

Airborne magnetic data processing and 3D modeling in northern Morocco: geological significances

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4
1 **Airborne data processing and 3D modeling of magnetic structures between Nador**
2 **region and the Chaffarine Islands: Geological significances**

3 **Abstract:**

4 The Cap of Trois Fourches-Nador-Chaffarine Islands zone (CTF-N-CI) located in the
5 Moroccan Oriental Rif is recognized by Neogene-Quaternary volcanic outcrops. Those later
6 formed volcanic cones and are considered the main source of the huge Nador magnetic
7 anomaly. This study aims to enhance the magnetic context using geophysical techniques and
8 identify the geometry of magnetic sources by performing 3D modeling using Talwani method.
9 We have achieved the following findings: (1) The elaborated residual magnetic map (Rs) that
10 shows three aligned magnetic anomalies. They are oriented W-E and register a maximum
11 intensity of 380 nT. Applying reduction to the pole to (RTP) the Rs map makes the anomalies
12 on the top of their body sources. Thus, we have found that those anomalies have resulted
13 essentially from the Gourougou volcano and Chaffarine Islands volcanoes outcropping in the
14 study area. Except for the middle Pm anomaly, which is related to volcanic rocks of the Kariate
15 Arekmane drillhole. (2) Performing horizontal derivative (HD) technique leads to establishing
16 the edges of the source bodies. Hence, the inversed map of the magnetization distribution
17 proves that the three bodies are homogeneous and probably splintered from a unique mass.
18 (3) The downward up continuation (DC) to different heights (from 500 to 2000 m) indicates the
19 source's depth. Thus, we have demonstrated that the common source could reach 0.6 km of
20 altitude. (4) Finally, we have constructed a 3D Talwani model of the volcanic edifices. The
21 released 3D model demonstrates that the anomalies are related to a very extensive mass of
22 80 km in length, 20 km in width, 1.3 km in thickness. This model supports that the Neogene-
23 Quaternary volcanism of the study area was fissural and related to the W-E fracture zone of up
24 to 80 km in length. This volcanism was also affected by the sinistral Nekor fault, which
25 probably made the Trois Fourches Cap body isolated from the other volcanic edifices.

4
26 Previously mentioned elements probably prove the simultaneous establishment of this
27 large magnetic structure. Moreover, they emphasize the crucial role of the magmatic

28 phenomena which occurred in Northeastern Morocco at the beginning of the Messinian.

29 **Key words:** magnetic anomaly, 3D modeling, magmatic phenomena, Oriental Rif.

30

31 **1. Introduction**

32 For several years, an important effort have been devoted to studying the magmatic
33 activity of the African margin. The magnetic anomalies of the Alboran Sea have been
34 associated with this magmatic activity since the publication of the aeromagnetic map
35 presented by Galdeano and Rossignol (1977). They delineated linear magnetic styles of the
36 Mediterranean western basin. At the level of the African continent, the authors identified the
37 Nador anomaly (NA) (Anahnah et al., 2009; Tendero-Salmerón et al., 2022) that constitutes
38 our subject

39 NA is located in the Melilla Kert basin (MKB), and it is related to the Neogenic volcanism
40 of this basin. This area has attracted much attention from many researchers. We can cite
41 geological and petrological studies of the Miocene volcanism in eastern Morocco that had
42 been carried out by Hernandez (1983). Then Hernandez and Bellon (1985) have elaborated
43 the K-Ar radiometric chronology of Miocene volcanic event in Eastern Morocco. Moreover, El
44 Bakkali (1995) and El Bakkali et al (1998) have provided more details about the volcanology
45 and magmatology of the Gourougou system. A synthesis of the evolution of the Rif and its
46 foreland since the Neogene is given by Morel (1987). Recently, (Anahnah et al., 2009) have
47 studied the Nador dipole performing measured magnetic field anomalies and susceptibilities.
48 However, very few publications can be found in the literature that discusses the issues of
49 modeling the sources of those volcanoes.

50 Magnetic anomalies have been analyzed for qualitative interpretation of the extension
51 of peridotite bodies in the western Rif (Bellot, 1985) and the Beni Malek (Michard et al., 1992;
52 El Azzab et al., 1997) located in the central Rif. But, up to date, geophysical studies of
53 magnetic anomalies produced by this volcanism have been weakly examined in the eastern
54 Rif. Anahnah (2009) studied the Nador dipole performing measured magnetic field anomalies

55 and susceptibilities, then added that ⁵the available data did not allow determining the geometry
56 of the infill channels coming from the deep crust. Also, Tendero-Salmerón (2022) studied (in a
57 global context) the magnetic anomalies of the Alboran Sea and constructed a 2D forward
58 model ³of the Nador dipole to quantitatively constrain the geometry and location of their
59 causative bodies of the volcanic bodies. However, the Nador anomaly is still poorly studied
60 because very few publications can be found in the literature that discusses the issues of 3D
61 modeling the sources of those volcanoes.

