

Lapis Lazuli from Serr-i-Sang

K. Brückl: Die Minerallagerstätten von Ostafghanistan.

Abb. 6.

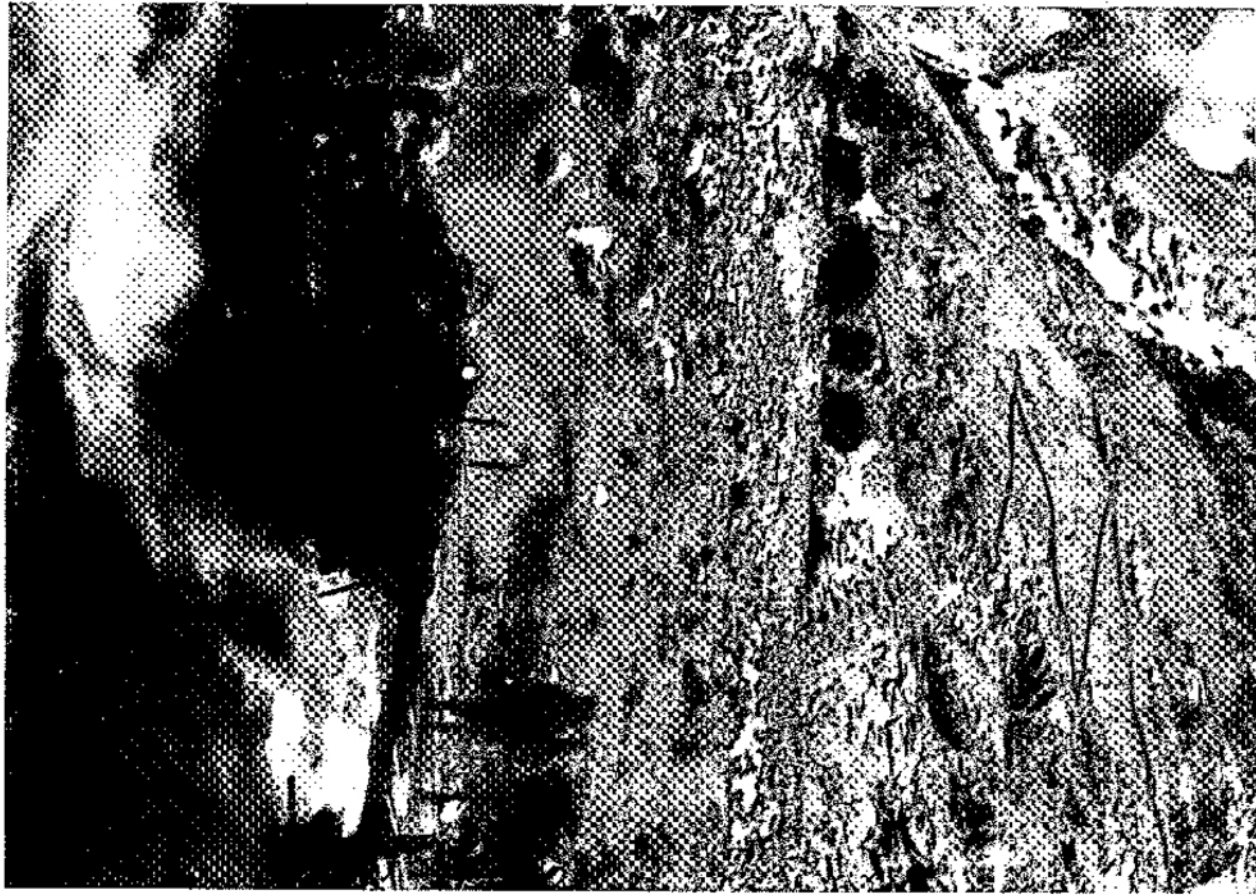


Abb. 4.

