

# Ports and Amphoras

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Through finds of shipping amphoras in port areas, we are slowly gaining more precise knowledge about the shifting centers of Roman exportation and importation, about the productivity, or lack of productivity, of the agricultural and fishing activities in areas adjacent to ports, and about the industrial enterprises that sustained such commercial locations.

Amphoras from two ports in Italy are increasing our understanding of Roman trade and industry during the last two centuries of the Republic. On the east coast, oil and wine amphoras manufactured near Brindisi are found in massive quantities at production sites there. The same amphoras reappear as imports at the markets of Brindisi farther east—at Athens, Delos, Corinth, and Alexandria---and throw light on the Republican commercial histories of those trading hubs. On the west coast of Italy, similarly, amphora finds enable us to identify the Portus Cosanus as a local point for the exportation of wine and garum. Finds of those same Sestius amphoras in France, Spain, Switzerland, and Germany, and in shipwrecks (like the Upper Grand Congloue) that never reached their destinations testify to the preeminence of the Portus Cosanus as a Republican export facility serving the western Mediterranean.

During the Empire, Italian products were replaced on the world market by products of the provinces, and amphora finds reflect the intensive exportation from Spanish, and later from African, ports that transformed the harbors of Italy and the rest of the Roman world into import centers for oil, garum, and wine.

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