Braudel spoke in his *magnum opus* about the Mediterranean Atlantic to refer to the area stretching from the Strait of Gibraltar up to Canary Islands, so we believe this to be very relevant, more on maritime issues.

The fishing in the Saharan Bank belonged to those that counted with major resources to Europeans because the Mediterranean Sea was a lacking deep sea, no overriding sea with barely submerged banks where was no fishing in big any more than for the coral, which is not food fisheries. So Europe had firstly looked in Terranova and later in the Saharan Bank for the needed fish.

One of the motivations leading to the European arrival in this latitude was related to the operation of the Saharan Fishing Bank and the needs to provide proteins to a European population showing significant growth since the Late Middle Ages.

A high percentage of the population of Europe’s coastal areas were engaged in sea fishing operations: fishermen, sailors, pilots, ship masters, ship builders, caulkers, in addition to *lonjeros* and fish sellers, all of them and their families were shaping a group of people who reported directly to the sea and fish.

In spite of being a marine area with difficult limits hard boundaries the space is well defined by the Saharan Fishing Bank which was located with a few concrete species and a few particular outcomes, without any doubt about the need to expand or reduce the frame.

As the Saharan fishing bank is a maritime region, we can not demarcate its space with total accuracy, but its area can be approximated. There are neighboring coastal land areas that must be included to gain a clear picture of the region under study.

Many different groups of people have settled in this territory along the coast of Africa,
so a set of populations should also be taken into account. This may explain the changing international relations which have significantly affected the development of fisheries.

From the very first Atlantic incursions by the Iberian monarchs, once they acquired the necessary technical advances, fishing in the Saharan Bank was one of the reasons which prompted this phenomenon. When listing the factors that dominated the initial phase of Portuguese expansion areas, Godinho identified the need for fishing areas. ¹ While traditional historiography emphasizes demand for luxury goods as a key factor in oceanic expansion, Europeans’ need for protein is a more plausible reason as they sought food for a growing population. Therefore, one of the causes of Iberian expansion into the Atlantic during the late Middle Ages, and the discovery of the islands, involved fisheries and the search for new fishing grounds in this region. Portuguese, Cantabrian and especially Lower Andalusian fishermen all took part in this search.

Many ancient peoples, including the Phoenicians, searched for knowledge and operation of the Saharan fishing bank, one of the richest in the world.² Although during the early Middle Ages these visits had increased, it was especially at the end of the Middle Ages that both Christian and Moorish kingdoms of Iberia increased their efforts.³ In the transition from Medieval to modern times, fishing expeditions set out from the main ports of Andalusia to the Canary Islands and Africa, generating substantial revenue to the noble estates.⁴

THE BARBARY COAST

Although the lands of Barbary were extremely broad, the fisheries in the Saharan Bank were limited to the part of Morocco and Western Sahara as far as the Bank of Arguin, which is the territory closest to the archipelago. The great height of the dunes on the east coast provided guidance to the sailors when they were coming to the mainland.⁵ The return route was familiar to Canary sailors because they fished here often. George Glas offers us an

¹ Victorino Magalhaes Godinho: Os descobrimentos e a economia mundial. Lisboa, Presença, 1983. This idea is also developed in Immanuel Wallerstein’s El moderno sistema mundial. I. La agricultura capitalista y los orígenes de la economía –mundo europea en el siglo XVI. Madrid, Siglo Veintiuno, 1984, p. 460.
... they haul in the anchor around six or seven in the morning, and remain at sea with the breeze, until noon, when they veer toward land, with the sea breeze when they get close, or to drop anchor to spend the night or sail in a zig-zag in small tacks, until dawn, they are thrown out to sea at noon (...). When they reach ten or fifteen miles to windward of Cape Bojador, head for the island of Gran Canaria, if the wind blows from the northeast, reaching the port of Gando (...); but if the wind is north-northeast-quarter, they only find calm, which they enter until a sudden wind carries them southwest to the Canary Islands ...

From the fifteenth century, Andalusian fishermen ventured to Cape Aguer to fish for hake which they referred to as *pescada*. They sailed even farther south, fished in the waters of San Bartolomé (St. Bartholomew), at the mouth of Mar Pequeña and on the banks of Cape Bojador where they caught grouper, bogue and sea bass.

The Catholic Monarchs leased these Saharan fisheries to Juan Vanegas and Pedro Alonso Cansino. As of March 7, 1490 a decree was enacted that no other Castilian subject should fish in the seas of Cape Bojador, Angra de los Caballos and six miles south and could only do so west of the island of El Hierro, where no fishing is possible because the techniques used would not manage to capture anything in such deep waters.

Fishing on the northwestern coast of Africa, the so-called Barbary Coast, gained momentum in the second half of the sixteenth century. Fishermen, vessel owners and investors reached agreements to carry out this activity. From 1579 onwards almost every year saw one or two vessels sail for the fishery, particularly the years 1599 and 1600.

The traditional fishing area was formed at the northern and southern ends of Aguer and Boujdour respectively. This was endorsed in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries by Hispano-
Portuguese treaties at Alcacoba, Tordesillas and Sintra.\(^9\) Portuguese sailors had reached Cape Bojador in 1434, and in 1455 the king of Portugal was granted Pope Nicholas V’s papal bull Romanus Pontifex which included conquered lands from Cape Bojador to Guinea. This was confirmed in 1456 by Pope Callistus III in his Inter coetera bull.

However, the Castilian court ignored these concessions, through the treaties mentioned. Portugal retained control of Guinea and Castile kept the Canary Islands and the African mainland opposite. From the final decades of the 15th century, Andalusian fishermen also fished beyond their limits, especially those from Cadiz who hunted tuna. Indeed, it is no accident that Cadiz’s emblem shows a pair of tuna intertwined and tuna was engraved on their coins.\(^{10}\) Thus, later on, we find that the Andalusians based in the Canary Islands fished from Cape Aguer to the Rio de Oro. They preferred Cape Espartel, the area between the Lupus and Sebu rivers and the waters that lap the shores of Azamor.

