

Passage II

SOCIAL SCIENCE: This passage is adapted from *Salt* by Mark Kurlansky (©2002 by Mark Kurlansky).

Most Italian cities were founded proximate to saltworks, starting with Rome in the hills behind the saltworks at the mouth of the Tiber River. Those saltworks, along the northern bank, were controlled by Etruscans. In 640 B.C., the Romans, not wanting to be dependent on Etruscan salt, founded their own saltworks across the river in Ostia. They built a single, shallow pond to hold seawater until the sun evaporated it into salt crystals.

The first of the great Roman roads, the Via Salaria, Salt Road, was built to bring this salt not only to Rome but across the interior of the peninsula. This worked well in the Roman part of the Italian peninsula. But as Rome expanded, transporting salt longer distances by road became too costly. Not only did Rome want salt to be affordable for the people, but, more importantly as the Romans became ambitious empire builders, they needed it to be available for the army. The Roman army required salt for its soldiers and for its horses and livestock. At times soldiers were even paid in salt, which was the origin of the word *salary* and the expression “worth his salt” or “earning his salt.” In fact, the Latin word *sal* became the French word *solde*, meaning pay, which is the origin of the word *soldier*.

To the Romans, salt was a necessary part of empire building. They developed saltworks throughout their expanded world, establishing them on seashores, marshes, and brine (saltwater) springs throughout the Italian peninsula. By conquest they took over not only Hallstatt, Hallein, and the many Celtic works of Gaul and Britain but also the saltworks of the Phoenicians and Carthaginians in North Africa, Sicily, Spain, and Portugal. They acquired Greek works and Black Sea works and ancient Middle Eastern works including saltworks by the Dead Sea. More than sixty saltworks from the Roman Empire have been identified.

Romans boiled seawater in pottery, which they broke after a solid salt block had formed inside. Piles of pottery shards mark many ancient

Roman sea salt sites throughout the Mediterranean. The Romans also pumped seawater into single ponds for solar evaporation, as in Ostia. They mined rock salt, scraped dry lake beds such as African sebkhas (salt flats), boiled the brine from marshes, and burned marsh plants to extract salt from the ashes.

None of these techniques were uniquely Roman. The Greek philosopher Aristotle had mentioned brine spring evaporation in the fourth century B.C. Hippocrates, the fifth-century B.C. Greek physician, seems to have known about solar-evaporated sea salt. He wrote,

The sun attracts the finest and lightest part of the water and carries it high up; the saltiness remains because of its thickness and weight, and in this way the salt originates.

The Roman genius was administration—not the originality of the project but the scale of the operation.

11. According to the passage, Romans transported salt from Ostia to Rome on the:
 - A. Hallstatt Road.
 - B. Dead Sea.
 - C. Via Salaria.
 - D. Mediterranean Sea.
12. According to the passage, the first method the Romans themselves used to produce salt involved:
 - F. burning marsh plants.
 - G. boiling saltwater.
 - H. pumping seawater into a pond.
 - J. digging tunnels near a river.

13. It can reasonably be concluded from the passage that one reason transporting salt by road worked well only in the Roman part of the Italian peninsula was because beyond that region the:
- A. army could not protect the salt from theft.
 - B. salt became too costly for most people to afford.
 - C. buyers did not care for the taste of Roman salt.
 - D. Etruscans controlled the salt trade.
14. According to the passage, the Roman Empire operated saltworks to produce salt for all of the following purposes EXCEPT to:
- F. pave its roads.
 - G. feed to its livestock.
 - H. pay its army.
 - J. sell to its people.
15. According to the passage, the original definition of the word *soldier* referred to the fact that soldiers receive:
- A. payment for their services.
 - B. training for their duties.
 - C. respect for their courage.
 - D. words of praise for their efforts.
16. All of the following are identified in the passage as methods used in salt production EXCEPT:
- F. boiling.
 - G. burning.
 - H. scraping.
 - J. sifting.
17. The main purpose of lines 58–61 is to:
- A. explain the process of solar evaporation for salt production in modern scientific terms.
 - B. illustrate the knowledge early peoples had about the process of solar evaporation.
 - C. demonstrate that the Romans had more accurate knowledge about salt production than the Greeks.
 - D. highlight how the basic methods of salt production have changed little today from the past.
18. The passage indicates that in order to continue building the Roman Empire, it was most important that salt be provided to the empire's:
- F. emperors.
 - G. general citizens.
 - H. trading partners.
 - J. soldiers.
19. According to the passage, how many saltworks from the Roman Empire have been identified?
- A. Just one
 - B. Only thirteen
 - C. More than sixty
 - D. Hundreds at multiple sites
20. According to the passage, piles of broken pottery help indicate where many Roman sea-salt sites were located because the Romans used pottery to:
- F. extract the salt from seawater.
 - G. prepare and serve food to workers.
 - H. preserve salt in large quantities.
 - J. transport salt long distances.