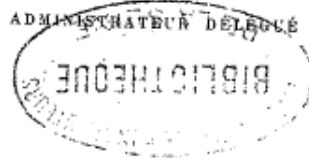


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LE MAGASIN  
PITTORESQUE

M. EUGÈNE BEST



CINQUANTE-HUITIÈME ANNÉE

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SÉRIE II — TOME HUITIÈME

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PARIS  
AUX BUREAUX D'ABONNEMENT ET DE VENTE  
15, RUE DE L'ABBÉ-GRÉGOIRE, 15

M DCCC LXXXV

THE FISHING OF SPONGE AND OCTOPUS IN THE GULF OF GABES.  
(pp.355-358)

Tunisian sponges known in the trade under the name Djerbi type sponges are  
356 classified, by the traders, in four types according to their appearance and their qualities:

1<sup>st</sup> The Djerbi sponge itself, with light tissue, tears easily and is fished only in the beds of the gulf of Gabès;

2<sup>nd</sup> The *Kerkemi* sponge or *black rooted sponge*, heavy, brown, irregular in form and with a resistant tissue

3<sup>rd</sup> The sponge from *Zarzis* or *white root*, it has a flexible flesh, and pleasant appearance. It is collected between Zarzis and the Tripolitan border;

4<sup>th</sup> The *Hadjemi* sponge Hadjemi from the Arabic word *hadjem* "barber" with a hard grain and compact which is collected a little everywhere around Djerbah and Kerkennah.

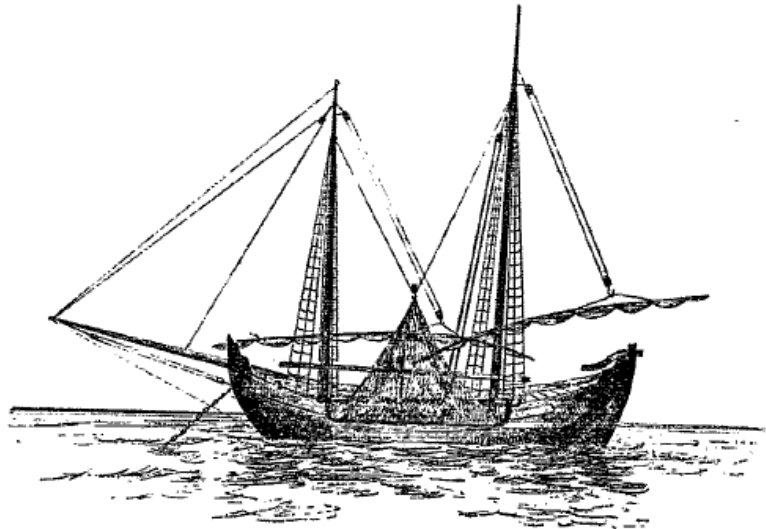


Fig. 1. – La pêche des éponges – Sacolève avec sa gangava relevée.

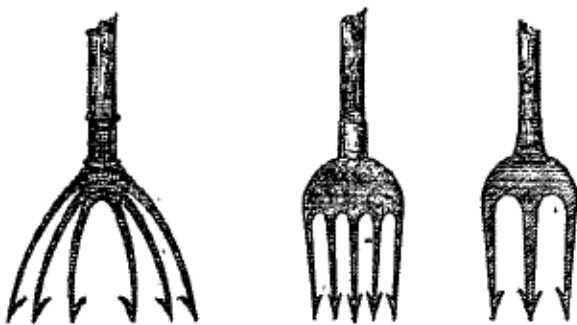


Fig. 2. – Pêche des éponges – Tridents et focina

The sponge lives at various depths, however the means yet of fishing it beyond 35 to 40 meters has not yet been found. The methods of fishing are quite varied.

The Sicilians and the Arabs provide themselves with a trident, the former mounting them on decked *tartanes* (fishing boats) that they call bovo, "beef", the latter on *loudes* similar to those used by the fishermen.

As for the Greeks they fish with the *gangava*, and finally the natives in certain water off the island of Djerbah plunge naked, and then sometimes in as much as 20 meters of depth.

*Trident or foëne.* - The Arab trident has a handle which varies according to the depth of the sea bed and has five or six points while the *focina* of the Sicilians only has three (fig. 2).