62
63 In this paper, we have shed the light on CTF-N-CI volcanism zone and have performed
64 sophisticated geophysical techniques to deliver more details about NA. This anomaly is not
65 only linked to the outcropping volcanoes that appeared on the surface (the Gourougou volcano
66 (GV), the Cap of Trois Fourches volcano (CTF), and the Chaffarine Islands (CI)). But also
67 related to the hidden and deep lavas discovered the Kariate Arekmane drillhole. ³Some of
68 these volcanoes include rocks of both stages (the calc-alkaline and shoshonitic stage and the
69 late, alkaline stage), such as the GV ³(El Bakkali et al., 1998). Hence, the occurrence of GV
70 has been related to the tearing of the oceanic slab attached to the African margin.

71 We aim to delineate the extension of the mentioned volcanoes based on magnetic
72 RTP, discover new structural lineaments using HD transformation, provide more information
73 about the source's depth using DC operation. The cornerstone of this study is the attempt to
74 draw a Three-Dimensional model of the buried magnetic sources and quantify the volume of
75 materials involved in NA by applying the Talwani approach.

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77 transformations, and quantify the volume of materials involved in NA. We also attempt to draw
78 Three-Dimensional model of the buried magnetic sources applying the Talwani approach.

79

80 ^{2 1}**2. Geological setting**

81 The study area ⁵is a part of the Eastern Rif Cordillera that was formed by basement

82 rocks of internal and external zones (structured up to early Miocene) and post-trusts basins,
83 Mainly filled by sediments of Upper Tortonian to Quaternary (Guillemin and Houzay, 1982).
84 The study zone is surrounded by the CTF volcanoes to the North, the Amjar massif to the
85 West, the CI to the Est Northwards, and Boudinar buttonholes to the South.

86 In the present work, we have focused on the CTF-N-CI area study where Neogene-
87 Quaternary volcanism appeared. This volcanism deposited interlayered beds in sedimentary
88 basins and then formed volcanic cones. The essential thing to mention is that volcanic
89 buildings are located near the coastline at boundaries between the thick continental crust of
90 the Rif Cordillera and the thin continental crust of the Alboran Sea.

91

92 2.1 The Kert-Melilia sedimentary basin

93 The KMB is considered the post-nappe basin of the Eastern Rif. This basin is filled with
94 sediments essentially Upper Tortonian to Pliocene (Guillemin and Houzay, 1982). This period
95 is known for setting up great volcanic features like the volcano of CTF and the GV.

96 The tectono-sedimentary history of the basin at Tortonien are well-described by Morel
97 (1987). He has proposed a scheme of evolution and opening of the basin related to the N45
98 strike-slip faulting and the N0 and N20 synchronous normal faulting. The opening event
99 involved the aerial activity of the CTF volcano. During this phase, the Tortonian series were
100 deformed. At the beginning of the Messinian, a collapse of the basins was observed along old
101 faults. Also, volcanism was very active throughout the region (but the GV did not exist yet in
102 this period). During the upper Messinian, the southern edge of the basin recorded a shortening
103 event that was oriented E-W to ESE-WNW. It was during this tectonic phase that the GV
104 began to manifest.

105 Volcanism in the Kert-Melilia Basin does not exhibit any chronological or geochemical
106 polarity. Therefore, the volcanism is related to a strike-slip system at the eastern edge of the
107 Alboran Sea (Hernandez, 1983). Also, this volcanism is engendered closely in the transverse
108 sliding system operation, which put in contact the Iberian and African plates and affecting the

109 entire lithosphere (Banda and Ansorge, 1980; Hernandez and Bellon, 1985).

110

111 2.2 Principal volcanic outcrops

112 The Neogenic volcanic edifices are spatially associated with the major strike-slip Trans-
113 Alboran fault responsible for the opening of these basins (Ait Brahim and Chotin, 1990).

114 2.2.1 The Cap of Trois Fourches volcano

115 The small massif of CTF is the last relief before the sea. It is bordered by the
116 Mediterranean Sea on three sides and attains a height altitude of 350 m to the south. CTF is
117 separated from the Tarjat Paleozoic zone by the Ajelman corridor. The CTF uplift is about 6
118 km in length, following the NNE-SSW direction and 3.5 km in width from West to East, and it
119 reached 400 m of depth. The lavas of the massif are rhyolitic except for some lavas with
120 dacitic composition. Hence they have resulted from the differentiation of a low potassium
121 alkaline magma (Hernandez, 1983). The age provided is 9.6 Ma (Bellon, 1976).