During the seventeenth century this geographical area was extended, with decreased Portuguese and Spanish dominance in the Atlantic. New powers such as France, England and Holland joined the hunt for fish, so the distribution of the catch between the two Iberian powers was rendered useless, especially after 1640 with Lusitanian independence.\(^{11}\) Surely Canary fishing in Barbary surpassed these limits, judging by the extended duration of these expeditions, which went much further south, often to Rio del Oro and in many cases to the Arguin banks. Some documents make references to this location as their preferred fishing site.\(^{12}\)

Thus, the northern fishing area was marked along the southern part of the Atlas Mountains, about 20 degrees north latitude and 20 degrees south to 14 minutes, a distance of just over six hundred miles. The movement of ships depended on the seasons. In spring and summer, they often headed north, but in autumn and winter, they sailed south, following the

\(^9\) Antonio Rumeu de Armas: *España en el ...* Op. cit. p. 486. However, there was a prohibition on fishing at Cape Bojador and in Angra de los Caballos, dated 7 March 1490. In A.G.S. Cancillería. Registro del Sello. Sig: RGS 149003, 116.


\(^{12}\) A.H.P.L.P. Escribano MOYA, Francisco de, leg. 1.208, año 1660, Gran Canaria, fol. 26 r-v. In February 1660, Dutch Captain Miel Feutrel, from Flesinga in Zelanda, master of the "El Castillo de la Torre", docked at the port of La Luz, said he went to the fishmonger at Arguin Castle.
movement of fish because the fish depends on the tropism of the seasons. Spanish fishing activity alarmed the Portuguese sailors. These disputes would remain dormant during the Ancient Regime.

Strictly speaking, Barbary was composed of the countries located in the Atlas range, part of what is now called the Maghreb, that is, from Morocco to Tunisia, although this term is usually understood as the territory between Mauritania and Libya. Historians Emilio Sola and José F. de la Peña noted that "Barbary is the name designated in the sixteenth century to the present Maghreb, from Tripoli in the east to the Moroccan Atlantic coast in the west, lands that constitute the present-day Libya, Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco." In terms of territorial space, Barbary has different areas according to the author we consult. This discrepancy has caused some confusion. We need to take into account how the lands were divided up to ascertain what is included in Barbary: Ceuta, Tangiers and Mazagan; the kingdoms of Fez, Tarudant, Town of Alguero, the province of Darratierra Azanegues, the Crown of Morocco, Province of Tafacetes, Teguriri, the lands of Escura and Tedula, Villa of Anega, Province of Sus, Hecha, Duquela; Marinecos and Tremecen; Tremecen and Mostagan, Larache, Tetouan and Cape Aguer.

Spain's hostile policies toward northwestern Africa throughout the Ancient Regime until the second half of the eighteenth century, was contained at low levels, but sometimes led to failure for the Spanish fishing in the Saharan Bank. The Spanish presence in Atlantic Africa until the death of Queen Isabella in 1504 was nothing more than isolated incidents, but included the presence in the Canary Islands and forays into the Mar Menor of Barbary. The Crown itself sought to limit its presence in the area by holding back resources involved and potential conflicts. On July 13, 1501 the monarchs replied to Alvaro de Lugo and Antonio de Torres that, except in the case of absolute necessity, they should seek assistance in building of towers at Cape Aguer, although Spanish ships were fishing there.

The fishermen of Puerto de Santa María in the first three decades of the 16th century regularly fished in the fishing ground at Anasal and Cape Aguer, which explains why fishing

14 B.L. The Department of Manuscripts, Additional, Leg. 16.176, fol. 21 r.
duties were at the head of taxation. A 1537 census of fishermen counted about two hundred men engaged in this activity, representing around 12% of the workforce. However from the 1540s, state charges fell, mainly due to the negative impact of Maghreb piracy, and competition from Santander and Portuguese fishermen, so by the early seventeenth century virtually exhausted.  

The Canary Islands have been fished since the late fifteenth century. The Saharan fishing bank came to be exploited by fishermen mainly from Andalusia and Extremadura. From the sixteenth century, it would become the most important activity along this part of the African coast. The Crown considered it a royalty and thus taxed those who fished there. Lobo Cabrera states that the first reliable records of fishermen who were settled in the islands and went to fish in Barbary, date from the early sixteenth century, around 1520.  

For his part, Professor Eduardo Aznar marks 1507 as the year Canary fishermen became directly involved in this activity. The first information in this respect involves an agreement among boat owners and some merchants, which stated that the former fish at Rio de Oro and sell their catch to the latter at three and a half real each. However, we must move this date back, as there is a claim by Fernando Martinez Daza, dated October 4, 1492, claiming Dona Beatriz de Bobadilla, a woman from the island of La Gomera, payment for a boat he had taken, as testified, to catch dogfish (rock salmon) in Guinea (this referring to the area south of Cape Blanco). She had apparently offered two girls from La Gomera as payment, but the Council of Castile had ruled that as they were Christians, they could not be enslaved. Therefore Martinez Daza demanded payment for the ship and Beatriz de Bobadilla would not repay her debt.

Since the beginning of the sixteenth century, Tenerife's notarial documents record people as fishermen by profession. In 1506 Blas Afon is listed as a sailor, in 1510-1512, the Portuguese Luis Gonzalo appears as a fisherman, another Portuguese Luís de Évora, a cage fisherman on October 12, 1511. A February 7th 1511 entry makes reference to a fisherman identified simply as Pedranis. On March 10, 1511 there is another fisherman listed as

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15 A.G.S. Cámara de Castilla, Sig: CC, CED, 5, 180,8, s/fol.
Ledesma, and finally, the October 7, 1513, a Portuguese reportedly mortgaged a fishing boat.²⁰

In the seventeenth century, Barbary continued to be the borderlands of the Canary Islands and not only geographically but also in a religious sense. The sea in which fishing took place marked the distance between Christianity and Islam. To understand the lack of cooperation and exchange with Barbary, it should be noted that, in the early seventeenth century, the Muslim world is considered the eternal enemy, an idea that bonded with the crusading spirit and the "reconquest." Negotiations between the two cultures hardly took place. There was always visions of subjugation and annihilation of "holy war" and "crusade" just below the surface. This opposition will soften in the eighteenth century, due to a progressive secularization in the Western world, along with more practical thinking of the Enlightenment and the decline of privateering.

