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**Honor — Fraternity — Justice**

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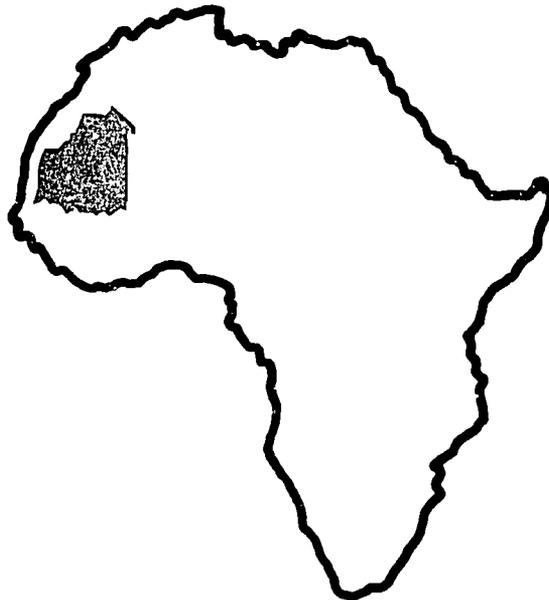
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The Future of Pastoralism

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1980

## INTRODUCTION

### Pastoralism Today: Three Case Studies

The bulk of migration is a result of this massive sedentarization all over Mauritania, whether permanent or temporary, of nomads and transhumance. The census of 1977 indicated the dramatic change in that population's way of life. While the 1964-66 census (admittedly limited) noted that 65% of the population was nomadic and only 35% was sedentarized, the 1977 census, barely over a decade later, showed the exact reversal: 64% of the population was now sedentarized and only 36% pursued its nomadic way of life. The movement is still an on-going process and the impact of the repercussions has been profound at all levels of society, politically, socially, economically, culturally.

The three case studies presented herewith illustrate three areas that adapted differently to the changes within the pastoral mode of life: Magta Lahjar, in the Sahel, along the new highway "The Road of Hope", had already had a sedentarized population of Moors, practising an agro-pastoral way of life; Néma, highly isolated yet expecting to soon become, in the next two or three years, the last eastern stop of the "Road of Hope", is still living a pure nomadic life, linking cattle trade between Mali and the northern extremes of Mauritania; Kankossa, with a mixture of pastoral Moors and Peulhs and other migrants, is in the process of adapting itself to sedentarization while

attempting to revitalize transhumance on a small scale, especially through the Peulhs.<sup>1/</sup>

The pastoral way of life is intimately tied to an understanding of nature, of an ecological reality and creates an atavistic link with those who once practised it. Today, urbanites regularly escape to the desert to relive, even if but for a few days, the nomadic life they were once accustomed to. This continuous going back and forth between two lives, especially for the psychological comfort of maintaining links with the past, is a reflection of the depth of disruption sedentarization has had not only on a manner of living but on an entire civilization still profoundly alive.

The catalyst of concentrated change was the drought of the 1970's. Yet, disruption on pastoralism had already become obvious as a result of the earlier drought of 1942-43. A phenomenon of migration and sedentarization already settled in and a beginning of urban centers took shape with nomads escaping the drought. There is no outlet today but exodus for the head of the family who loses his principal means of production, and thus the search for salaried work begins.

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1/ The major study by Pierre Bonte on "Les Mouvements de Population et Migrations en Mauritanie" (Population Movements and Migration in Mauritania), RAMS; a study in "Social Change", fills the obvious gap in the lack of research conducted in the northern sector of the country. It must be pointed out that a shortage of time for this study forced us to cut short our field research.

It would be erroneous to assume that it is only the ecological cycle of drought which is the basis of nomadic disruption. The heart of the problem goes further back, with the penetration of an alien economic system which forced a whole population to resort to the search of a monetarized way of life, slowly forcing them into abandoning their traditional production. It is significant to point out, however, that the social facts which helped perpetuate economic relationships of loans and gifts, of patronage and redistribution, traditionally limiting the risks of total impoverishment, has considerably weakened in the past 50 years, rendering adjustments to traditional mechanisms of support difficult.

