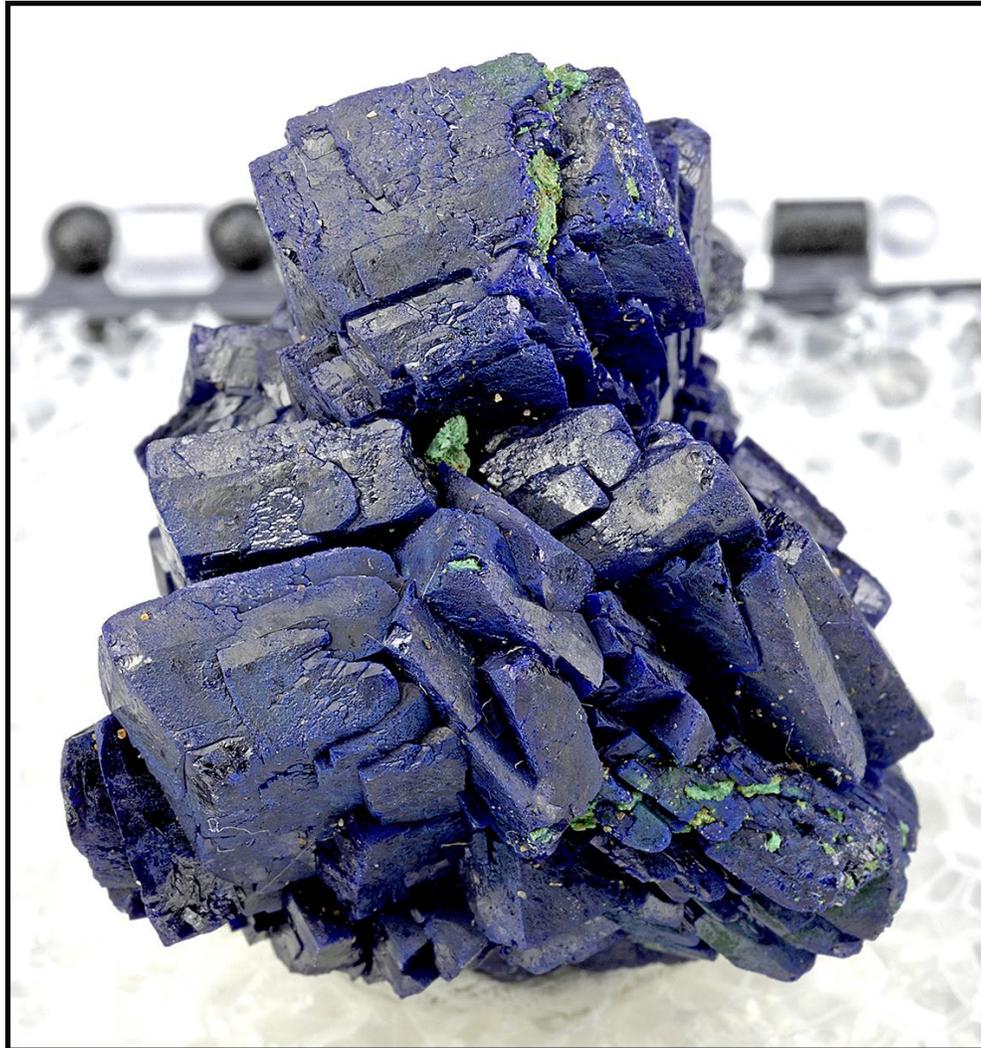
Many previous online reports (as well as many show reports in the print magazine) have described exciting new minerals offered by Jordi Fabre of Barcelona, Spain, whose dealership, *Fabre Minerals*, went online very early in the Electronic Age. But now Jordi has retired as a dealer (he will be concentrating instead on further enhancing his “Virtual Museum” of minerals—#MVM—on Facebook), and he has sold his remaining mineral stock to Dan Weinrich. Accordingly, Dan’s most recent updates on his *Weinrich Minerals Inc.* website (WeinrichMineralsInc.com) have plenty of ex-Jordi things, particularly from Jordi’s four favorite countries for minerals: Spain, Portugal, France and

