



## UNDER THE VOLCANO

After a nice run to Lanzarote in a wind of 5 to 6 Beaufort, and an attempt of anchoring at Arrecife (to avoid, bad holding), and “Yo!” is moored in Marina Puerto Calero on Lanzarote island in the Canarias Archipelago. Our first trip in the Atlantic lasted 12 days with one unscheduled stop at Mohammedia, a few miles north of Casablanca, just a refresh into Islamic culture, babushs, and headscarves ...

On September 24<sup>th</sup>, we went through the Hercules Pillars, the limit of the known world in the Antic times. Hercules would have separated the mountains with his hands creating the passage. The two pillars symbolize the link between the Land and the Ocean. The Mount Calpe of the antic world is now the Gibraltar rock. On the south side in Morocco, mount Abyla becomes Djebel Moussa next to Ceuta.

The « first parallel », a kind of equator of the areas that antic scholars could master, goes exactly between the Pillars of Hercules. Out of the Strait, on the Atlantic side, are the two old cities of Gades (Cadix in Spain) and Lixus (Larache in Morocco). These two cities are on a North/South line, sort of meridian which used to be the western limit of the inhabited world, the Ecoumene. These two imaginary lines cross near Tangiers. These three locations are famous for Hercules tasks: in Lixus Hercules steals the golden Apples of the Hesperides, in Tangiers he removes the giant Antee from the ground to kill him and in Gades he takes Geryon’s cattle.

Beyond this western limit of the known world ancient Greeks would situate evil powers like the Gorgons, the giant Atlas and the Island of the Dead that Ptolemy located close to Cabo Verde.

Christophe Colomb the first sailor who wanted to go to Levant through Ponant – like us as a matter of fact - left from Cadiz.

In our modern atlas, the imaginary limit between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean is a line from Trafalgar Cape west of Gibraltar and Espartel Cape west of Tangiers. Crossing it is the occasion to celebrate Yo's entrance into the Atlantic and to open the bottle of champagne provided by Vincent.



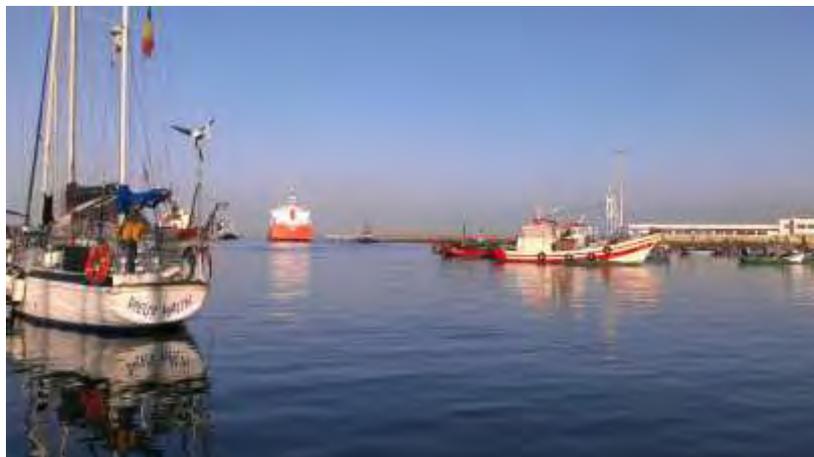
So, while tacking between cargoes we take measures and wait dutifully to leave the Espartel Cape in  $165^\circ$  to say we're in.



It takes time, the bottle warms up, it's not good. Fortunately, we suddenly realize the magnetic declension of  $+5^\circ$  is on our side: this is it! We are in the Atlantic Ocean! Welcome into the unknown world! Hooray to long swell! Over with the lack of wind! Over with ever changing weather forecasts! At last!

In fact, it didn't turned out to be as expected. We left Gibraltar in a hurry as low pressures coming from the West were threatening to lock the Strait of Gibraltar for the next 2 weeks, we went along the Morocco coasts in no wind at all, then much too much and had to stop in Mohammedia in order to get shelter from the rain which eventually flooded Marrakech.