Spanish fishermen fished the African coast for environmental reasons. Fishing is abundant only near the coasts and in areas contact currents that give rise to deep water upwelling.²¹ In this sense, the Canary Islands are the perfect location between 27 ° 37 'north latitude and 13 ° 20' and 18 ° 10 'west of Greenwich. The shortest distance over the mainland is from Fuerteventura to Cape Juby separated by about 115 kilometers.

They are located in a cold ocean current of the Gulf Stream system in the area of the Azores Archipelago which creates a cold branch that reaches the Canary shores. The direction of this current is south-southwest, parallel to the coast of Africa, with a low average speed between 15 and 25 cm s⁻¹, but among islands it reaches 60 centimeters.²² In this zone the trade winds prevail with their movement over the Atlantic Ocean picking up moisture and the rising of deep water which is cooler, less saline and richer in nutrients.

Seasonal variations in the trade winds create a movement of surface water in a direction perpendicular to the wind. This creates a vacuum that is taken up by other deeper

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²² Gabriel Escribano Cobo y Alfredo Mederos Martín: “Balance y nuevas perspectivas de la arqueología
water, causing an upwelling of cold waters of the depths that carry nutrients from organic material deposited in the grounds of the coastal shelf. This produces phytoplankton, ie the set of aquatic organisms capable of autotrophic photosynthetic plankton, which serves as food for larger organisms and supports the base of the marine ecosystem’s food chain.

The special mechanics of ocean currents, (or upwelling), wind and the sun’s rays cause these abnormalities in water salinities and temperatures which directly affect marine life. The targeted species are determined by oceanographic conditions. As we move away from the continent in a westerly direction towards the Canary Islands, temperature and salinity increase.

All these features give the archipelago a richer marine ecosystem than the continental one, but with a smaller contingent. Canary region fish fauna is very diverse, there are approximately 350 species, but each has a limited number of specimens. Furthermore, the conditions facilitate sailing and rowing from the African coast to the islands, but it is best to avoid such winds in the return trip.

The African coast between Cape Aguer and the Arguin Bank is one of the most productive marine regions on earth. Therefore, the plentiful fishing grounds make the travel and investment worthwhile. Around the islands it was not possible to maintain a large-scale fishing operation. Furthermore, there was a lack of island platforms, due to the Archipelago own development as autonomous entities that makes the underwater surface extremely steep and rocky, with a very deep sea bed. Thus any massive fishing operations would be impractical and this is more remarkable in the northern and western coasts. The south and east, however, are less steep and in more sheltered areas from the trade winds. The tides range between the solstices, in early summer and winter with minimum and maximum of between 0.7 and 3 meters during the spring and autumn equinoxes. Abrupt depths are inhabited by fish, but they can only be caught with small scale gear, such small pots, lines, trammel nets and hammocks.

In addition, frequent winds and limited areas of shelter forced the Canary fishermen to use small vessels that could be easily hoisted from the sea by human strength when the weather conditions dictated. The reduced size of these boats meant they could not accommodate machinery to bring up fish from the depths and could only fish up to about 150 submarina en las Islas Canarias”. Cuadernos de Arqueologia Maritima, Nº 4, Cartagena, 1996, p. 204.
meters deep. The fish that spawn in shallow waters are grouped into schools with great ability to move and with a growth rate higher than ground fish. This determines the types of boats and fishing gear used.²³

The Canary Islands’ marine resources could not be compared with those near the northwest coast of Africa, despite having 1,250 kilometers of coast line, the sea floor surrounding the islands is low.

The diverse types of fishing are the result of the way of coasts, hydrological conditions, boats and methods. Each of these marine areas acquires specific technical and social organizations, but seem unified to those not familiar with that reality.²⁴

In this regard, the platform itself is critical in the type of fishing, it marks the type of gear and intensity of work time devoted to one or another type of fishing. Ecological anthropologists have examined the types of vessels characteristic of artisan fisheries near the coast in small boats whose crew could consist of between 2 and 5 people who navigated by oar or lateen.²⁵

Fishing is divided into bottom fishing or benthic and pelagic which includes species not related to the seabed. A small platform can not maintain large stocks, or allow large-scale fishing which produce large surpluses. Pelagic resources are, in turn, divided into coastal such as mackerel, sardines, and, most notably, tuna,²⁶ the islands are in the migratory routes of these species which seasonally increases coastal biomass.

From May to October the fishing is carried out in the windward area. During the eighteenth century, they docked at Puerto Cansado, facing Fuerteventura, and Cape Blanco, often anchored in the Bay of Santiago to avoid the constant breezes in this time of year. Between Puerto Santiago and Cape Blanco there were another five docking areas: the Parcher (place name that has influence in Gran Canaria), Playa de las Carabelas, Buenjardín the Cañuelas and Rio de Oro, was a sparsely populated area, only a few Arabs living in tents without any boats.

²⁶ The Sahara fishing bank hosts a diverse store of fish in the tuna family. Ramón Carmelo García Cabrera: “Túñidos de las pesquerías canario-africanas”. Homenaje a Elías Serra Rafols. T. IV, La Laguna, Universidad de La
On these trips there were very few technical resources, they were even said to sail without a compass, without any formal sea training, experience was their only guide. They rarely carried pilots, learned through oral transmission and from having fished before with others who knew the routes. Given this level of expertise, it was no surprise that these men were taken on the crews of vessels trading with America.

