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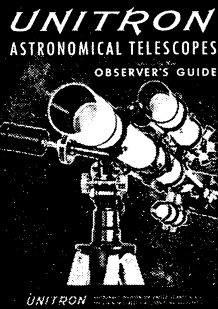


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CHEMISTRY

Mineral Made in Lab Discovered in Meteorite

➤ A MINERAL PREVIOUSLY unknown on earth has been discovered in a meteorite and also created in the laboratory.

The extraterrestrial mineral is named sinoite. It consists of silicon oxynitride, with the chemical formula, Si₂N₂O. Silicon oxynitride is gray on color and occurs in rough, rectangular crystals.

It was identified using an electron microprobe by Dr. Klaus Keil of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration's Ames Research Center, Moffett Field, Calif., C. A. Andersen of Hasler Research Center, Goleta, Calif., and Dr. B. H. Mason of the American Museum of Natural History, New York.

The mineral was discovered in a meteorite that fell near the village of Lajh deh Kot Lalu in Pakistan in 1926.

A team of Swedish scientists synthesized sinoite in the laboratory by heating pure silicon and silicon dioxide to a temperature of 2,650 degrees Fahrenheit in an atmosphere of nitrogen.

Meteorites are the only extraterrestrial material available on earth.

• Science News Letter, 87:174 March 13, 1965

Nature Note

The Birdfoot Violet

➤ ALTHOUGH its pale, dull green, tufted leaves are above the ground by early spring, the distinctive flower of the birdfoot violet will probably first appear in late March in the Southwest and bloom until early June in its more northern habitats.

The flower joins its leaf above ground after bursting out of its green capsule, which grows from an erect rhizome, or fleshy underground stem. Unlike more common violets, *Viola pedata* never experiences cross-pollination but is self-pollinated beneath the ground, out of reach from probing bees.

Once above the ground, its nectar is protected by its brilliant orange stamen and a small protuberance near the center of its stigma cavity.

A five-lobed flower, its two upper petals are a deep pansy-purple. The three lower petals may range from deep lilac-purple to a paler shade and occasionally are white veined with violet. The flower's inch-wide diameter makes it the largest of its family, and the plant itself may grow as high as ten inches.

This inhabitant of sandy open woods and fields is actually named for its cleft leaf which bears nine or more points and may resemble the claw-print of a bird. Hairy around its edges, the leaf ranges in size from one-half inch smaller to one-half inch larger than the flower.

It grows as far north as Maine, south to Louisiana, and west to Texas and South Dakota. This aristocrat of wild flowers is an outstanding representative of the violet family.

• Science News Letter, 87:174 March 13, 1965