Casablanca Marina is under work since 2000, completion planned for 2005, oops, sorry, 2010, oops, in fact 2015 and still nonfunctional. As a consequence, Mohammedia marina is the only one on the Atlantic Moroccan side but for Agadir's; Mohammedia is a nice example of diversity: protected by a huge wall from the southwest swell, an oil terminal built in the seventies for THE Moroccan refinery protects the tankers as well as a very active fishing harbor and a tiny marina.



A very simple and warm welcome. We had some good time watching all these people come and go sheltered by the big wall in the uttermost indifference whilst LPG carriers were loading highly flammable gazes. We also had a good time eating grilled sardines with families coming from Casablanca on a Sunday afternoon, or celebrating the end of season close-out party of the roof top restaurant "Le Port" with the local jet-set. A nice occasion to observe a casual Islam, where veiled and coquettish women sit with others wearing t-shirts and where alcohol flows freely. Yet, one can feel Islam everywhere. One example is the Great Mosque of Casablanca built by the King Hassan II. Partly on the sea, it has the highest minaret of the world.

The monarchy, its role, and objectives, bring a lot of interesting discussions. The change Janus, Moroccan women are among the most liberated in the Maghreb whilst families are splitting. High education for all, but few perspectives apart from emigration.



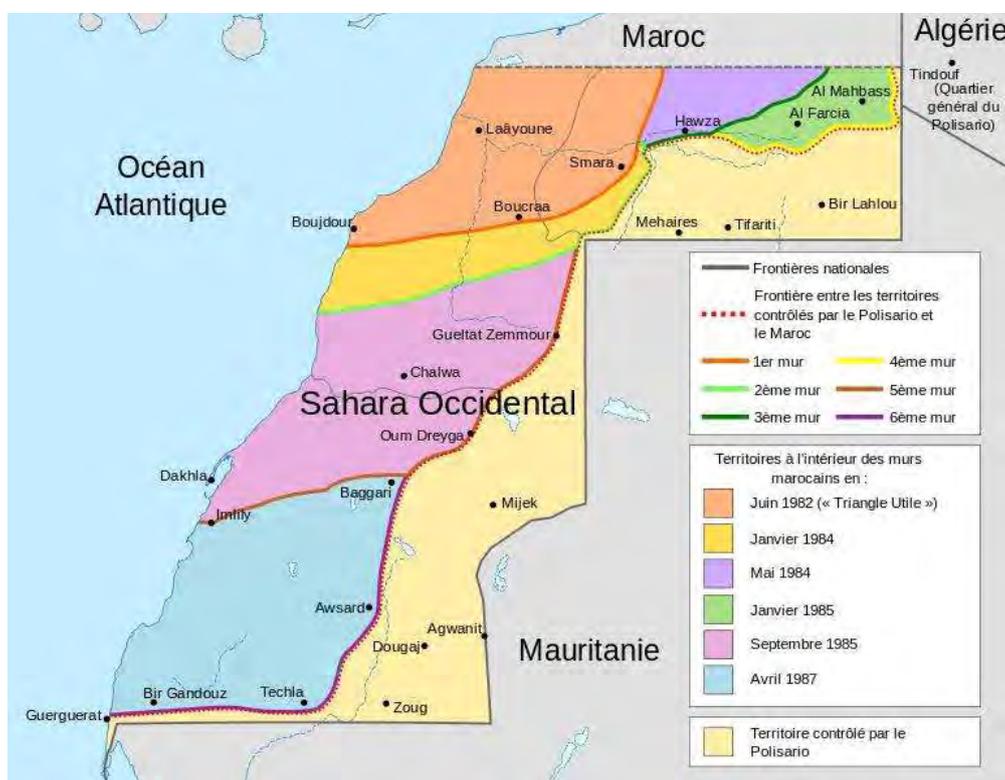
From here, a long sailing down the Moroccan coasts, long nights off Safi then Essaouira, while watching out for fishing boats with or without lights but surely erratic movements and moments to meditate the saying of Aristotle (?): There is three kinds of people, the living, the dead and those who go at sea.