**EUROPEAN POWERS DISPUTE OVER FISHING RIGHTS**

As Morales Lezcano has maintained, the Crown’s diplomatic relations with North Africa should be put into the context of Portugal and Spain’s generally belligerent policy against Islam, even after the conquest of the kingdom of Granada was completed. They moved war-like into the north of the continent. In the collective mind, the "dangerous desert people" loomed menacingly on the horizon. It was an offensive-defensive strategy against the Ottoman Empire at one end al the way to the kingdom of Morocco, Fez and Tarudant at the far west of the continent. This is a dispute between two different social models, so the Spanish monarch’s policy to consolidate their military posts (which in the sixteenth century extended from the Atlantic coast of Africa to Santa Cruz de la Mar Pequena and Cape Bojador) was to hold off the Ottoman fleet, stem piracy and the Barbary pirates of the Republic of Salé. However, the existence of these Spanish prisoners never guaranteed Spain's security interests in the area, it was even a source of conflict that bedeviled diplomatic relations.

In 1494, Pope Alexander VI had bestowed a papal bull granting to Castile the conquest of Africa. With the Catholic Church taking part in this, confrontation between two civilizations developed. The opposition seems to be centered on the concept of rationality, the "otherness" increases in the spatial dimension, where they belong outside, so that ethnic factors was important in shaping the concept of the other. The sentiment of foreignness, the other in relation to a communal existence, has ancient roots in the historical origins of European

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28 A.M.C. Collected Documentation of Agustín Millares Torres, T. XI, Leg. 5, fol. 63 r.
culture. It is found in the Bible and then we see from Greece and those circles of different radius referred to the concept of alien that would endure in Europe. It is important to note that fear helps us construct the "other" as an enemy and therefore as a threat with strong support for authority. As the modern state is still forming, the monarch tries to impose the feudal lords, the images of enemies as archetypal figures in the community's unconscious creates a target and a social consensus in favor of absolute power.

The Treaty of Tordesillas reinforced the legitimacy of each of these the great kingdoms of the time, Castile and Portugal. With the capitulation between the Catholic Kings and the King of Portugal, through their attorneys on 12 July 1494, they set the boundaries where fishing could be carried out by each kingdom's subjects in African waters: from Cape Bojador south to the Rio del Oro and the limits of the Kingdom of Fez. 29

The Castilian conquest of the Canary Islands ending in 1496, coincides with the crown's wish to have closer access to the African mainland and avoid Portuguese opposition. In 1449 Juan II of Castile detached the Canary Islands from African control by Royal Decree 8 July that bestowed on the Duke of Medina Sidonia “sea and land from Cape Guer (today Agadir) as far as the high lands and Cape Bojador, with all neighboring fishing grounds and inland. However, the duke did not use this noble concession. 30 Thus the Monarchs were the biggest beneficiaries of fisheries from 1477 through leases.

One of the first Spanish facilities on the African continent was at Santa Cruz de la Mar Little, a fish factory founded in 1496, whose trade was controlled by the governors of Gran Canaria who directly represented the Crown, with special rules, confirmed in 1503 by Queen Isabella. They were accountable to officials of the House of Seville31. Portugal legitimized this site in 1509 with the Treaty of Sintra which recognized the right of Castile to settle a small coastal strip of the Sahara. Santa Cruz de Mar Pequeña came under royal control, taking advantage of the wealth of its river fishing. From 1472 there is no documentation on this fishery in Seville protocols. The leading role belonged to the fishermen of Palos, followed by

\[29\] A.G.I. Patronato, Sig: 170, R.5.
\[30\] José Ignacio Algueró Cuervo: El conflicto del Sahara Occidental desde una perspectiva canaria. Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Gobierno de Canarias, 2003, p. 32.
Moguer, Huelva, Gibraleón, Cartaz, Lepe, Ayamonte, Sanlucar de Barrameda, Puerto de Santa Maria and Seville. Later they were joined by fishermen from Fuerteventura and Lanzarote, and finally those of the other Canary Islands.  

However, as Lobo Cabrera has indicated, the starting point of this process dates back to the fourteenth century, due to the northwest African fisheries exploitation. The Andalusian fishermen turned Morocco in one of the most soughtafter fishing centers. Spanish commercial trade in this area was dominated by merchants from Cadiz and their associates from Genova, frequenting the ports of Taracuco, Tamarique, Santa Cruz del Cabo de Gue and Messa. This mutual association with Africa was banned by Charles V, in a March 29, 1549 decree, but was immediately resumed, particularly in Morocco.

Furthermore, Canary Island contacts with Portuguese outposts along the nearby African coast, were primarily military in nature, with limited economic importance. Portugal had expanded its operations along the Moroccan coast from Ceuta and other ports such as Seguer Alcázar, Asilah, Larache and Tangier. After the fall of Santa Cruz in 1541, Safi and Azamor were evacuated in the autumn of that year which further reduced the relationship. After the abandonment of Arcilla y Alcázar-Seguir in 1550, however, Canary boats continued fishing at Cape Aguer.

When water became scarce it had to be sought on land. The Canary fleet would obtain it at Parchel Mata, Bobard, and Cape Blanco, but risked being attacked. Armed with rifles, natives of those areas killed various fishermen on occasion. Only at Rio del Oro could they rely on the natives, where they obtained water, sheep, goats, gum and ostrich feathers, in exchange for cakes, fish, fishing hooks and lines.

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36 A.R.A.H. Manuscritos. Sig: 9/5918. This is also published in its entirety in Javier López Linaje y Juan Carlos Arbex: Pesquerías tradicionales y conflictos ecológicos 1681-1794. Madrid, Ministerio de Agricultura, Pesca y
Fishing on the northwestern coast of Africa was gaining momentum in the second half of the sixteenth century. Fishermen, vessel owners and capitalists agreed to carry out this activity. From 1579 onwards almost every year one or two vessels would sail to the fishery, particularly in the years 1599 and 1600.\(^37\) All these expeditions were staged by Canary Islanders, Andalusian and Galician fishing, which had operated the bank since the fifteenth century, was languishing in this area. From 1578 we see that it was slowly falling off until it almost disappeared, displaced by the islanders.