122 2.2.2 The Gourougou volcano

123 The GV is the largest volcanic edifice that outcrops in the surrounding plains. It records
124 881 m of height and a diameter of 30 km. The volcano is accompanied by a cortege of massifs
125 called satellites. They all form a varying shoshonitic. It is constituted by several sub-units
126 (Hernandez, 1983) :

- 127 ▪ The Gourougou strato-volcano that covers an area just over 15 km in diameter.
- 128 ▪ The BBI massif that is constituted of small volcanoes spread over a radius of 15 km.
- 129 ▪ The Amjar massif that constitutes an independent edifice shaped 4 km in diameter.

130 2.2.3 Lavas of Kariate Arekmane drillhole

131 The lavas encountered in the KA survey has been defined by Wernli (1980) as an
132 underwater casting because it is composed of augite, andesite, and oxyhornblende.
133 Additionally, it is covered by a polygenic breach, pectin lumachilles, and conglomerate rolled
134 pebble beds. On the other hand Hernandez (1983) believes that drilling has penetrated only a
135 domed structure. El Azzab (1993) have studied the natural remanent magnetism of volcanic

136 rocks in KA and provided an average inclination of 44.9°. This result strongly agrees with the
137 results found out by Najid (1981) and leads to conclude that the GV and KA volcanoes are
138 highly linked to the same genetic model.

139

140 **3. Methodology**

141 The aeromagnetic surveys are measured and sponsored by the Ministry of Energy and
142 Mines during the airborne geophysical campaign of North-Eastern of Morocco (Compagnie
143 Géophysique Générale Française (C.G.G.)) since 1965. The aircraft, equipped with a Cesium
144 vapor magnetometer with a sensitivity of fewer than 0.01 nT/s, was flown at a constant altitude
145 in calm weather. The error on the height is 30 m. We focus in this paper on the measurements
146 done in the oriental Rif with a flight altitude of 2600 m, with lines oriented N16°E, spaced 3km
147 on land areas and 6 km in marine areas. Control lines have N106°E orientation and a spacing
148 of 5 km. The residual magnetic field data extraction was released by digitizing the intersection
149 points among the isovalues curves and lines and the traverses of the potential field data.

150

151 **4. Results and discussions**

152 We have arrived at defining the corresponding sources of magnetic anomalies and
153 estimating their depths using sophisticated magnetic techniques. Then we have dressed the
154 geometry of these sources based on the Talwani modeling method (Talwani, 1965).

155

156 4.1 Source and depths of magnetic anomalies

157 4.1.1 Residual magnetic anomaly then reduced to the pole

158 The established residual magnetic map (Rs) shows an immense magnetic signature
159 (called NA) produced by volcanic edifices of CTF-N-CI area (Fig. 2). The NA is oriented
160 W-E and represents an association of three dipoles. Those latter have a normal polarity
161 with lateral extension of 80 km in length and register a maximum intensity of 380 nT. We
162 have applied the RTP technique to the Rs map. It is a powerful method that transforms

163 the observed anomaly into the one that would have been obtained if the magnetization
164 and the local magnetic field were both vertical. It thus allows positioning the observed
165 aeromagnetic anomalies on the top of the bodies of their sources (Baranov, 1957;
166 Baranov and Naudy, 1964). The employed magnetization is defined by a declination of -
167 6.17° and an inclination of 50°. The resulting RTP map (Fig. 3) shows a huge positive
168 anomaly composed of the fusion of three sub-circular anomalies. They are roughly aligned
169 W-E and labeled Pw, Pm, and Pe. We have remarked an increase of intensity from 380 to
170 440 nT and a Northward displacement of 10 km.