Morocco. And here we segue from the Chinese sphalerite of the previous paragraph—for as everyone knows it is *Spanish* sphalerite which tops all the rest for color and gemminess—and, sure enough, Dan’s November 23 update has several splendid ex-Jordi thumbnails and miniatures showing lustrous, intensely orange-red-brown sphalerite crystals as loose groups or scattered singles on matrix. These specimens are not from the extensive Aliva Mining District in Cantabria (to which most of the July-August 2021 *Mineralogical Record* is devoted), but rather from the much less well known Troya mine, Mutiloa, Goyerri, Guipuzkoa Province, in the Basque country of far-northeastern Spain. Never prolific of specimens in the first place, the Troya mine has been collapsed and flooded since the 1990s, and so we might expect beautiful sphalerites from there to be expensive—but for the 4.5-cm crystal cluster shown here Dan Weinrich asks only \$35.



**Sphalerite, 4.5 cm, from the Troya mine, Mutiloa, Goyerri, Guipuzkoa, Spain.
Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.**

France is mineralogically represented in the November 23 update of *Weinrich Minerals Inc.* by several crisp-looking, thumbnail-size clusters of deep blue, medium-lustrous **azurite** crystals. These ex-Jordi pieces are from Chessy-les-Mines, Rhône-Alpes, where mining for copper began in the time of the Romans, peaked during the time of Napoleon I, and ended in the mid-19th century. You would expect the famous malachite-coated cuprite and major azurite specimens from this ancient locality to be much rarer than they are—mysteriously, there are always a few nice “Chessies” for sale around the market. Nevertheless, the azurite thumbnails that Dan got from Jordi are excellent bargains; the one shown here costs only \$195.



**Azurite, 2.6 cm, from Chessy-les-Mines, Rhone-Alpes, France.
Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.**

Then there are the loose stalks of lustrous, beautifully crystallized **gold** which have been emerging, these past three or four years, from a locality given by Jordi, and hence by Dan, as Aouint Ighoman, Assa-Zag, Guelmin-Oued Noun, Morocco. Jordi Fabre was one of the first international dealers to have secured specimens of this new Moroccan gold (I mentioned his offerings of it in a couple of earlier online reports), and now it is Dan who, in that November 23 update, offers a handful of thumbnails at low-four-figure prices:



**Gold, 2.3 cm, from Aouint Ighoman, Assa- Noun, Morocco.
Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.**

Dan Weinrich offers besides, in a “Special Sale” update of November 24, a few *matrix* miniatures such as have come very rarely from the occurrence, with the stalk-shaped aggregates of sharp twinned crystals of gold rising delicately—“aerially,” as Jordi would say—from points of attachment to pieces of massive white quartz. The 4.5-cm example shown here is priced at \$6,475.



**Gold in quartz, 4.5 cm, from Aouint Ighoman, Assa-Zag, Guelmin-Oued Noun, Morocco.
Weinrich Minerals Inc. specimen and photo.**

Both the October 5 and November 24 (“Black Friday”) updates on the website of *Quebul Fine Minerals* (quebulfineminerals.com) offer this Canadian dealership’s usual abundant selection of worldwide minerals with special emphasis on Canada. What struck me most strongly this time around were the dozens of lovely specimens, mostly miniature-size, of **vesuvianite** from the now-closed Jeffrey asbestos mine, Val-des-Sources, Les Sources RCM, Estrie, Québec. And yes, that’s the correct locality name these days, as the former town name of “Asbestos,” with its disreputably cancerous baggage, has been permanently retired for public relations reasons. Experienced collectors know that vesuvianite from the Jeffrey mine comes in hues ranging from

almost colorless through pale green, deep green, pale lilac and deepest red-purple, as well as color-zoned combinations of these; we know too that the finest specimens of the material tend to be very expensive, as they represent, after all, the best occurrence of the species worldwide. However, Todor and Nadya of *Quebul* ask a “reasonable” (with points for beauty) 460 U.S. dollars for the bicolored 3.6-cm piece shown here.



Vesuvianite, 3.6 cm, from the Jeffrey mine, Val-des-Sources, Les Sources RCM, Estrie, Québec, Canada. Quebul Fine Minerals specimen and photo.