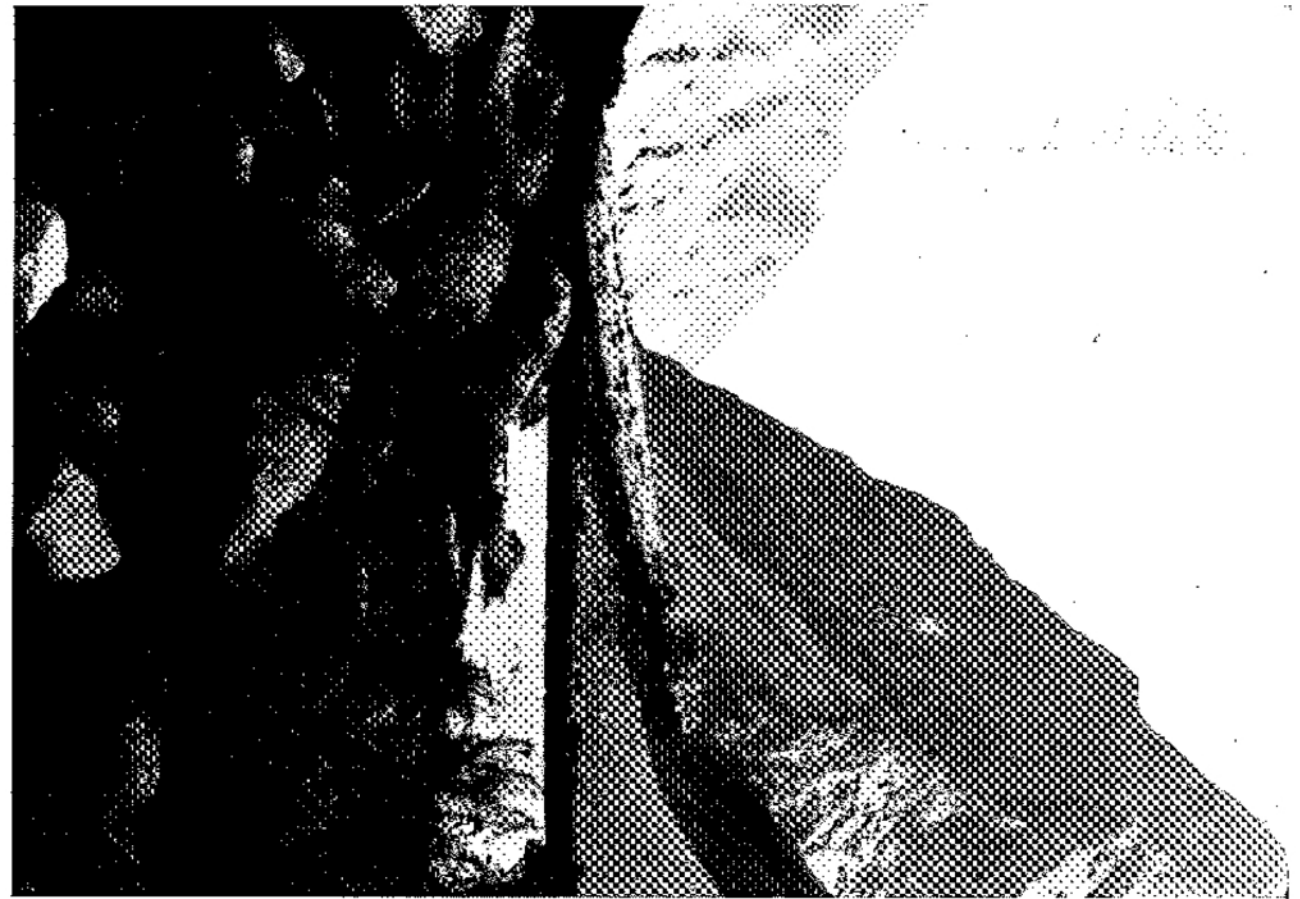
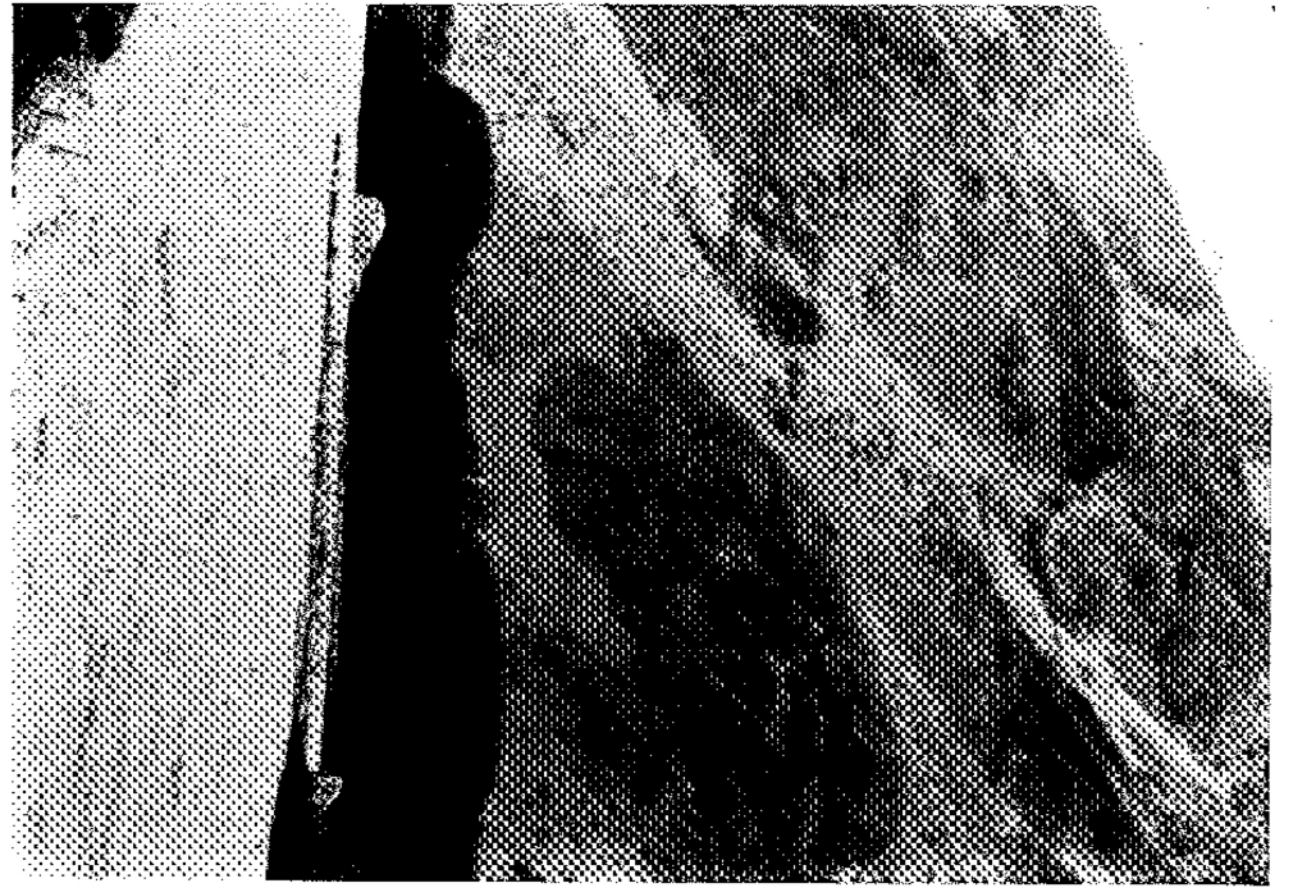