171 We have superposed simplified geological features to the illustrated RTP map (Fig. 3).
172 The sources of the Nw and Ne anomalies (that appear on the subsurface) are the GV and the
173 Cl volcanoes, respectively. However, there is no evidence for the Nm anomaly on the surface.
174 It reflects the magnetic effect of deep lavas that are fortunately discovered at the Kariate
175 Arekmane drillhole during a surveying company of seven drillholes that reach 694 m of depth.
176

177 4.1.2 Horizontal gradient

178 The HD technique highlights lateral variations in magnetization related to lateral variations
179 in lithology. Its property is used in structural mapping (Blakely, 1996; Cordell, 1979; Cordell
180 and Grauch, 1985; Nabighian et al., 2005). It is very effective in detecting tectonic structures
181 such as faults (Cordell and Grauch, 1985; El Azzab et al., 2019). The HG map underscores the
182 maxima of gradients that highly reflect geological contacts of the study area (Fig. 4). We have
183 highlighted local maxima by discontinued features, which indicate the edges of magnetic
184 sources. Black ones correspond to the large source that includes three inside sources marked
185 by red ones. Therefore, we have observed a new magnetic lineament in the HD map, which
186 indicates E-W directions. Those latter are different from the mapped faults of the study area
187 that are most oriented NE-SW and NNE-SSW.

188 We have noted also that no positive anomaly appeared around CTF volcano in both the
189 RTP and the HD maps. So, we have explained this by the interference of the low intensity of
190 CTF volcano with the north negative lobe.

4.1.3 Downward continuation

Downward continuation (DC) is used to enhance the responses from sources at a depth by effectively bringing the plane of measurement closer to the sources. The famous advantage of enhancing the potential field by a DC is that the physical dimensions of the transformed field are the same as in the original data (Fedi and Florio, 2002; Tran and Nguyen, 2020; (Roy, 1967)). Otherwise, the recognition of a grave oscillatory character in the continued up field map highly indicates the top of the of the source, so it is not theoretically possible to continue through a potential field source. We have applied a DC filter (every 500 m until 2000 m) for the RTP map to estimate the depths of bodies sources (Fedi and Florio, 2002). Figure 5 shows the resulted maps (Fig. 5a-d). The anomalies isovalues are smoothy and from 500 to 1500 m. But from 1500 to 2000 m, oscillations of high magnitude are illustrated by the decrease of maps resolution.

This behavior indicates the sudden enhancement of intensity. It can be explained by the DC operator that arrives at the top level of the source. Thus, we have suggested that the immense body source is situated at 2000 m of altitude. Since the survey level is at 2600 m, the level of 0.6 km m matches the top common source level of the three anomalies.

We have also noted that the gradient on the Southside of the anomalies is so strong. This note informs us about the probability of a deep southern extension of lavas.

The Pw is comparable to the Pm. Their corresponding sources had probably the same shape. Pm anomaly seems to be the smoothest and also the most symmetrical. So the Lavas of KA highly correspond to the top of the common volcanic source.

4.2 Talwani modeling of the magnetic structures from Nador to the Chaffarines Islands

Talwani method (TM) is dedicated to elaborating a 3D model of the magnetic sources (Talwani, 1965; Talwani and Ewing, 1960). It uses irregular polygonal laminas to describe by advantage a body of arbitrary shape. Unlike the Bhattacharyya approach (Bhattacharyya, 1965, 1964), it involves calculating magnetic fields due to prism-shaped bodies, but is limited

270 on using rectangular prisms that are very difficult to adjust for geological structures. The
271 Okabé method also calculates magnetic anomaly produced by a homogeneous polyhedral
272 body composed of polygonal facets (Okabe, 1979). Despite, the use of polyhedral form with
273 their large number makes simulating the shape inadequate.

274 The Talwani method performs a double integration analytically (DIA) and a single
275 integration numerically (SIN). The body, whose anomaly has to be evaluated, is represented
276 by a polygonal lamina. The DIA is carried out over the horizontal polygonal lamina, while the
277 SIN is subsequently carried out concerning the vertical axis.

278 We have used the Talwani software (TS) to model the magnetic structures responsible
279 for the three anomalies. We have introduced the program (1) bin extension file that contains
280 different layers for each body to be modeled. We have drawn the shapes of the layers (Fig 7.
281 a) respecting the anomalies edges found in the HD map and the volcano's contours mapped in
282 the geological map. Then (2) the altitude of each layer is concluded from the DC maps. (3)
283 The intensities used (Table 1) are founded by El Azzab (1999). Thus, the TS generates the
284 magnetic map of the introduced prisms. Many tries were done to adjust the shapes to
285 construct the ideal synthetic model (SM) where the anomaly intensities are equal to the RTP
286 map ones (Fig. 6).

287 The method of inverting the magnetization is published by Gibert and Galdéano (1985)
288 applies the operator "inverse layer magnetization". This method relies on the convolution of
289 the magnetic anomaly map initially reduced to the pole. We have adjusted the width of the
290 equivalent layer to get magnetization intensities. They should be equal to the ones measured
291 in the borehole samples. Finally, the resulting magnetization values are obtained by inversion
292 distributed in the area. Then they are assigned to the synthetic bodies.

