On the Cover: Salinas de Maras is an ancient salt mining operation in the Sacred Valley of the Inca along the Urubamba River, Peru at an elevation of 3,100 m (10,200 ft). More than 3,000 small ponds were constructed beginning between 200 AD and 900 AD during pre-Inca times. Highly salty water emerges from the Qoripujio spring close to the head of the valley. This water is diverted into an intricate system of tiny channels constructed so that the water runs gradually downhill to the ponds. Almost all the ponds are less than five meters square in area, and none exceeds thirty centimeters in depth. After filling the ponds, salt harvesting begins after several days of evaporation by scraping the sides and bottom of the pond. These ponds have been operated communally by salt “farmers” since at least Inca times. The farmers necessarily cooperate on the maintenance of the feeder channels, the side walls and the water-entry notch, the pond’s bottom surface, the quantity of water, and the removal of accumulated salt deposits. Photo taken by Doug Bartlett, CPG-8433.
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