To fish with the trident under good conditions, it is necessary that the sponges can be seen distinctly where they are fixed.

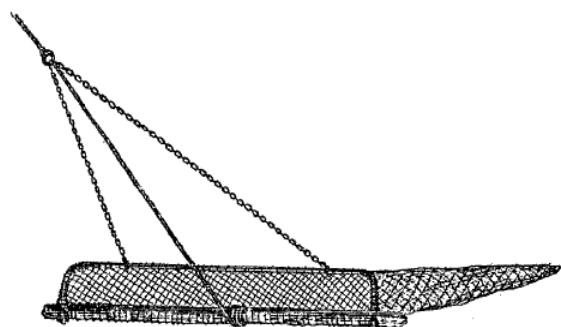


Fig. 3. – La pêche des éponges – Gangava

That is easy when the sea is transparent, but impossible when it is slightly agitated, that is to say completely opaque; in this last case the fishermen have recourse to an instrument by the name of *specchio*.

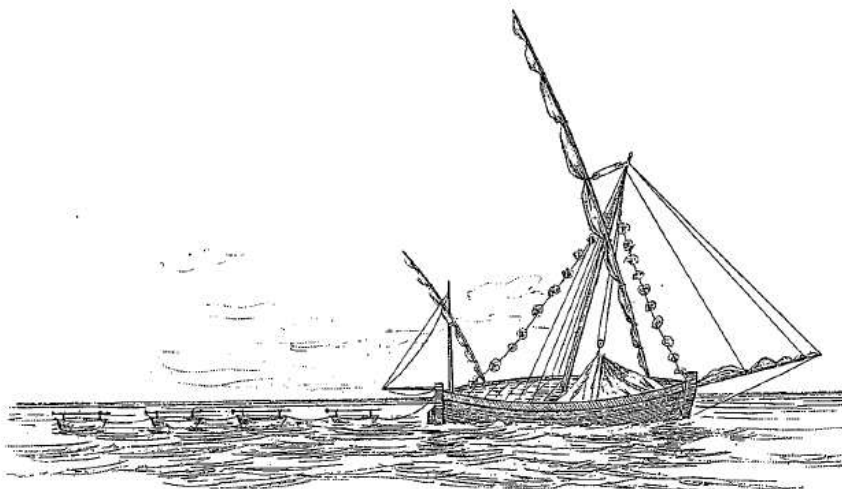


Fig. 4. – La pêche des éponges – Bovo sicilien.

*Specchio*. The *specchio* “mirror” is a machine of Greek importation (fig. 5).

It is composed of a cylinder of tinfoil, approximately 30 centimetres diameter and 40 high. Sealed closed at its base by a transparent pane, at its open upper part two ears are provided to be used

as handles. Here is how the fishermen use the *specchio*. They insert it a few centimetres of its lower part into the water. The contact of the glazed part with the sea makes it absolutely still and completely transparent. The harpooner, leaning on the opened side, then distinguishes clearly all the details of the sea bed; if he discovers a sponge there, he judges by eye roughly the depth and throws his three-pronged fork at it.

*Sicilian Bovos*. – The *bovos* generally come from the port of Trapani and are manned by a twelve to fifteen man crew (fig. 4). They go first of all to Sfax where the captains rent for relatively moderate sums some light boats known as *barquettes*. Each small boat is operated by two men, a harpooner and an oarsman. When a *bovo* goes to the bed of sponges that he wants to exploit, he tows behind him the series of his small boats, attached one behind another. Every morning they leave to work, in the evening bringing back to shore their harvest of the day.

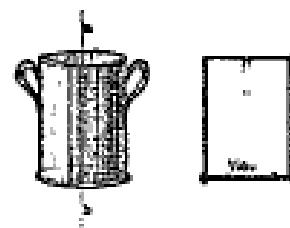


Fig. 5. – *Specchio*.

