

## Noctiluca

Malac (mainly known as **Noctiluca**) is a Phoenician goddess. Her name, Malaca, could be the origin of the Málaga's demonym. Noctiluca was the Goddess of the moon, fertility, life, death and hunting.

According to the Phoenician mythology, Malaka, whose name means queen, was Eshmun's wife. Eshmun was a god associated with fire and metallurgy. Eshmun was the Cabeiri god who died and resuscitates just to come back with Malaka, goddess of the sky.

The figure of Noctiluca is considered to have been the most important spiritual symbol in the whole Mediterranean region. She was also an object of worship in Syria where she was known as Astarté, in Egypt as Isis, in Greece as Hécate, Cibele and Afrodita: Noctiluca is the Mother of the gods, the female aspect that is given to the moon's actions of controlling life and agricultural cycles.



Statue representing Noctiluca, Rincón de la Victoria

## History

Festo Avieno, who was a poet from the IV century, talked about an island where there was a temple dedicated to Noctiluca. The island was located opposite **Rincón de la Victoria**:

*“There, opposite the town, there is a consecrated island of Tartessos’ domain dedicated to Noctiluca.”*

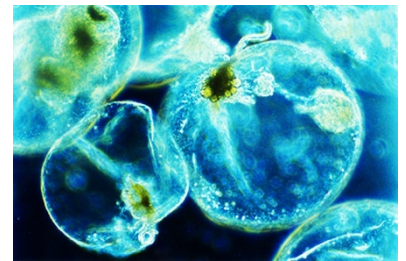
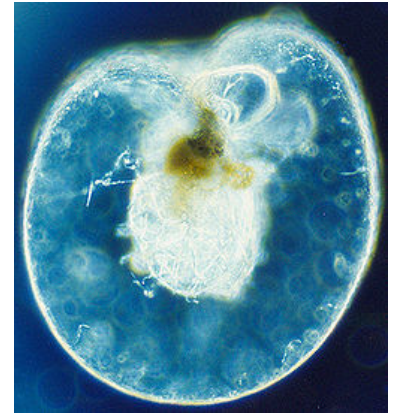
Nowadays, that island is connected to the town due to geological processes and thanks to the Totalán river. In Rincón de la Victoria there is a monument dedicated to the goddess in the promenade. Rufus Festus Avienus, recounted his experiences researching the coast of the Iberian Peninsula in his "Ora Maritima". With regard to Malaga, his references to the sanctuary of Noctiluca in Malaka Tarressia stand out, and the description coincides with the **Cueva del Tesoro**. The temple was dedicated to the Mediterranean moon goddess Noctiluca (she who shines in the dark). This cave is one of only three underwater examples of its kind in the world, and the only example of its kind found in Europe. The other two are in Asia and Central America (Mexico) respectively.



Cuevas del Tesoro, Rincón de la victoria.

## Noctiluca scintillans

*Noctiluca scintillans*, commonly known as the sea sparkle, and also published as *Noctiluca miliaris*, is a free-living, marine-dwelling species of dinoflagellate that exhibits bioluminescence when disturbed. The bioluminescence is produced by some organelles in the cytoplasm. They are about 1mm long. They eat plankton.



Iberians' religious traditions have always been a mystery, but it is often said that they used to worship goddesses, and also the sun and the moon.

According to the history, when they got to the Iberian Peninsula, they noticed in the coastline in Málaga these "sea sparkles", and they thought that these creatures were related to the goddess Noctiluca.

## Virgen del Carmen and Noctiluca

Iberians used to perform processions taking Noctiluca from Cuevas del Tesoro to El Palo beach. There, they introduced the goddess into the water so that she could bless the sea.

This is probably the origin of the tradition of Virgen del Carmen. The Virgen del Carmen is the current patron virgin of Rincón de la Victoria. Every 16<sup>th</sup> of July, they take the virgin in procession and they get her into the sea.



## Jorge Drexler's song

Jorge Abner Drexler Prada (born September 21, 1964) is a Uruguayan musician, actor and doctor. He wrote a song for his second child, related to the *Noctiluca scintillans*.

Lyrics:

La noche estaba cerrada,  
Y las heridas abiertas.  
Y yo que iba a ser tu padre buscaba sin encontrarme,  
En una playa desierta.

Tenía la edad aquella en que la certeza caduca,  
Y de pronto al mirar el mar vi que el mar brillaba con un brillar de noctilucas.  
Algo de aquel asombro debió anunciarme que llegarías,  
Pues yo desde mis escombros al igual que el mar sentí que fosforecía.  
Supe sin entenderlo de tu alegría anticipada,  
Un día entenderás que habla de ti esta canción encandilada.

Brilla noctiluca,  
Un punto en el mar oscuro,  
Dónde la luz se acurruca.

La noche estaba cerrada,  
Y las heridas abiertas.  
Y yo que iba a ser tu padre buscaba sin encontrarme,  
En una playa desierta.

Tenía la edad aquella en que la certeza caduca,  
Y de pronto al mirar el mar vi que el mar brillaba con un brillar de noctilucas.  
Algo de aquel asombro debió anunciarme que llegarías,  
Pues yo desde mis escombros al igual que el mar sentí que fosforecía.  
Supe sin entenderlo de tu alegría anticipada,  
Un día entenderás que habla de ti esta canción encandilada.

Brilla noctiluca,  
Un punto en el mar oscuro,  
Dónde la luz se acurruca.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rrPcx4bNxpo>