...and numerous other vesuvianite crystal groups, displaying among them the full range of possible colors, are strewn over the 16 pages of *Quebul's* latest update. This is the place to go if you want to score—before it's too late—a classic Jeffrey mine vesuvianite at a very fair price.

Now, thanks again, this time directly, to Jordi Fabre, there comes something entirely *new*. Jordi has sent me an e-mail in which he describes some **fluorite** from Nigeria showing the “alexandrite effect,” found in February 2023, and he observes that some specimens from the find were in the hands of a Spanish dealer who came to the 2023

Munich Show. No, I did not see the material, or that Spanish dealer, in Munich, and so could not learn in the usual interrogative way about this new fluorite. But after what Jordi describes as his several diligent “checkings” we may safely say that the locality is the Jalingo mine, Mambilla Plateau, Taraba State, Nigeria. The two photos below show the same 10.3-cm cluster of sharp, largely transparent, cubic fluorite crystals with minor calcite; the fluorite is seen to be deep blue in sunlight and medium greenish blue in incandescent light. Fluorite being a very popular collector species these days, this new Nigerian find may well make a nice two-toned splash on the market soon.



Fluorite, 10.3 cm, from the Jalingo mine, Mambilla Plateau, Taraba State, Nigeria. The left photo shows the specimen in natural light; the right photo shows it in incandescent light. Jordi Fabre (MVM) specimen; Jordi Desuedes photo.

Speaking of **fluorite**, the 2022 Denver Show saw an appearance of attractive bicolored fluorite specimens from the Yindu mine, Hexigten Banner, Chifeng Prefecture, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China—see the Denver 2022 show report in January-February 2023, with a photo of a Safaa Yu specimen (now in the Chris Stefano collection) from this new occurrence. Well, a November 10 update on Ibrahim Jameel’s *Khyber Minerals* website (khyberminerals.com) offers several more very pretty Yindu mine fluorites—one cabinet-size piece and a handful of thumbnails—with clusters of sharp, cubic, gemmy, color-zoned crystals. Some of the crystals have pale blue outer zones through which deep blue, roughly octahedral inner zones may be espied; other,

more recent specimens (“from a pocket hit a couple of months ago,” Ibrahim writes) have crystals which are pale green on the outside with deep purple cubic zones on the inside. All of these Yindu mine fluorites of Ibrahim’s are already marked “sold,” but, by way of alerting you to the occurrence, I show a photo here of one of the best of the thumbnails—priced at \$200.



Fluorite, 2.8 cm, from the Yindu mine, Chifeng Prefecture, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.

Collectors may recall that the Bairendaba and Weilasituo mines in Keshiketen Banner (see the July-August 2023 issue) have also been referred to as the Yindu mine, but that is an error deriving from the fact that the Yindu Mining Company Ltd. Operates those mines.

The same November 10 update on the *Khyber Minerals* site also offers six miniatures of something apparently *new* from the Haunggang mining complex (or “Huanggangliang”) in Chifeng Prefecture, Inner Mongolia, China: **andradite epimorphs after hedenbergite**, as loose, boxy forms composed of small, tightly intergrown, dull yellowish green garnet crystals over what once were flat-topped, bladed crystals of hedenbergite. These were unknown when the very full article on this important contemporary locality by Bert Ottens and Gunther Neumeier was published (September-October 2012). The specimens are not pretty but certainly they are unusual and may, as I

say, represent a new find in the prolific Huanggang mine. The 6.4-cm specimen shown here is Ibrahim’s best, priced at \$345, from which point his prices for the six miniatures, 5 to 8 cm, decline to \$160.



Andradite epimorph after hedenbergite, 6.4 cm, from the Huanggang Mining District, Chifeng Prefecture, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, China. Khyber Minerals specimen and photo.

The website of Rob Lavinsky’s *The Arkenstone* (irocks.com) posted two galleries full of wondrous gem-quality crystals of **beryl** from the Bill Larson collection, Rob having purchased the collection from Bill in 2003. The first, “Part I,” gallery, with three pages of splendid beryl crystals, appeared in an update of October 9, and the second, “Part 2,” reduced to two pages (many specimens having been sold in the meantime), came online in mid-November. Both updates sport some of the finest goshenite, morganite, heliodor and aquamarine crystals (sorry, no emeralds) that you have ever lusted after. The localities are worldwide, but Brazil, Afghanistan and California dominate, as we would

expect. There are a few older “classics,” too, e.g. the doubly terminated, 5.9-cm crystal shown here, which Rob calls aquamarine although in the photo its color appears greenish yellow—this from a find at some time in the first half of the 20th century at Topsham, Sagadahoc County, Maine. Prices for these aristocrats among beryls might be called commensurate with their uniformly high quality, but even if you can’t afford many of them you are certainly welcome to educationally ogle them all on the site.



