

The *salinae* of O Areal (Vigo) and Roman salt production in NW Iberia

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In antiquity, the production of sea salt was one of the most important sources of salt. According to Pliny the Elder (*NH* 31.81), the most common way of obtaining salt was through marine *salinae*: *facticii varia genera, vulgaris plurimusque in salinis mari adfuso*. There are plenty of textual references to marine salt evaporation ponds:¹ Livy (1.33) reported that Ancus Marcius opened saltworks on the Tiber next to Ostia; Pliny (*NH* 31.84-87) mentioned a series of examples of such installations distributed throughout the Mediterranean, while Columella (*Rust.* 10.135) indicated the existence of saltworks at Pompeii, and Casiodorus (*Var.* 12.24) spoke of those located near Venice. Passages in Rutilius Namatianus (*De red.* 475-90) and Manilius (*Astr.* 5.682-92) are also well known for their explanations of how ancient saltworks operated.

The available archaeological evidence for saltworks is scattered and incomplete, but this is starting to change as evidence for marine salt production emerges across Mediterranean lands. Saltworks have been documented on the right bank of the Tiber dating to the first half of the 1st c. A.D.² At Kaunos, 48 circular ponds have been identified; with a diameter of 4.3 m, 14-18 cm deep and a floor in *opus caementicium*,³ these ponds were arranged in 8 lines of 6, to create a total of 5 units separated by 4 rectangular canals through which sea water was distributed.⁴ At Antibes, a large cobble-paved floor next to an ancient salt-water lagoon has been interpreted as a *salina*.⁵ In connection with the large number of Roman fish-salting factories known in *Gades*,⁶ some remains of Roman saltworks have been documented at Cádiz.⁷ In Huelva at the site of El Terrón (Lepe) Roman saltworks have been

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- 1 C. Carusi, *Il sale nel mondo greco (VI a.C.–III d.C.)* (Bari 2008) 45-148; B. Moinier and O. Weller, *Le sel dans l'Antiquité ou les cristaux d'Aphrodite* (Paris 2015) 320-23.
 - 2 M. C. Grossi *et al.*, "A complex relationship between human and natural landscape: a multidisciplinary approach to the study of the Roman saltworks in 'Le Vignole-Interponto' (Maccarese, Fiumicino-Roma)," in R. Brigand and O. Weller (edd.), *Archaeology of salt: approaching an invisible past* (Leiden 2015) 83-101; C. Morelli and V. Forte, "Il *campus salinarum romanarum* e l'epigrafe dei *conductores*: il contesto archeologico," *MEFRA* 126 (2014) 10-21.
 - 3 S. Atik, "A new discovery in Kaunos. *Sal Caunitis*," in *Vom Euphrat bis zum Bosphorus. Kleinasien in der Antike* (Asia-Minor Studien 65, 2008) 39-45.
 - 4 The proximity of the saltworks to the city of Kaunos (c.5 km away), as well as Pliny's reference (*NH* 31.99) to salt from Kaunos as a remedy for eye diseases (Carusi [supra n.1] 85), could lead one to think that the origin of these structures could be taken back to classical antiquity; yet no archaeological evidence has been published that allows the chronology to be fixed.
 - 5 I. Daveau and O. Sivan, "Les aménagements lagunaires du Bas Lauvert à Antibes (Alpes Maritimes)," in X. Delestre and H. Marchesi (edd.), *Archéologie des rivages méditerranéens: 50 ans de recherche* (Paris 2010) 55-60.
 - 6 L. Lagóstena Barrios, *La producción de salsas y conservas de pescado en la Hispania romana (II a.C.–VI d.C.)* (Instrumenta 11; Barcelona 2001) 98-119.
 - 7 C. Alonso Villalobos, F. J. Gracia Prieto and L. Ménanteau, "Las salinas de la Bahía de Cádiz durante la Antigüedad: visión geoarqueológica de un problema histórico," *SPAL* 12 (2003) 317-32; C. Alonso Villalobos and L. Ménanteau, "Paléoenvironnements et techniques de production du sel marin (par ignition ou insolation) durant l'Antiquité: les cas des baies de Bourgneuf (France) et de Cadix (Espagne)," in J.-C. Hocquet and J.-L. Sarrazin (edd.), *Le sel de la baie. Histoire, archéologie, ethnologie des sels atlantiques* (Rennes 2006) 87-103; C. Alonso Villalobos *et al.*, "Geoarqueología y arqueometría de la sal," in L. Lagóstena, D. Bernal and A. Arévalo (edd.),