

**ASINAN: DOCUMENTING BOHOL'S TRADITIONAL METHOD
OF SALT PRODUCTION AND THE IMPORTANCE OF SALT
IN THE REGION'S EARLY ECONOMY**

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Early Salt Production in East and Southeast Asia

Salt was an important commodity in many of the world's early economies. It was widely produced, traded, used and consumed. Traditionally, salt was procured from a variety of sources including salt rock, brine springs and seawater. In areas rich in these resources, people developed ways to exploit them, and those without the natural resources found ways to obtain salt through trade.

In Asia, recent archaeological and historical research has shed some light on the social and economic role of salt over the past four thousand years. Archaeological evidence of salt production dates back to the third millennium BC in the Eastern Sichuan Basin, China where numerous archaeological sites have been identified with dense accumulations of potsherds believed to be linked to early salt production (von Falkenhausen 1999, Chen 2004, Flad 2004). In Japan, evidence of salt-production dates back to the Late Jomon Period (first millennium BC) from numerous coastal sites in Honshu (Imamura 1996, Kondo 1975). By the fourth century BC, Chinese historical records provide textual evidence of the importance of salt as a royal resource as well as a ritual good, and by the Han Dynasty (206 BC – AD 220) salt was a state controlled monopoly, and as such, was considered an important source of revenue for the Chinese im-

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