Beryl, 5.9 cm, from Topsham, Sagadahoc County, Maine. Arkenstone specimen and photo.

The busy website of *The Arkenstone* contains, moreover, plenty of life after beryl. An *Arkenstone* posting of November 20 offers a “holiday sale,” which will run through January 5, 2024, with 25% reductions off retail prices and with an additional 5% off for buyers of two or more pieces. These 12 pages of “mixed” minerals, large and small, old-

timery and new, are helpfully arranged by price, leading off on page one with specimens for \$11,000, finishing up on page 12 with specimens for \$150, and here I show you three pieces near the midpoint of that range which struck me as exceptional in some way.

First, we have a remarkably large, quite splendid specimen of something “Alpine”: a 10.9-cm crystal group of adularian **orthoclase** from Fiesch, Goms, Canton Wallis (Valais), Switzerland, with equant, textbook-monoclinic crystals which are sharp, colorless and mostly transparent. Specimens this fine are highly valued by Alpine collectors. The Fiescheralp, administered by the municipality of Fiesch, is accessible by the Eggishorn lift, and has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site for its spectacular view of the Jungfrau-Aletsch Protected Area. Other minerals found there include barite, chabazite, chlorite, epistilbite, fluorite, heulandite, laumontite, milarite, quartz, scolecite and stellerite, plus unusual occurrences of galena weathering to cerussite, wulfenite and mimetite.

This *über*-noteworthy piece of the Alps is priced at \$2,250.



**Orthoclase, variety adularia, 10.9 cm, from Fiesch, Goms, Wallis (Valais), Switzerland.
Arkenstone specimen and photo.**

For the thumbnail collector and/or the adept of Old Arizona, Rob has a loose, distorted, 2.5-cm crystal of **cuprite** from the Old Dominion mine (opened in 1874 and closed in 1957) in the Globe-Miami District of Gila County, which when backlit is seen to be transparent and realgar-red throughout. Good crystals of cuprite are quite rare from the Old Dominion, better known for copper, chrysocolla and malachite. This specimen, which has passed over the years from Phil Scalisi to the late Ernie Schlichter to Shields Flynn and finally to Rob, bears a discounted price of \$1,110.



Cuprite, 2.5 cm, from the Old Dominion mine, Globe-Miami Mining District, Gila County, Arizona. Arkenstone specimen and photo.

Then there is something mysterious and new from China: a 6.2-cm matrix, mostly of white quartz, with small, flaky crystals of bright blue-green **chalcophyllite** scattered all over it. For several years now I have been taking in rumors and whispers of this occurrence, although I have never before seen an example, much less one this good. The best locality designation I was able to find while composing *Moore's Compendium of Mineral Discoveries 1960-2015* is "Gengma County, Lincang Prefecture, Yunnan," but Rob has come up with a much more satisfying one: "the Mengding mine, Gengma Dai and Va Autonomous Areas, Lincang, Yunnan." The fine example on the *Arkenstone* website may offer hope that specimens of chalcophyllite from this remote place will come to rival the great antiques which emerged around 1800 from Wheal Gorland in Cornwall, England.



Chalcophyllite, 6.2 cm, from the Mengding mine, Gengma Dai & Va Autonomous Areas, Lincang, Yunnan Province, China. Arkenstone specimen and photo.

On more than one occasion during the past few years, these online reports have referred readers to *Via Mineralia*, a small, sophisticated and somewhat idiosyncratic dealership that was run jointly by two Austrians, Robert Kunze and Martin Gröll. Their website specialized in classics from the old Austro-Hungarian Empire as well as many interesting pyrite specimens which they field-collected. Now the partners have split up, with Gröll continuing to enhance *Via Mineralia* (viamineralia.com) while Kunze has crafted a new dealership called *Mister Mineral* (mistermineral.com), and both sites are currently up and running with some very interesting items.

