

Tabriz Islamic Art University
1999

DOI: 10.29252/jra.3.1.77

URL: <http://jra-tabriziau.ir/>

Review Paper

A Road Map for the Ancient Mining and Metallurgical Studies in Iran



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Received: 19/03/2017**Accepted: 05/06/2017**

Abstract

Iran is rich in ancient mining and metallurgical relics. Nevertheless, the studies on these relics have so far been mostly unsystematic. The road map for the ancient mining and metallurgical studies in Iran, that has been ordered by the Research Centre for Conservation of Cultural Relics of Iran (RCCCR), proposes a systematic multidisciplinary plan for the ancient mining and archaeometallurgical studies of Iran in the future. In this regard, following a brief review of the few systematic researches on the topic in Iran, the problems and challenges concerning the ancient relics of mining and metallurgy have been addressed. The conflict of interests between the modern mining sector and the cultural heritage organization, the lack of systematic plans for the documentation and study of ancient mining and metallurgical studies together with low contribution of the associated private sector in such studies as well as weak analytical infrastructures in the country are among the major challenges of the study of ancient mining and metallurgical relics in Iran. In this respect, an action plan for future studies in different aspects of ancient mining and metallurgy has been proposed. This plan is composed of five major pillars consisting of (1) “Collaboration”: interactive cooperation between associated Iranian institutions including the mining sector and the cultural heritage organization together with international institutions in the frame of the re-establishment of the “committee for studies on old mining and metallurgy”, (2) “Education”: training and education of mining archaeologists and archaeometallurgical experts together with familiarizing geologists, mining engineers, and archaeologists with the subject, (3) “Research”: research and study on the ancient mining and metallurgy by a number of substantial actions including preparation of an archive of the present level of knowledge on the subject which can eventually result in the preparation of an atlas of ancient mining and metallurgical relics of Iran, considering the old questions of archaeology concerning provenance and trade of raw and manufactured materials as well as the exchange of ancient technologies, performing systematic surveys for finding and documentation of the neglected ancient mines and metallurgical sites together with archaeological excavation of the significant ancient mines or metallurgical sites, and boosting the analytical and scientific infrastructure, (4) “Conservation”: preservation and conservation of selected representative ancient mining and metallurgical relics of the mines that are going to be exploited by modern mining sector, and (5) “Presentation”: publication and presentation of the results of the above-mentioned aspects in diverse visual forms and appropriate scientific ways not only to the experts but also to the public. In the end, the paper has summarized the priorities concerning the future ancient mining and metallurgical studies of Iran. This road map that has mainly been prepared based on the

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knowledge and experience of the authors in the public and private sectors of Iran has also benefited from the constructive advices of the prominent international experts including Prentiss de Jesus, Vincent Pigott, Ernst Pernicka, Barbara Helwing, and Thomas Stöllner.

Keywords: Ancient Mining, Archaeometallurgy, Archaeometry, Geoarchaeology, Interdisciplinary sciences.

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