Abb. 7.



Abb. 5.



The German geologist Karl Brückl was the first person to photograph the lapis lazuli mines of *Serr-i-Sang* in Afghanistan. In 1936, he published the scientific report *Die Minerallagerstätten von Ostafghanistan*, in *Neues Jahrbuch für Mineralogie* accompanied by seven photographs. These black and white images reveal the source of the precious

blue stone that has played a key role in visual culture throughout history, as a natural resource for sculpture and, ground into ultramarine blue, as a pigment for painting. Before the invention of synthetic ultramarine in 1824, this color was inseparable from the rare and precious lapis lazuli. The color symbolized the presence of the stone itself

and recalled images of both lavish exchange value and profound spirituality, meanings projected onto the stone for over 6000 years, since the lapis lazuli mines began operation. Although lapis lazuli is found in various places on earth, the best quality is found only deep inside one mountain in what is now Afghanistan.

Brückl took his photographs with a Leica 35mm camera, developed by the optical engineer Oskar Barnack in the service of Leica founder Ernst Leitz. Barnack was also a landscape photographer suffering from asthma, and the weight of heavy equipment was difficult for him to handle. For that reason he developed the Leica 35mm camera,

lightweight for landscape photography and particularly useful during mountain trips. It was Barnack's physical condition that led to the invention of the 35mm camera, which became an essential tool in landscape exploration. In turn, the 35mm device that accompanies the exploring body has become the image of the explorer at the periphery

of late-colonial Europe, a position and gateway to exclusive knowledge to which only privileged subjects have access.