In the pilot for the North Atlantic Islands, one of the described dangers when coming to the Canarias consists in hitting of a “Cayucos” which would have sunk accidently. The Canarias Archipelago is located less than 100 miles from Moroccan coasts and the unclear political situation of the Western Sahara instigates immigrants to flee Africa on “Cayucos” through Fuerteventura or Tenerife to make passage to Europe.

Spain left the Western Sahara in 1976 and since then considers its liability is over. But the United Nations consider that the decolonization process is not over and put this area on its list of non-autonomous territories, without administration.

Since 2003, Morocco and the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) consider themselves as empowered administrations, the African Union recognizes the SADR, and therefore Morocco is the only African country which is not a member of the Union. Morocco would like to make the Western Sahara one of its southern province which seems to be an element of political stability for the Moroccan population and agreed by countries of the “Free world” which consider that SADR could be a tool used by Algeria (looking to guarantee access to the Atlantic Ocean and natural resources). Besides, there is the specter of AQMI (the Saharan Al Qaida arm) looming. The auto-determination referendum claimed by the SADR and Algeria could not be organized since 1988. It is so difficult.

For the time being, Morocco (80 % of the territory) and SADR control zones are separated by a sand wall of 2500 km built in the eighties by Moroccans. Morocco remains on the west side and SADR on the east side.



Economic stakes make it all clear. Morocco (including the Saharan part of course) detains the largest phosphate world reserves and the production of early fruits and vegetables is highly developed.

Now that Greece despite its Homeric past fell, the role of Gate keeper of the Empire is held by Italy (cf Lampedusa) or Spain (cf Melilla, Ceuta or the Canarias). Morocco is part of the device, a buffer zone likely to be used but not integrated alike Turkey that we like but do not want. No doubt that the Empire supports the two former Catholic Church bases in their mission of protection against barbarians; yet the Empire mainly allocates its resources to:

- The satisfaction of all the desires of a little minority driving nice cars, living in nice apartments or enjoying exceptional dishes (“langues de rossignols farcies à la graisse d’urus dans Astérix” – “civelles et foie gras truffé de nos jours”)...
- The control of basic instincts and satisfaction of the need for security of the overwhelming majority, never ending flow of world cups or championships, saturation of cultural activities or adulterated debates around the Other one, the Stranger that one prefers to exile or cover with an invisibility cloak, perspective of a continuous rise of life expectancy...

So, these resources tend to decrease, making it hard to contain the “Limes”.

From the Great discoveries to the Post war economic boom, predation behaviors fuelled the rise of the Empire at low cost, raids on black “free” power (slavery and oil) for example, which is not possible anymore.

Sequels can be imagined from history books. Are there any others? Your opinion is welcome.



Some hundred kilometers west, the Canarias: a volcanic archipelago, located just above the Tropic; the island further north is Lanzarote, essentially famous for flocks of English people on holidays. But the desert and desolated aspect of this low island on which only numerous craters exceed is the most striking. Lanzarote is under the trade winds regime and the cold current of Canarias makes the climate milder that one could imagine: temperatures are never over 25°C except when the Sirocco is blowing. As the island is very low, winds from the Northeast loaded with humidity have very few influence on the rains which remain under 200 mm and which a great part go into the sea without being kept except in cultivated zones.



These climatic conditions have a great influence on the useful quantity of water, primarily a few sources or wells. Today, 100 % of fresh water comes from a few dams and mainly desalinization plants. Thank to these installations, tourists can use spas, swimming pools, gardens, golfs... The price of water is around 0.60€/m<sup>3</sup> for the first 10 m<sup>3</sup> then goes up to 3 to 4€/m<sup>3</sup> beyond 40 m<sup>3</sup> or for recreational use, inducing a strong consumption auto control. As a comparison, in France in 2012 the price was of 3.43 m<sup>3</sup> and the consumption around 120 m<sup>3</sup>.

