

## La Azohía and its tunny-net.

In La Azohía, the fishermen in charge of the *almadraba* or tunny-net leave the harbour every day between February and June.

The net, which in fact consists of several nets that oblige the fish to enter a labyrinthine trap from which it is impossible to escape, is left in place for the whole season.

Every day, the fishermen check to see if it is worth proceeding to the *levantá*, or raising of the trap to extract the catch.

Tunny-net fishing requires a precise choreography in which every man has a role to play. There is no time for mistakes or explanations; each man knows what he has to do, and does it immediately when the master gives the word, with no argument or comment.

The technique of the *almadraba* requires total discipline. The strength of twenty men working in unison is required to raise the trap, contained within the circle formed by the boats.

The fish are thus brought to the surface and the men seize them, sometimes with hooks and sometimes by hauling the whole trap into a boat.

The *almadraba* of La Azohia is a right-handed version, which means that it lies in wait for fish that arrive from the Atlantic, following the coast. It is not intended for the large fish of the Strait of Gibraltar.

In fact, the nets used in La Azohia form an *almadrabeta*, or lesser tunny-net. This can make it easier to haul in, though the fishermen would prefer to have their nets full of large red tunas, but these are rare in the Mediterranean.

The *almadraba* fishermen of La Azohia expect to catch small tuna, plain bonitos, tunny and corb, all regarded as lesser species, though they are still appreciated on the market and welcome on board the boats.

This may well be the last *almadraba* on the eastern coast of Spain; and even in La Azohia the age-old tradition of passing on these skills from father to son may not last much longer.

The boats return to the harbor with their catch. As usual, the fishermen don't think it is enough.

The size of the catch never compensates for the exhausting work at sea.

The *almadraba* of La Azohia no longer captures the quantity of fish that it once did. The sea is not as generous as it was. Perhaps we have taken too much.