293 The elaborated 3D Talwani model of magnetic field distribution (Fig. 7) contains seven
294 bodies that are 3D simulation of the three anomaly sources. Those bodies represent

321 lithological sets that are more magnetized than their surrounding formations. The 3D model
322 shows a gigantic body-source (B1) oriented W-E characterized by (of the magnetic bodies) 80
323 km in length, 20 km in width, 1.3 km in thickness, and 1.9 km depth. B3 magnetic body records
324 the higher intensity of 440 nT, and B7 gives the lower intensity 120 nT. The B7 related to CTF
325 volcano is isolated to the north and located outside the global source without a link to other
326 bodies on the sub-surface. Therefore, we have suggested that CTF volcano is cut and moved
327 away by tectonic event.

328 4.3 Upward continuation of the Talwani synthetic model

329 ¹ UC is a convolution of the original map with a geometric operator of upward continuation
330 at the level of vertical continuity of the field (Gibert and Galdeano, 1985). UC operator filter is a
331 pass-low wavenumber, ¹ which reduces the high frequency related to shallower sources and
332 emphasizes the frequency of deeper sources.

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333 Performing UC to 5 km for both calculated Talwani synthetic map and observed magnetic
334 field maps has proved the existence of a common base of the three volcanoes. The shared
335 base I looked inevitable and restrained (Fig. 8).

336 The interpretation of the aeromagnetic field of the CTF-N-CI zone has characterized the
337 presence of a gigantic NA that is oriented W-E (Galdeano and Rossignol 1977, Anahnah
338 2009, Víctor Tintero-Salmer 2022). Coupling the RTP filtering technique with geological
339 information has gathered that NA embodies three anomalies (Pe, Pm, and Pw). Those later ³ are
340 related to the prolongation of the volcanic rocks outcropping at the onshore area (the GV and
341 the CTF) and extending Eastwards offshore up to CI volcanoes. However, we have found that
342 the Nm that register the highest intensity of 380 nT do not show any subsurface lithological
343 feature. It is highly linked to the KA lavas deeply discovered at 694 m (El Azzab 1999). Hence
344 we have suggested that the three anomalies are fragments of an extensive mass. Furthermore,
345 we have proved that the root of the three volcanoes was unique.

346 The elaborated HD map has illustrated magnetic boundaries that are 80 % oriented W-E.

375 So there is a contradiction between mapped faults orientation and interpreted magnetic
376 lineament. This observation supports that the Neogene volcanism of CTF-N-CI was fissural
377 but cannot be related to the subsurface structures. Otherwise, it certainly was linked with the
378 W-E fracture zone.

379

380 The resulting 3D Talwani model (argumented and evaluated by DC technique) delivers a
381 3D simulation of the deep connection among the GV, the CTF, and the CI volcanic edifices by
382 a kilometric scale elongated E-W basic intrusion (B1) parallel to the African coast. This basic
383 intrusion was structured by W-E tectonic zone and had no relationship with faults or folds,
384 which are not W-E oriented (Victor Tendero-Salmer´ 2022).

385

386 5. Conclusion

387 All previously geophysical conclusions have defended the theory of the simultaneous
388 establishment of this large magnetic structure since they have the same source. Missenard
389 (2006) has also seen that Mio-Plio-Quaternary alkaline volcanism of oriental Rif is devoided of
390 crust contamination because their geochemical signatures comparable to the intra-oceanic
391 basalts. He has suggested the contribution of the “so-called” Moroccan Hot Line, extending
392 from the southeast of Spain to the Canary Islands (Chalouan et al., 2008). Maury (2000) has
393 suggested that there is a direct link between the magmatic evolution and the subduction of the
394 African plate ended by the pullout of the oceanic slab. This paper will be an important
395 document for paleogeographic studies for Northeastern Morocco because it underlines the
396 importance of the magmatic phenomena that has been occurred in northeastern Morocco at
397 the beginning of the Messinian. Furthermore, the present work gives new magnetic styles,
398 which will be very important for iron prospection in the study area.

399

400 **Acknowledgements:** Deep thanks and gratitude to the reviewers for careful revision and their
401 helpful comments and recommendations, which improved the quality of this paper. We are
402 grateful to the Ministry of Energy and Mining of Rabat, for providing us aeromagnetic data

431 used in this study.

432 **Disclosure of Funding:** This research did not receive any ⁶ specific grant from funding
433 agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

434 **Disclosure of any Conflict of interest:** The authors declare that there are no conflicts of
435 interest regarding the publication of this work.

436

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