During the eighteenth century it was common for the expedition to reach Cape Blanco. In 1779 Fernando de Molina y Quesada wrote that Cape Blanco had only recently been discovered. However, records indicate since the sixteenth century ships reached these latitudes. In 1755 the French consul Casalone wrote that his fleet was sailing from the "Ribera del Oro" down to Cape Blanco. \(^38\) In 1786 another French consul, Hermand, set the fishing boundaries between Cape Nun and Cape Bojador. \(^39\) In the late eighteenth century we find documentation from a local Canary history group based in Gran Canaria (Amigos del Pais de Las Palmas) who stated that the Canary Islanders were operating from Mount Atlas to Cape Blanco. \(^40\) Fishing was carried out in the north or south depending on seasons. In spring they would head north, while in autumn and winter further south did, and that depending on the fishing season was more or less abundant in one or another area.

In the vicinity of Rio de Oro they hunted longrones, mullet, machetes and cabazot, (large herring), which the inhabitants took from the oil zone. There was also an abundance of eels, morays, rubio, long-fin salema, and locally-termed remudos, casones, gatas, sueldes and

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\(^{39}\) C.A.R.A.N., Affaires étrangères, B/III/344, s./fol.

\(^{40}\) A.R.S.E.A.P.L.P. Serie 2. Informes, 2.1. Informes manuscritos, leg. 2, 11. Legajo de papeles sobre la pesca en la Costa (1790-1867), s./fol.
A good example is the brig *La Caridad* went fishing in the Saharan Bank from the island of La Palma. Departing on November 6, 1822, the campaign lasted until December 29 when it arrived back to La Palma. From the beginning of the voyage they were "dropping their lines" and catching the amount they needed for dinner, then continued the journey and at 5 in the morning they sighted the coast. Two hours later they were able to anchor in a place called La Puntilla Negra. They reported that the next day they fished and noticed some schools so sent out their boats, then sailed along the coast to anchor near Punta Lirio. Another day they fished at Punta Gorda, where they spied another Canary boat also fishing in the area, anchored near the Roque del Sur, laid the brig to leeward, and launched their fishing boats, and returned to the boat to unload their catch. While sailing through the area, they usually could see the coast. To fish though they were forced to sail further out to sea to locate a school of fish, then they would again launch their boats to sea. They also found two other fishing boats that came in *El Roque* from Gran Canaria, throughout the campaign to find them again several times. Sometimes they had to land on the appropriate ground.

From mid-February to mid-April they generally remained in the Canary Islands, to refit and repair, because it was where weather conditions were worse. Molina y Quesada noted that the best months for fishing were between April and July when the fish spawn in the banks, but added that every month of the year there were plenty of fishing. However, weather conditions could change at any time.

Historical documentation recounts the links between this area and the Canary Islands which date back to the fifteenth century, a tradition that would continue throughout the sixteenth century. This indicates that fishing was practiced in the Canary Islands since the late fifteenth century.

Fishing was developed and continued throughout the Ancient Regime, always providing an important source of wealth, which fed directly or indirectly to many families.
gradually replacing the initial importance of Andalusian fishing enterprises with the Canary firms.

There is little doubt that international conflict hampered Canary salt fishing operations in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. In both these eras adverse circumstances befell many of these vessels, with catastrophic results for the island economy and markets. In all, 22 fishing launches were lost, six in the first and 18 in the second conflict.\(^\text{45}\)

In 1785 the Royal Maritime Company attempted to establish business on the coast of Africa. They brought samples of fish and production of the interior of the continent. Proponents of the idea thought it would be advantageous to rely on Canary fishermen and establish operations at Rio del Oro, the most appropriate place on the coast. It was estimated that the investment could be recovered in two years with the sardine fish plant, which would add the benefits of livestock, wool and rubber that could be traded with the Arabs established at Rio del Oro. It only needed to fortify a small strip of land of less than two rifle shots (an inaccurate measure of a few hundred meters), where the enemy could enter, to ensure a 16-mile area that was surrounded by ocean with abundant fish and ground wells.

This establishment not only interested Spain but also England and France, who wished to call on voyages to Guinea and India, especially for safety from their frequent shipwrecks. It was only recently that a French frigate *La Bonita*, was stranded in this area, and had to camp on the shores until some Canary fishermen rescued them and took them to Tenerife. Something similar happened to an English ship that had enslaved some of their people and only one group was rescued by Canary fishermen. Seven months earlier another French schooner sailing from Senegal to Europe capsized off the coast and was lost, without food. Only one crew member survived, managing to hide until he was spotted by a Spanish brig which was fishing at the Beriles. A Dutch frigate Netherlands endured another dramatic episode, in 1803, when it was shipwrecked, killing 19 men. Eight men were saved by Canary fishing boats some two weeks later. All these events were reported by Godoy in an effort to

\(^{45}\) *Los Quadernos del comerciante de la calle de la Peregrina Don Antonio Betancourt 1796-1807.* Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, 1996, p. 100. Con Introducción y estudio de Antonio de Bethéncourt Massieu.
promote the notion of a settlement in the west coast of Africa.  

Fishing gained momentum after the signing of the Peace of the Pyrenees in 1659, and we see an increased presence of foreigners. This is also related to increased salt plants in the islands after that date.

By the end of the eighteenth century, Europe’s sole objective was trading slaves, gold, ivory and spices. As industrial capitalism develops, European policy toward the colonies change, and trade is not only profitable but also involves the search for industrial raw materials and foodstuffs such as fish and finding markets for their industrial products.

In the seventeenth century, there was an important presence in the Canary Islands of foreigners who mainly wanted to fish, this was only a minority compared to the number of Canary Islanders who were involved in this pursuit. However, foreign presence was continuous throughout the period, with French, English and Dutch sailors, all of whom were affected by the wars of the Spanish Crown.

Lope Antonio de la Guerra y Peña’s diary records that in 1774 a British ship loaded with sardines and other products went aground on the Punta del Hidalgo, Tenerife. At night the neighbors stormed the ship and took the entire cargo, then smashed up the ship leaving no signs of what had been stranded there.

