



ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

From Mines to Markets: Archaeological and Ethnographic Perspectives on the Mining and Exchange of Lapis Lazuli during the Bronze Age

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Abstract

Lapis lazuli, a rare metamorphic rock and semi-precious stone, is sourced from regions such as Sar-e Sang in northwest Afghanistan, Lake Baikal in Siberia, and the Andes in Chile, each distinguished by unique mineralogical characteristics. Additional reported but unverified sources include Italy, the United States, Canada, the Chagai Hills in Pakistan, and the Iranian plateau. Lapis has been found in various archaeological contexts over time and across different regions, sparking scholarly interest in its origins. Further studies, including chemical analyses and written sources, largely identify northeast Afghanistan as the primary source of ancient time.

The widespread distribution of lapis suggests long-distance exchange networks, raising questions about the organization of its exchange mechanisms and distribution patterns.

This paper presents the preliminary results of my work on the distribution of lapis lazuli during the Bronze Age, integrating various conceptual and methodological approaches commonly utilized in archaeological studies. To better understand exchange patterns, I use quantitative analysis to examine the proportional occurrence and presence of lapis at sites in Afghanistan, Central and South Asia, as well as Iran. Additionally, ethnographic research data collected in Badakhshan will be included to discern the evolution of lapis extraction and trade over the past century.

Keywords

Lapis Lazuli, Bronze Age, Long-Distance Exchange, Mining, Ethnographic Research

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