First, a “Latest Update” on Gröll’s *Via Mineralia* website has 57 excellent miscellaneous specimens (only a few of which are marked “sold” as of the end of November), including this gorgeous 5.1-cm **amethyst** crystal group from the Murzinka area, Sverdlovsk Oblast, Russia. Martin Gröll says that the specimen is from the “Murzinka *mine*,” which may be a generalization, inasmuch as “Murzinka” is actually a village in the region of gem-bearing pegmatites near Sverdlovsk; it was exploited most heavily in the days of the Czars. This old-timer is largely gemmy and of a rich dark purple hue, and the cluster is wonderfully composed; it would set you back 1200 euros (almost the same these days as 1200 U.S. dollars).



Amethyst, 5.1 cm, from Murzinka, Sverdlovsk Oblast, Russia. Via Mineralia specimen and photo.

Also available from *Via Mineralia* (for 980 euros) is a beautiful, 4.1-cm-high, stacked cluster of honey-brown and translucent, very sharp crystals of **sturmanite** from—where else but?—the N’Chwaning II mine, Kalahari Manganese Field, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. This is one of the best specimens of the rare, one-locality-only, complex borosulfate that I have ever seen.



Sturmanite, 4.1, from the N’Chwaning II mine, Kalahari Manganese Field, Northern Cape Province, South Africa. Via Mineralia specimen and photo.

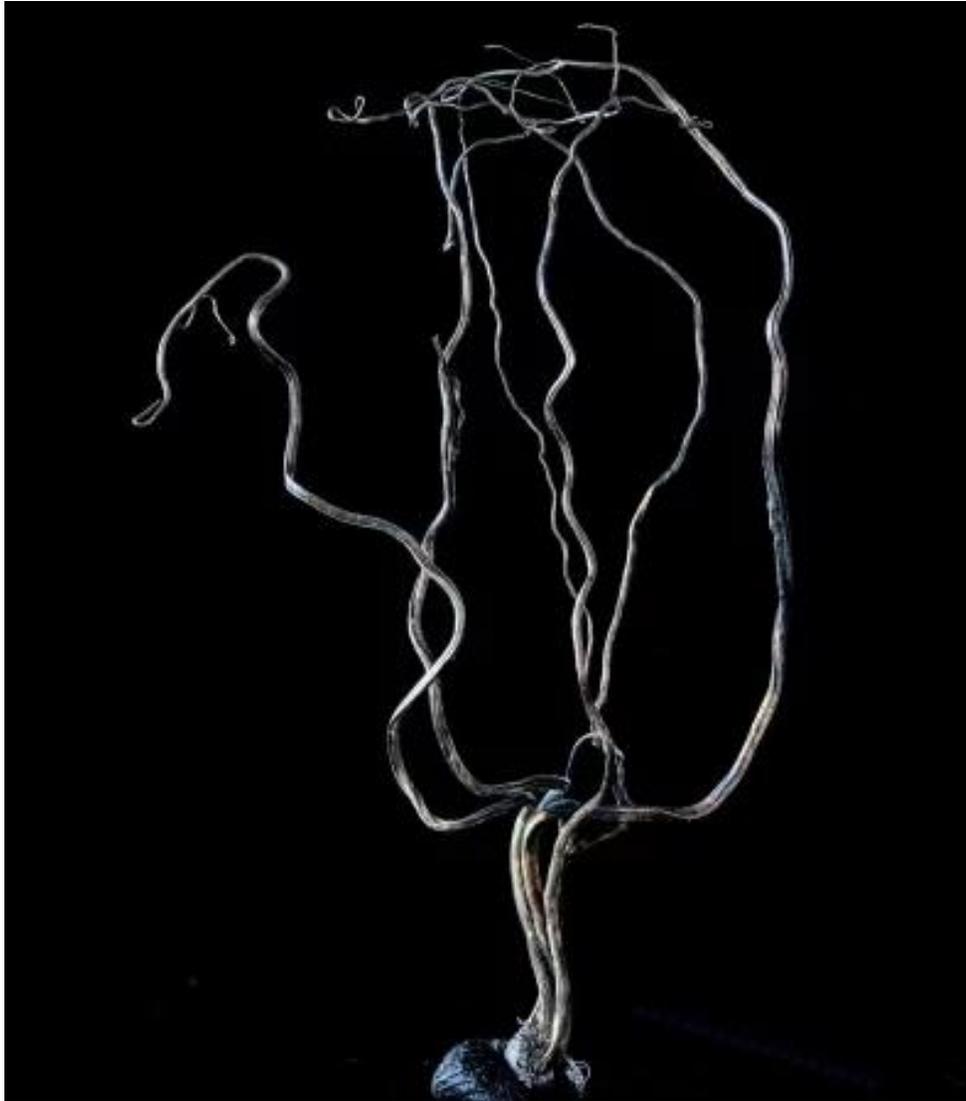
Finally from *Via Mineralia* there is this giant (for the species) specimen of the rare sulfosalt **semseyite** ($\text{Pb}_9\text{Sb}_8\text{S}_{21}$) from its world's-best locality, the now-extinct Herja mine, Baia Mare, Maramureş, Romania. Semseyite typically comes as small, isolated, distinctive flowerets of metallic black crystals, making for distinctive thumbnails and miniatures, but here we have a 10-cm expanse of massive galena which is entirely covered by hundreds (thousands?) of intergrown semseyite flowerets, with a tower of the same little clusters rising from its center. The price of the piece is 850 euros.



