

and is still classed as the finest, while that from Egypt has a greenish tinge. Other sources are New Mexico and California in the USA, and China. A veined variety is found around Medina in Saudi Arabia and is used in Bedouin jewellery.

Turquoise has also been found near Liskeard in Cornwall, England, but only as a collector's specimen. A



Natural untreated turquoise from Iran. (Photo: KW)

hardness of only 6 on the Mohs scale does make it liable to abrasion. 'Spider web' patterns across the stone distract from its value, although some people prefer to see it. It has remained a popular gem and is widely used.

Due to its variable fragility it is often 'stabilised' by impregnating with wax or plastic under pressure. It is also reconstituted by bonding pulverised turquoise, after removal of any impurities, into slabs that may be cut into gems.

It is simulated by glass, porcelain and plastic that may be identified by careful inspection with the loupe, which will show small bubbles. Dyed chalcedony or howlite are used as simulants but the former has a glassy lustre. It has also been synthesised by Gilson, now taken over by Chatham, but is expensive.



Unakite talisman. (Photo: KW)

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UNAKITE

An uncommon mineral sometimes offered mounted in jewellery. It is a form of granite consisting of quartz, pink feldspar and green epidote. It is opaque, but when polished produces an attractive stone.

Unakite takes its name from the region where it is found, the Unaka mountain range in North Carolina, USA. It is also found in other regions of the USA, Zimbabwe and in Galway Bay, Eire (Ireland).

ZINCITE

Strictly speaking this 'gemstone' is synthetic. It was originally discovered growing in the smoke stack of a Polish factory. Zincite – a very dense material with a high refractive index – occurs in yellow, orange, orangey-red and yellowish green. Cut stones are very attractive although soft (4.5 on the Mohs scale). It has subsequently been found in similar processing in the USA.



Zincite, 924 pts.
(Photo: ATG)