It is likely that some of these expeditions from bases to the Canary Islands should be sought a complementary activity to their major trade with the islands, while loading and unloading, and chartering another boat to return to their countries of origin or other points, which, as we have seen, could be done for several months. Some European masters took advantage of these months of waiting. Rather than stay in dry dock, they would tour nearby regions or go to Barbary. We also know that the Dutch, who took advantage of their catches of fish in the Saharan fishing bank purchased Canary products, among which were sold at eight

49 A.H.P.L.P., ÁLVAREZ DE SILVA, Diego, leg. 1.280, año 1662, Gran Canaria, fols. 227 r.-229 r .
real. They would then exchange them in the Guinean markets for ostrich feathers and gum.  

**Political relations with Barbary**

The Spanish Crown’s contact with the African coast near the Saharan Bank, particularly the area known as Barbary, was characterized by the difficult and changing confluence with the Arab World. The constant hostilities between Spanish and North African kingdoms during the sixteenth, seventeenth and first half of eighteenth centuries, significantly damaged Spanish fishing along the African coast. However, in this period, the Canary Islanders managed to maintain some fishing in the Saharan Bank, but through occasional commercial relations with some Indian tribes were discontinued.

Spanish policy towards North Africa is characterized by confrontation. The total conquest of this territory had been postponed indefinitely as Spain turned its gaze more toward colonial America and Europe. Alfonso de la Serna writes that although some further military operations were carried out, but once "Atlantic objective" was turned overseas the African front lost depth and the main objective in the area was combating privateering, protecting Spain’s Mediterranean coast and also stemming any Turkish advances.

At the same time, since the sixteenth century, the Muslim world generated an output to maintain their independence and even opposed the Christian states while recovering some of the cities that the European powers dominated in North Africa. Such examples as the Ottoman occupation, the response of privateers and the achievement of a relatively strong central power in Morocco in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries would bear testimony to this trend. While the Spanish Crown would not launch a full invasion in North Africa did not mean it renounced its role in the politics of this area, which led to intervention in internal affairs and the occupation and maintenance of places such as Ceuta, Penon de Velez, Al Hoceima,

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52 The current bibliography concerning Berber-Spanish relations in the modern era, is extensive, there are some particularly relevant studies. One reference book cites 16,172 titles up to 1980 in Rodolfo Gil Grimau: *Aproximación a una bibliografía española sobre el norte de África 1850-1980*. Madrid, Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores, 1988. Gran parte de las referencias las encontramos en obras de carácter general, donde se hacen alusiones dispersas a estas cuestiones. Son más numerosas las investigaciones sobre el África Atlántica y sobre el Maghreb y en ellas también hallamos datos de gran valor que iremos resaltando. Por otra parte, algunos artículos se han detenido a analizar las relaciones comerciales entre diversas comunidades hispanas con el norte del continente africano, principalmente de Canarias y Cataluña.
Chafarinas Islands, Melilla and Oran with its port of Mazalquivir (although the latter site was abandoned in 1792). The Canary Islands were caught up in this international context through a relative isolation from Maghreb.

During the Ancient Regime, this area was divided into large blocks with different political administration. On the one hand, the area of Ottoman rule, which corresponds to the sixteenth century North African territory between Algeria and Egypt. On the other hand, Morocco, which opened the seventeenth century with a decaying dynasty, Saidi, which will be replaced in the middle of that century by the renewed Alawite dynasty. This was accompanied by a growing process of disintegration of state power in the Maghreb, which started in the late Middle Ages, where parallel to the emerging powers of the central authority. In this environment, we can understand the influence of the corsair republics in Morocco during the seventeenth century or the phenomenon of holy men. European domination of North African territory is noteworthy. The more we move away geographically from the nuclei of the central power in the Maghreb, the less its authority is recognized, as with the peoples who inhabited the Western Sahara and Mauritania today.

From the seventeenth century, Morocco will have three major ports operating in the western Atlantic: Salé (now the Citadelle des Oudayas in Rabat), Safi and Santa Cruz (now Agadir). Further north had some importance Larache and Mamora. The most important of these was Salé, which belonged politically to Fez, and even between 1627 and 1630, became an independent republic with a royal governor. In the second half of the eighteenth century the further development came about at Mogador (today Essaouira). We assume that these people must have fished, but there is no documentation in Spain or Morocco. In any event, it would only be coastal fishing, production of which was devoted only to subsistence. Once caught, the fish did not go through at processing except to be put out in the sun.

The sixteenth century raids in search of slaves became part of history. These had been organized from the Canary Islands with strong support by the ruling class. These camel train raids were the incursions the Iberian Christians made during the fifteenth and sixteenth into Barbary, in search of treasure, especially slaves, for others, simple acts of privateering on land. In 1572 Felipe II prohibited these campaigns into Barbary. The reason was due to the

Pons, 2001, p. 131.
desire to carry out a "peace" and prudence policy in North Africa at the time of maximum Ottoman imperial expansion in the Mediterranean. In addition, for some years Barbary had increased its privateering in the Canary Islands: So there were attempts to establish more defensive action that would not endanger the possession of the islands. Yet some campaigns were carried until the end of this century.

Since these Saharan incursions were banned (as a result of its "pacifist" policy in North Africa), the slave trade in this area was stopped almost entirely for the Canaries. This fact, coupled with the fear of the Muslim Barbary pirates and attacks that increasingly affected the Canary Islands, trade relations stopped, which could have been beneficial for both the islands and for the Spanish monarchy itself. At that time the raids were common. We know that produced huge profits (estimated by Professor Wolf at between 150 and 200%) and fostered capitalism, as capital accumulation produced could then be invested in those social formations that occurred.

Since the fifteenth century, the Lords of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, conducted about 100 raids into Barbary, which constituted a major problem in the Spanish relations, for which they were temporarily suspended until 1505 when Queen Juana renewed them. Finally, as noted previously, in 1572, Philip II again prohibited the practice. After this suspension, resumed in 1579 due to the efforts of Gran Canaria Alderman, Pedro de Escobar, and the following year the lords of Fuerteventura and Gran Canaria authorities organized several new raids. The captains also had to use slaves for fishing the Saharan grounds, so the Gran Canaria council issued an ordinance in Valladolid December 4, 1550 that prohibited this type of action:

"In this council it has been decreed that from now onwards no fisherman, or other master of a vessel of this island may bring back with him or carried on any other ship to fish nor sail, an enslaved black man, upon penalty that such slave will be returned to his land at three times his value, and at present have such slaves within the first twelve days following the removal off the Island, under said penalty, because thus it should be for the good of this island and custody thus no slave ships shall sail to Barbary as it hereby proclaimed." 55.