Semseyite on galena, 10 cm, from the Herja mine, Maramures, Romania. Via Minerealia specimen and photo.

Meanwhile, on the *Mister Mineral* website, Robert Kunze has something quite new from Iran. (I note that from its beginning the *Via Mineralia* dealership has consistently had unfamiliar things from Iran—Kunze and/or Grüll apparently have some special, perhaps unique, connections in that difficult country.) The eight fine miniatures of **wire silver** now being offered by *Mister Mineral* are from the Taknar mine, Bardaskan, Razavi Khorasan Province, Iran, of which Robert Kunze writes “The Taknar mine [has been known so far] for specimens of native copper...but a group of collectors were [recently]

able to find some native silver specimens in very good condition. It's not easy to get access to the mine [as] the owners are very strict." The wire silver comes as loose, delicate tangles of very thin wires which resemble the wire silver specimens from Dzhezkazgan, Kazakhstan, which first hit the market some 30 years ago—except that the Dzhezkazgan silvers are heavily tarnished to a dull black (indeed, some are totally altered to acanthite) whereas the Iranian specimens are only lightly tarnished, and much more attractive. Kunze's eight tangles of silver range in size between 3 and 4.5 cm, and in price from 100 to 220 euros.



**Silver, 3.5 cm, from the Taknar mine, Bardaskan, Razavi Khorasan Province, Iran.
Mistermineral specimen and photo.**

The “All Minerals” and “Europe” pages of the *Mister Mineral* website each display a single **pyrite** specimen which is fine enough in itself but which is intriguing foremost for its locality, namely the Rosia Poieni mine, Mușca, Alba County, Romania. This, readers may recall, is the locality which, a few years ago, surprised us with fine **vivianite** specimens in such great abundance that many are still available on the market today. However, no *other* minerals from the occurrence (or none, anyway, that I know of) have so far come to light. Robert Kunze writes that his pyrite specimen came from “a limited find...a small spot with high-quality pyrite specimens...discovered in May 2021” in the Rosia Poieni mine. On this 8-cm specimen, priced at 300 euros, very sharp, lustrous pyrite crystals to 2 cm rest lightly on matrix. Some of the crystals are simple pyritohedrons while others show complex combinations of forms. And what *other* “limited” finds, one wonders, may have occurred at this place, which Mindat identifies as an active open-pit mine in a porphyry copper deposit, and which Wikipedia credits as representing the largest copper reserve in Romania and the second largest in Europe. This surely is promising, specimen-wise, for the future...



Pyrite, 8 cm, from Rosia Poieni, Alba County, Romania. Mistermineral specimen and photo.