The island vegetation is very poor due to geology, the type of soil and climatic conditions. But to what extent is the human impact as well to blame?

The first human implantation by people of Berber origins goes back to the 3rd-2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. After that, there is little information of contacts between islands or with the continent before the arrival of Spaniards in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Today, we can find all the clues described by Jared Diamond (Collapse – 2006) contributing to an ecologic disaster: deforestation for agricultural needs, breeding of goats and sheep, burning of wood in lime kiln or to produce brandy, introduction of exotic plants from South America. To this, must be added local people sent to slavery. This was already an alarming situation in the XVII century. Then, “Montañas del Fuego” got awake. Eruptions lasted 6 years between 1730 and 1736. The last one dates back 1824. These are considered as some of the most important of volcanism history, speaking of the quantity of lava and length of eruptions. They covered the most fertile soils and many villages disappeared. Very very slowly, flora grew again.



Then, another period of deforestation started in the middle of the 19th century for the sugar cane growing industry, from this mass-production, population grew which necessitated to affect an always greater part of the soil to the grain culture as soon as the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Dating back from this period are the numerous terraced fields to retain soil and water.



Last step, in the sixties and seventies, the agriculture model converted to tourism. People quit maintaining structures that prevented the soil to go downhill. Erosion started again at great speed... In Fuerteventura, the closest island the fresh water reservoir of Las Peñitas built in 1943 and of a capacity of 350 000m<sup>3</sup> turned into 300 000m<sup>3</sup> of mud.



Apart from some vegetable gardens which benefit from drip irrigation, the only culture is wine. Each plant is in the middle of a small basin of black sand and protected of the wind by a small wall of volcanic rocks. That enables to get the slightest drop of night humidity.



Today, the island's economy relies exclusively on tourism, which increase environmental stress, despite that Unesco has declared the park of Timanfaya as a biosphere reserve and that the artist Cesar Manrique acted greatly for the protection of the traditional landscape forbidding any billboards or more than 2 floors buildings. Visitors to the Island (more than 100 000 a week as much as the local population) are parked in the white resorts of the East coast and only go out by bus to see the volcanos. One must say that trekking in the sea of lava is for the strong hearted only, more extreme than walking the Sahara. The thirst, terrrrrrrrrible...



And now, a quick poll. Thank you in advance for your answers because we are deeply puzzled:

The question arose as Voyager 1 left the solar system (after 35 years which leaves us some time). The probe provides all the necessary information for an extra-terrestrial civilization to find us – including a voice recording of Jimmy Carter which he'd better have avoided committing

According to the speed of development of the human race on our damn planet – very slow starting when the Large White Elephant fertilized the mother of Buddha some 2500 years ago then exponentially quick, the period of “technologic conscience” of our species is very tiny when compared to the 4 billion years of our crib existence.

So, the possibilities which Voyager 1 might encounter are:

- a) There is nothing out there – high probability- no consequence
- b) Some underdeveloped life forms exist – low probability- few consequences in the short term, high scientific interest
- c) Some life forms exist with a similar development as our, i.e. so predatory – low probability- high consequences, we are gone be eaten
- d) Highly developed life forms which already know all about us – even lower probability- a trip to see the Phoenix'Lights in Arizona is a must.

Setting a probe with all the necessary information to find us is like having built a huge billboard to say “EAT ME”. Is this such a good idea? We seek your opinion.

[We call this issue “the Blonde and the Tuaregs” imaging a blonde lost in the Sahara and coming to a Tuareg camp at night... likely she is not running over to ask her way]

Wish you the best, Sanity and Sobriety

Stéphanie / Christophe

Puerto Calero

22 Octobre 2013