

From Mine to Object

Archaeometallurgical Dialogues between East and West (3rd - 1st millennium BC)

23 & 24 November 2023

Musée d'Archéologie Nationale, Saint-Germain-en-Laye, France

Archaeometallurgy (of non-ferrous alloys) is a discipline which encompasses the entire field of ancient metallurgy, from the extraction of metals from their ores to the present state of archaeological objects, has been rapidly expanding over the last two decades. Considerable progress in advancing the field is enhancing our knowledge, whether about ore extraction and mining activities, production processes (from ore to metal) or artifact transformation (from metal to finished product), as well as the lifecycle of metallic products (from finished products to their current status and location).

This structuring of archaeometallurgical research has been accompanied by several bulkheads: researchers are often specialists in: one step of the "*chaîne opératoire*", a type of approach, a category of scientific analysis, a specific material or a particular geographic area or time period. It makes for research compartmentalized between different approaches such as mining archaeology, archaeometry, technology and archaeology on one hand, and, for example, between Europe and the Near East on the other. Although interdisciplinarity, which is now the norm, relativize this observation, the various specialists often have difficulty gathering and exchanging ideas due to their disparate methods, training, research traditions and questions.

Otherwise, it seems that archaeometallurgical research is developing in parallel in Europe and in the Near East, with relatively few bridges between these two regions, although some researchers navigate between these very different chrono-cultural, technical, environmental, and socio-political contexts.

This is why, in the framework of the proposed symposium, we want to create a dialogue between these two worlds. Our objective is to provoke a disciplinary, methodological, geographical, and chronological decompartmentalization to bring together researchers who are rarely in contact despite the complementarity of their approaches. We hope, in the long run, that this approach will allow us to strengthen ties, weave collaborations, and create an interdisciplinary research group on archaeometallurgy in the entire Old World.

We propose to organize the conference around four axes, making four main sessions:

1. Mining and ore extraction activities

All evidence of ore exploitation and mining activities, whether they are direct or indirect, will be considered in this session.

2. Tools, actors and production loci: specialization and organization

This session will be devoted to the organization of production and will question the notion of the "workshop". Who were the metalworkers? What was their degree of specialization? Their socio-economic status? their symbolic position? What were their tools and their work environment? How were organized different stages of the metallurgical process? Can we distinguish different types of workplaces and/or activity areas according to geographical and chronological contexts?

3. The production process (*chaînes opératoires*), from metal to finished product

What were the processes and methods of manufacturing metal objects? Here, direct or indirect clues that provide information on the gestures, techniques, skills and know-how of ancient craftworkers will be used to propose reconstructions of the metallurgical production process. As metals are complex materials whose physico-chemical structures condition their reactions, approaches combining material sciences and technological studies will be favored here.

4. Exchanges and uses of metallic objects: from archaeological contexts to the laboratory.

All approaches that allow us to question the circulation of metals, whether in the form of ores, ingots, semi-products, finished objects, or fragments of objects, find their place here. From physico-chemical and isotopic analyses to typo-chronological studies, through use-wear analysis and tribological approaches or the detailed study of archaeological contexts, allowing us to address the question of the use, functions and circulation of metal, are considered here.

If you accept this invitation, please send us your proposals for communication in the form of an abstract of no more than one-page in length by December 31, 2022.

Practical information: this SPF/APRAB symposium will take place at the Musée d'Archéologie Nationale in Saint-Germain-en-Laye on November 23 and 24, 2023.

Organizing committee

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