It is impossible to speak of pastoralism today in Mauritania or of its future without speaking simultaneously of sedentarization. The first question that comes to mind at questioning a nomad is whether he plans to sedentarize. The interrelationships of both phenomena - nomadism and sedentarization - are inextricably linked today.

Several aspects have been irreversibly modified in the very concept of nomadism. The most obvious is in the perception of space and mobility as expressed in each of the case studies presented. Indeed, except for the few remaining "real" nomads who still travel hundreds of kilometers, often with no fixed schedule (as those of Néma), the sedentarized nomads have been forced to extend their distances to places they have often never been to. The lack of pasturage and water availability incites the herds to search far for sustenance. This has also become apparent with the cultivators of oasis regions and agro-pastoralists (especially the dependent and servile classes). The droughts and the search for salaried labor have forced them

to move far from their home base, often for years on end. Indeed, many a Beidane has set up business all over West Africa, while the Haratine usually worked as agricultural laborers in Senegal. Two points are relevant here:

1. Both shepherds and cultivators, moving farther away than they have had to some twenty years ago, now come into greater contact with towns, new countries and different ethnic groups. A new consciousness is bred and new needs develop. All this, in effect, leads to the first step towards inequality, both economic and experiential, between themselves and those they had left temporarily behind. An understanding of these needs, as well as the control of the waste and squandering developed through these very needs which are often purely material expressions (expensive bridewealth and marriages, etc.), seems eminently important.
2. The concept of mobility as related to the trade and transport of cattle has also begun to change - but in this case, for a few wealthy traders. The "Road of Hope" between Nouakchott and Kiffa has greatly facilitated the transport of cattle by trucks to important market centers, spreading the commerce as well as centralizing it. This percentage may be small but the impact is important enough to provide indications of a reorganization of the whole circuit of traditional commercial relationships.<sup>2/</sup>

The drought and the hope of salaried labor, urging a massive exodus from everywhere, have deeply affected the pastoral economy. The reasons for sedentarization, however,

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<sup>2/</sup> See Study by Pierre Bonte on Evolution des Modes d'Accumulation in the Studies on "Les Changements Sociaux", RAMS, 1980.

are numerous and common to all those who decided, whether intentionally or unintentionally, to sedentarize: the dramatic and sudden loss of the means of survival, the cattle, the attraction to schools for the children, to hospital services, to wells (especially those dug by the Mendes Company which is pursuing its construction of the "Road of Hope") around which nomadic camps are settling daily to administrative and commercial centers; the desire to escape a way of life becomes harsher and more difficult to cope with. The nomads everywhere are feeling marginalized - precisely because their growing contacts and more distant mobility - in relation to the rest of the settled population. Yet, once sedentarized, even if temporarily, they became even more marginalized both within their own traditional context which they may not be totally rejecting but at least wish to escape, and within their sedentarized environment in which integration especially in the urban centers is difficult.

The process of sedentarization is complex, and one aspect is constant in this complexity: the seriously decreasing herding, which brings about a decline in a specific way of life - nomadism. Numerous problems arise as a result of that rapid process, some of which may have previously existed, but which now acquire greater and more difficult proportion: diminishing resources of water and pasturage lead to clashes between clans for water rights, clashes between old and new settlers (the latter being considered as intruders) for land right, between owners and salaried laborers. Moreover, the lack of sustaining resources lead the herders into an overuse of pasturage and water not only as a result of their own ignorance of needed protective measures, but because their choices have become very limited. The inexistence of an administrative

infrastructure able to control and spread awareness for ecological balance only exacerbates an already critical situation. This can only incite a greater exodus and the abandonment of a way of life, without aiding in the constructive preparation for integration elsewhere.

The social organization of nomads, however, has not fundamentally changed in spite of all the upheavals, but it has developed new nuances through various economic pressures. These are seen at two very different levels: in marriages, where expenses similar to those of the sedentarized populations have reached often irrational proportions; and in social class relationships, especially between the Beidane and their dependents in agro-pastoral areas. Greater financial needs placed greater mutual demands but also more urgent push to liberation and exodus, especially for the Haratine. This fact is highly evident in all three of the studies.