55 Libro rojo de Gran Canaria. Introducción de Pedro Cullén del Castillo, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria,
Actually, after 1572 some raids continued to be organized and carried, but this practice declined. Prisoners were also languishing on the continent over the last quarter of the sixteenth century.  

Despite the bans, even in the early decades of the seventeenth century, Canary merchants and authorities harbored fond hopes of resuming a very lucrative business in Barbary, but they were finally thwarted, although it has been argued that during the seventeenth century there were no more raids with 1611 being the last one reported.

Spanish diplomacy changed throughout the eighteenth century with the Bourbon dynasty in power. This would have significant impact on the Saharan Bank for economic relations with the Arab-Berber and hostilities between the two peoples will influence the economic and social dynamics the Canary Islands. The Hispanic Monarchy also sought to prevent attempts by other European powers to settle on the coast of northwest Africa.

The exchanges between the Canaries and Barbary were always fundamental. This was indeed the hinterland surrounding the archipelago and, therefore, international relations between the Spanish Crown and the Kingdom of Morocco would cause different impacts on the Canarian fishing.

Throughout the eighteenth century various peace treaties were signed between the two Crowns. Belligerence in this area was less common as there were less pirate attacks from North Africa.

Commercial breaks were terribly harmful for both regions, leading to some declarations of war between the Spanish and Moroccan monarchs. Such declarations specified that the battle be waged only on land and that sea routes should can continue to negotiate normally, thus safeguard fishing.

Joint business agreements with Africa would play a positive role in overcoming times of tension, such as on free trade with Morocco decreed in 1766 served to offset poor crops in subsequent years.

In the second half of the eighteenth century, the Spanish Crown’s relations with the kingdom of Morocco were still important, even if there is a relative decrease compared to

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56 Cabildo Insular de Gran Canaria, 1995, p. 446.
57 Manuel Lobo Cabrera: La esclavitud en las... Opus cit. Págs. 63-65.
58 A.M.L.L. Libro 2º de Reales Cédulas y provisiones del primer oficio de Cabildo, fol. 211 r-v. Así, en 1603, Tenerife solicitó ante el Rey el poder realizar entradas en tierra de alarbes, no siendo vasallos del Jerife.
59 A.A. Alz. Berbería, s/fol.
In the children’s school manual, they were taught, during the reign of Charles III, in
1783, regarding Africa, it was said that the Kingdom of Morocco was subject to legislation and
civil bodies, and the republics of Algiers, Tunis and Tripoli were dismissed merely as serfs of
the “Great Turk”, governing themselves independence according to his particular laws.

In addition, the school had to learn Africa’s descriptive geography. This manual is
noteworthy as it details the area of interest and what should be known of it. After dividing
Africa into three parts, from north to south in the north, would be what they called Barbary,
which in turn is composed of two parts. First, the republics mentioned above, where the
Spanish crown held a stronghold at the Oran port of Mazalquivir and on the other hand, the
kingdoms of Fez and Morocco, where the Spanish held Ceuta, Melilla, Penon de Velez and
Alhucemas.  

Since the early eighteenth century, Morocco did not allow entry to any merchant or
consul except England. This nation maintained a business and political affairs agent there.
England, as the first naval power played an important role in the Regency. This law remained
in place until 1757 when Sidi Mohamet Ben Abdelà took the Moroccan throne. This sovereign
declared peace with several European powers, the Netherlands, Denmark and Spain. He
denied access to English because they had supported another claimant to the throne.  
In the
second half of the century the Canary authorities were concerned about the possibility that
England take over fishing on the African coast.  

Given their location, the Canary Islands are concerned about issues affecting African
politics in their area, especially in the last three decades of the eighteenth century, from the
first peace treaty, which would protect Canaries and Spanish fishing rights.

Under Charles III, Spain maintained friendly relations with some African regencies and
Morocco. Hernandez Franco considers this approach a way of getting friends and allies from

59 B.L. The Department of Manuscripts, Egerton, Leg. 581, fol. 114 v-117 r.
60 B.L. The Department of Manuscripts, Egerton, Leg. 371, fol. 177 v. Gaston Zeller: Los tiempos modernos. En
England.\textsuperscript{62} This was the only Spanish monarch who maintained a coherent policy in Africa. The normalization of relations and peace was a priority of his foreign policy.\textsuperscript{63} The most important result was the disappearance of Salentine piracy. In 1767 and 1799, Spain signed peace and trade treaties with Morocco after the truce of 1765. They also signed similar agreements with the Ottoman Empire and with Algeria in 1782.

From 1765 he initiated contacts between the Spanish Crown and the Kingdom of Morocco to establish normal relations between the two states with the high profile of the Count of Aranda. The Sultan of Morocco Sayyidi Muhammad b. 'Abd Allah had taken the initiative to restore relations, Carlos III sent the Franciscan missionary Fray Bartolome de la Concepción Giron, who arrived in Tangier at the end of that year with instructions to reach an agreement. This would include permission to form a settlement on the African coast where the Canary fishermen could dry and cure fish, however the results were not positive in this case.\textsuperscript{64}

In mid-1766 the Moroccan Ambassador Ahmad al-Gazzal arrived in Spain, to negotiate with the Spanish Prime Minister, Marquis de Grimaldi, and the following year, the Spanish squad leader, Jorge Juan, visiting Morocco on a diplomatic mission signed the treaty of peace and friendship cited previously.\textsuperscript{65}

The Treaty of Peace and Commerce favored fishing, but the Spanish negotiators tried in vain to obtain the prerogative to establish a factory on the African coast, but at least obtained a monopoly of fishing in the area. Indeed, the Marrakech Treaty was signed on May 20, 1767, as was a peace and trade agreement between Morocco and Spain primarily concerned with the Spanish fishing rights in the Saharan Bank. In fact, as noted, it gave Spain the exclusive right to fish in those waters, but to enter Moroccan ports, the Spanish fishermen would have to present documented to the authorities. This agreement was not the result of a war, but the mutual wish to

