



## CHAROITE

First Draft

08.04.06

Pronounced **cha** - ro - ite

**Origin** Formed from the long, slow alteration of limestone under great heat and pressure and in the presence of certain alkali chemicals. This combination of factors is very rare, hence the rarity of charoite.

**Composition** Hydrated potassium sodium calcium barium strontium silicate hydroxide fluoride (!!)

**Structure** Monoclinic. Swirling patterns of interlocking crystals often visible.

**Colour** Rich lavender / violet / purple with a paler streak.

**Sources** Crystals buys its charoite from the only known world source - the Chara River basin in Russia.

### Crystals

#### Story

Our connection goes back to a visit to Lake Baikal in Siberia, the largest inland, fresh water lake in the world in 1996. Ray was stunned to find this beautiful stone on sale outside the Lake Baikal Institute on the lake banks. Subsequently we have bought the VERY best AA grade cabs at the northern end of the lake but were thwarted in an organised visit to the mine in 2000. A dramatic purchase of rough material took place from the boot of a car meeting our helicopter that had just visited a gulag (remote communist prison camp) that had mined uranium. Discovered in 1947, it was politically dangerous to be famous for any reason. The female geologist (an ethnic Buryiat) was justifiably scared of her name being used and preferred the name of the nearby river. Until Stalin's death the discovery was only known by a few. Only recently has it been commercially used in jewellery. It is one of our company's favourite stones and we still buy directly from Russian geologists.

**Ros Mason April 2006**

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