*Gangava and Sacolèves* (Fig.1 and 3). - By the name of *gangava* one indicates a kind of “dredger” composed of an round iron bar, bent to a right angle at its two ends and firmly connected to a piece of wood to a length of from 6 to 12 meters, around which is wrapped a net out of cord, with large meshes forming a pocket 2 to 3 meters deep. Two iron chains are fixed close to each end of the metal bar, and a cord is attached to the middle of the wooden cross-piece; these three are attached to a single, long cable of about fifty brasses, which connect the dredger to the fishing boat. The people who practise this kind of fishing almost exclusively work in small boats known as *sacolèves* with a crew composed of four to six men. To fish with the *gangava*, to start with it is thrown into the sea and the iron part which borders it comes to rest on the bottom; the *sacolève* travels and is allowed to drift with the sail, trailing the *gangava* after it until a pronounced deceleration in its progress indicates that the net is full. The

boat then heaves to and the engine is mounted help a cable winch located in the front of the boat which rolls up the cable which connecting it to the dredger.

From the point of view of the reproduction of the species, the gangava is more dangerous, because it forms a framework of unequal density. This framework, whose width varies from 60 to 80 centimetres, clear the sea bed everywhere it passes. This apparatus was introduced for the first time into the gulf of Gabès in 1873 by Greek fishermen from Calymnos.

#### *Fishing for Octopus.*

Octopuses, though of a very poor flavour are sought avidly by the Greeks and the natives who are very fond of delicacies. The fishing of this mollusc gives place to significant

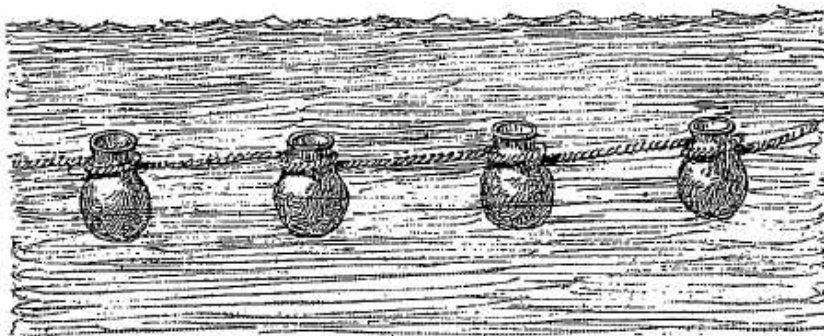


Fig. 6. – La pêche des poulpes – Gargoulettes.

trading and is done from September to the month of April. The fishermen seize them either while diving, or while harpooning with the foëne, or finally with the help of special traps. These traps are built sometimes with fragments of rock, but normally with branches of the palm tree, and are laid out on the beds or in the shallow water, assembles in several rows (fig. 7). In deeper water one employs a kind of trawl line in which the hooks are replaced by “gargoulettes” (fig. 6) of average sizes, opened at their

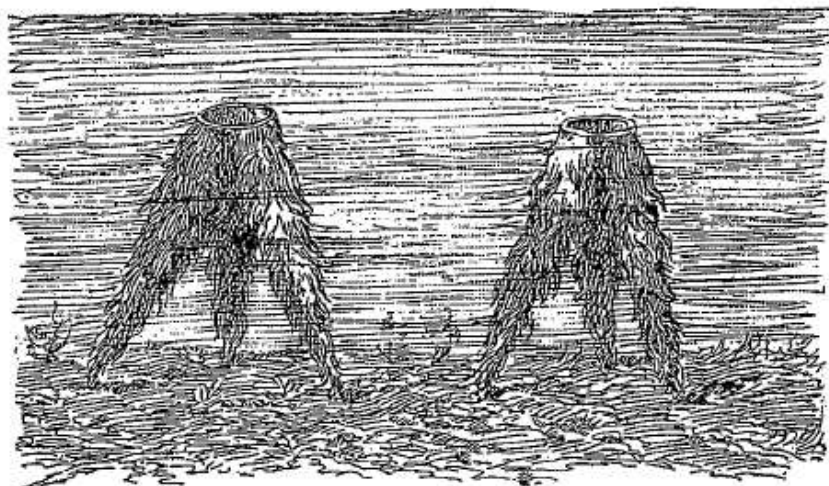


Fig. 6. – La pêche des poulpes – Pièges à poulpes en branches de palmier.

two ends. These pots, manufactured in Djerbah, are dispersed on a very long chain that is unrolled on the sea be, and which is raised a few hours later to collect the molluscs which have taken refuge there.

The octopuses are dispatched

mainly to Greece where at the time of the Lent they replace the traditional cod of other nations. Fishing of octopus belongs to the tenant farming of sponges.