



The Pirotechnia of Vannoccio Biringuccio: The Classic Sixteenth-Century Treatise on Metals and Metallurgy

Vannoccio Biringuccio

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Vannoccio Biringuccio was the Siennese metallurgist and armament maker who wrote history's first clear, comprehensive work on metallurgy. First published in 1540, shortly after Biringuccio's death, *The Pirotechnia* is a lavishly illustrated volume that describes in detail the equipment and processes of 16th-century mining, smelting, and metalworking.

For centuries, this famous work has been a standard reference in the field of metals and metallurgy. It is especially valuable today as a vital source of information on the state of technology in the 15th and 16th centuries.

The book first addresses the principal ores — gold, silver, copper, lead, tin, and iron — and the making of steel and brass. It then introduces semiminerals, from quicksilver and sulphur to manganese and rock crystal, and describes the assaying and preparing of ores for smelting. Other topics include the making of alloys, the art of casting, methods of melting metals, and the making of fireworks.

This edition of *The Pirotechnia* has been reprinted from the authoritative translation published by The American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Engineers, and is complete with an historical introduction to Biringuccio and his work. It also contains reproductions of the 94 woodcuts from the original 1540 edition, which depict centuries-old technologies ranging from the recovery of mercury with a distilling bell to a machine for boring guns.

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