

Sardinia's historical and cultural heritage of mining exploration

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In Sardinia, the exploitation of mineral resources began in the Early Neolithic age (6000 BC) with the mining and processing of obsidian, followed in the late Neolithic period (3000 BC) by the extraction of talc (steatite variety). With the development of bronze metallurgy during the Nuragic age (1200 BC) began the exploitation of metallic ores, in particular copper bearing minerals for the production of bronze. In 1000 BC, the Phoenicians took an interest in the Sardinian silver and lead bearing ores. Following this, the Punics also intensely exploited the mines in the Iglesiente region (SW Sardinia), where evidence of their excavations persisted until the middle of the XIX Century. In 238 BC Sardinia passed under Roman rule. The evolved mining and metallurgical techniques of the Romans were applied to the Sardinian mines. Following the end of Roman rule, mining exploitation was only resumed in the XIII Century, thanks to Count Ugolino della Gherardesca from Pisa, who founded Villa di Chiesa (today Iglesias), a thriving mining town and the second most important metallurgical center of Europe after Bohemia.

With the extraction of granite and mining of mineral deposits of lead, zinc, silver, copper, iron, nickel, cobalt, antimony, tungsten, molybdenum, manganese, cadmium, germanium, mercury, gold, carbon, fluorine and barium, mining finally developed with varying success until the industrial age, marking the following major seven periods, here in chronological order: (1) prehistoric, (2) Phoenician-Punic, (3) Roman, (4) Judicial and Pisa; (5) Aragonese-Spanish; (6) Savoy; and (7) Modern.

With the end of their industrial cycle (1980), all the Sardinian mines saw their role changed, essentially assuming sufficient cultural importance today to be declared "World Heritage" sites. The almost total abandonment of mining in Sardinia left an important and unusual heritage of historic and highly distinctive environmental values, documents and archives, infrastructure, machinery, buildings, skills, and human values, within a context of really extraordinary natural landscapes that represent a unique cultural identity to be preserved and transmitted. This is one of the main tasks undertaken by the Geological, Mining, Historical and Environmental Park of Sardinia from its institution.

Presented in Theme 1