For the penultimate treat in this report, Italian dealer Federico Barlocher, a long-time specialist and half-time resident in the Mogok Stone Tract in Burma (see our spectacular Mogok Issue of January-February 2022), posted just today on Facebook (google

Facebook “Barlocher Federico”) a photo of a superb cluster of short, red elbaite crystals and big quartz crystals from Male, Singu Township, Mandalay Division, about 70 km south-southwest of Mogok. In 2015, he reported that, beginning in 2006-2007, superb specimens showing stout, lustrous, gemmy red elbaite crystals clustered on matrix with quartz and feldspar began to emerge from Pyinygi Taung at Male, where mining had just ceased, but potential for future production remained. As Federico excitedly describes his new piece (shown below): “Probably the perfect best ever found tourmalines in mixed colors and different heads [terminations] in combination with quartzes from Male, Mogok, Myanmar.”



Elbaite with quartz, about 18 cm, from Male, Mogok, Burma. Federico Barlocher specimen

A Postscript from Connecticut

Russell Behnke of Meriden, Connecticut is a consummate high-end mineral dealer whom I have known for many years. He is low-profile, soft-spoken and somewhat reclusive, but also friendly, gracious and learned, and I am always glad to see him when he comes cruising about the Tucson and Denver shows. As a collector and scholar, Russ harbors a special love for the many old New England localities which he has studied, and in whose abandoned workings and waste piles he has gone digging for most of his life—check out his website (russbehnke.com) for some of his writings on topics like New England garnets and Bristol, Connecticut chalcocite. His dealership’s stock, however, is

worldwide, and if, like him, you favor pegmatite minerals, you'll find exceptional things on his site from "modern" pegmatite places, as well as occasional New England pegmatite oldies. Russ has never been mentioned before in these online reports, since "what's new in minerals" isn't especially his thing, but he has surprised me now with some information (plus photos!) on recent finds in Afghanistan, and so I'll conclude *this* report by passing on his info (with photos on the next two pages):

From around September 2022 to May 2023 Russ acquired "several dozen" specimens with large, remarkable crystals of **blue quartz** emerged from scattered pegmatite prospects in Afghanistan. Yes, the quartz crystals are decidedly *blue*—"sky-blue" is almost the word—as they are thickly infused with fine-grained inclusions of what is most likely blue ("indicolite") tourmaline. Most of the specimens are loose single crystals, many to cabinet size, associated only with feldspars (microcline, rarely albite) and schorl; however, he acquired just two specimens wherein the blue quartz is accompanied by fine gemmy crystals of aquamarine beryl and yellow "triphane" spodumene respectively. The former, 14-cm piece is a crystal group showing caps of blue quartz over the terminations of big smoky quartz crystals, and then there are muscovite crystals, and near one edge of the group is a short prism and very prominent basal face of a gemmy crystal of aquamarine. The specimen came in May 2023 from somewhere in the Dara-i-Pech pegmatite field, Chapa Dara District, Kunar Province, Afghanistan.

The second, even more striking specimen (although it measures just 3.6 cm) is a fat quartz crystal which is blue all the way through, with, protruding straight from its top, sword-in-stone-wise, a strongly etched but entirely gemmy crystal of bright yellow spodumene; its stated locality is the famous Paprok pegmatite prospect in the Kamdesh District, Nuristan Province, Afghanistan.

Russ writes that in the last 40 years he has seen only one respectable specimen of blue quartz (from the old White Rocks quarry in Connecticut), and that he has always aspired to own another such specimen just as good—never mind a thousand times better. So he is "not inclined to sell these," but at least by showing them to you I can keep up my little tradition of ending online reports with amazing one-of-a-kind. We can't hope to acquire such things, but just looking at their pictures enhances our general joy in mineral beauty while teaching us something new, too.



**Blue Quartz and Spodumene variety triphane, 3.6 cm, from Paprok,
Kamdesb District, Nuristan Province, Afghanistan.
Russell Behnke specimen and photo.**



Blue Quartz and Beryl, 14 cm, from the Dara-i-Pech pegmatite field, Chapa Dara District, Kunar Province, Afghanistan. Russell Behnke specimen and photo.

Happy holidays to everybody from me and from Wendell Wilson,
Tom Gressman (the “other” Tom), Chris Stefano and Christi Cramer.
Hope to see you in Tucson in February!