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{64} Mariano Arríbas Palau: "Canarias en los tratados entre España y Marruecos". \textit{II Aula Canarias y el Noroeste de África} (1986). Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Cábido Insular de Gran Canaria, pp. 125-144, concretamente en p. 127.
  \item \textsuperscript{65} Vicente Rodríguez Casado: \textit{Política marroquí de Carlos III}. Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1946, pp. 69-133.
\end{itemize}
establish friendly relations. The original text in Arabic (which is not exactly like the Castilian translation) stated in Article 18 that the Moroccan monarch would be held responsible for what may happened to Canary fishermen on the coast from Wadi Nun and "beyond" by the existence of Arabs who are not under the effective control of Morocco. This is contrary to what was happening from Agadir to the west if it was under their control. The Spanish version expresses the desire of Carlos III of "establisuing a place to fish " on the Atlantic coast of Africa, which does not appear in the Arabic version, but only the fact fish.66 Sometimes Canarian fishermen were caught and enslaved by the inhabitants of the coast south of Wadi Nun when sailing near the land or docked to rest or refuel, they were almost always small boats with small crew.67 This meant that the Spanish fisheries were only partially favored.

In the reports establishing the Society of Maritime Fisheries, it was stated that there would be no need to fear the Arabs because the land south of River Nun, were not theirs. The commissioner, Jacinto Delgado, claimed to have spoken with the locals (in what is now Western Sahara), who were said to "love fishermen" and speak Spanish fluently. In fact, what they wanted was fish on these boats Canary Islands, while others remained on land grazing their herds, in groups of 10 or 12, to steal fish from these Spanish and take the remains of shipwrecks.68 This peace posed a major breakthrough in the economy to the activities in the Saharan Bank, allowing Moroccan ships to enter unappropriated islands (Gran Canaria, Tenerife and La Palma), as described by Arribas Palau.69

Trade between the two crowns was assured as Morocco hoped, to the extent of stipulating that passports appearing given to the subjects of both kingdoms, should be simplified to the point of not being required to read.70

After the 1767 treaty, of Mohamed III and Charles III signed the Convention of Aranjuez in

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66 Mohamed Larbi Messari: "El tratado de 1767 como fundamento de los derechos históricos de España sobre el Sáhara occidental". En Víctor Morales Lezcano y Javier Ponce Marrero (eds.): Canarias y el noroeste de África. Historia de una frontera. Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Gobierno de Canarias, 2007, pp. 13-20. Este tratado es de gran trascendencia y aún se discute acerca de sus cláusulas hasta en el seno de la ONU porque es lo que da legitimidad al dominio español en el Sáhara Occidental y cuestiona la soberanía marroquí de dicho territorio.


1780, which was subsequently revised in 1785.

Mohamed III attempted to ensure the safety of the maritime area against piracy. Prior to 1767 Morocco had signed similar treaties with Denmark in 1751, with Holland in 1754 and Sweden in 1763. In 1767, apart from the treaty with Spain, another was concluded with France another with Denmark. By this time Morocco was a relative sea power with 27,000 sailors, which forced Sweden in 1758 and later the United States to respect its conditions.

Molina y Quesada claimed there was no record that these states fished in the Saharan Bank from that point. Only the Portuguese began to fish after 1664, while Canary fishermen from Tenerife would do so after 1500. We know this assertion is an entry completely wrong and probably intentional.

In August of 1772 found two Spanish ships at the port of Agadir loading fish, a Catalan saetia and a Canary brig. Both carried a letter of recommendation addressed from Vice Consul Pedro Suchit to al-Hasan b. Salem, who wielded the port authority in that city. The letter said that both vessels would keep to the agreement and pay more than 61 dollars for rights to anchor there. Aware that the Sultan decreed Saetia (three mast) pay 500 pesos and the brig (two mast) 200, without charging anything for the fish they had.

Morocco also attacked Spanish possessions at various junctures, but suggested that the war was only by land and that seaways remain peaceful. This benefited trade between the two kingdoms and fishing in the Saharan Bank.

October 1774 saw relations between Spain and Morocco broken by the Moroccan sultan’s attack on Melilla which led to a declaration of war the following year. In the Canary Islands, the danger of assaults by Africans would constitute a significant risk to the entire island navigation: "... Because of the sailing expeditions which are inevitable, and not all have the power to them, as well as the fear of the Moors, who usually inhabit those seas."

In mid-1779 relations between Spain and Morocco were resumed, Carlos III authorized opening certain mainland ports to ships, first Salé and then other ports. This led to the signing

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73 B.L. The Department of Manuscripts, Additional, Leg. 25.090, fol. 47 v.
of a new agreement in May 1780 at Aranjuez which ratified by the end of that year that trade relations between the two kingdoms be restored. 74 Meknes signed on March 1, 1799 an agreement that renewed earlier treaties and again insisted that Spanish fishermen could fish without problems north of Wadi Nun, but not establish posts along the coast. In Article 35 ensures the tranquility of the Canarian fishermen north of Agadir. Furthermore, with article 22, the Moroccan king pledged to deliver those Canary Islanders that had been captured by in those areas and Article 37 gives powers to the Moroccan authorities to identify sites where they could fish. Even the Spanish Ambassador to Morocco advised that it would be safer to fish north of the river to gain the protection of the Moroccan monarch since the south of this region was outside the domain of the ruler. 75

After the European wars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Moroccan monarch Moulay Slimane also become aware of his country's military weakness. European navies had an obvious technological advantage that outstripped all the other continents on a global level. This fear of the power of European navies, with their sophisticated weapons and strategy, made him fear any confrontation with Europe. So in the early nineteenth century, Moulay Slimane used a defensive policy, a policy of settlement of troops that characterized relations between Morocco and Europe in the nineteenth century. 76

By 1813, Spain would forge in Vienna a definitive solution to the problem of Barbary privateering, through a punitive international expedition against the North African regencies.

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