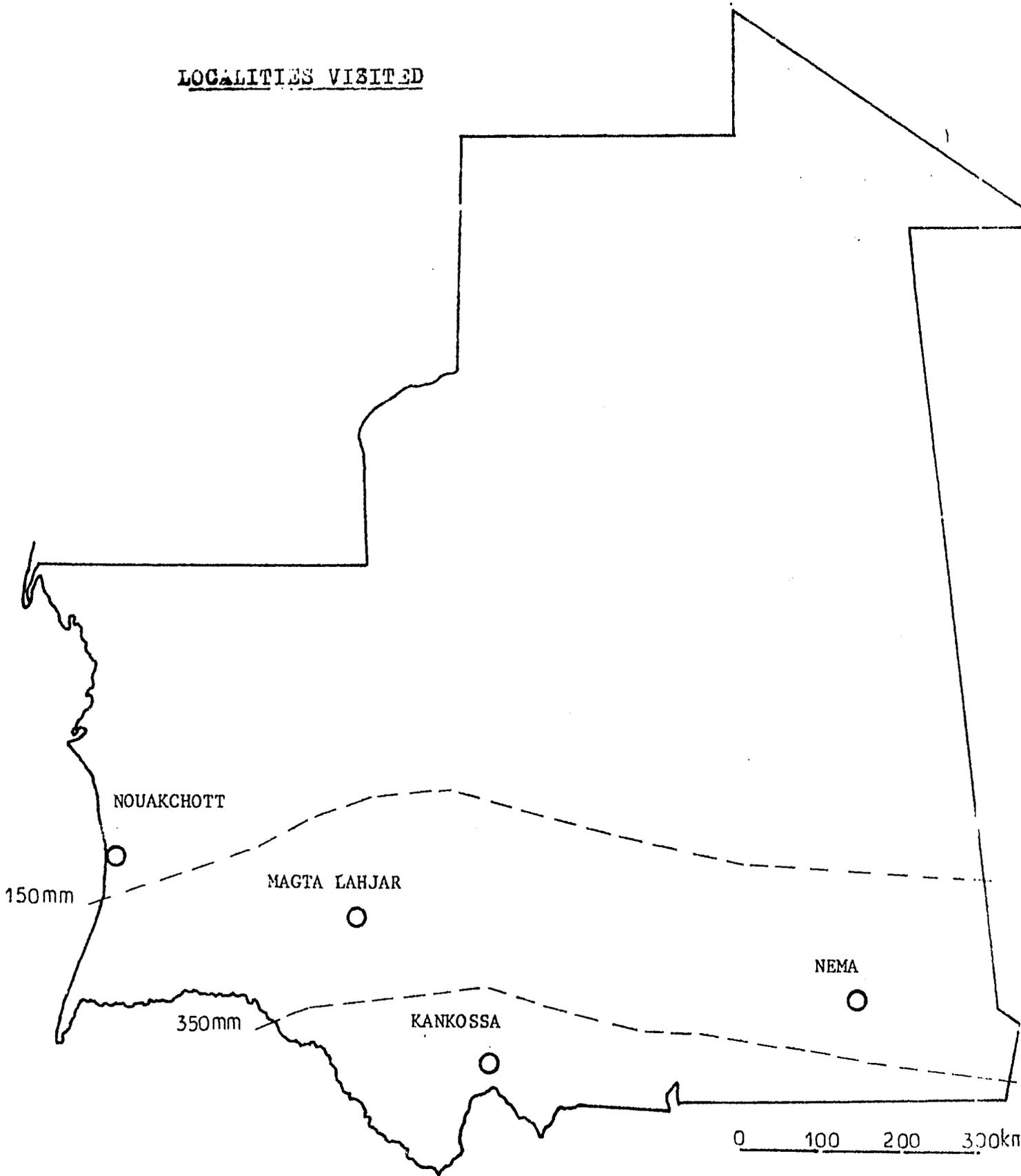
Sedentarization has had a positive impact on women of both rural and "urban nomads", if such a distinction could now be allowed to be made: mobility of the nomadic life had always allowed a certain autonomy to the women of all Moorish social classes, especially those of the lower levels. Sedentarization did not diminish this role; indeed, it may have even given women the impetus to develop a trade which nomadic living had not permitted because of its mobility.

The movement of nomadic sedentarization in the 70's was essentially spontaneous, and unplanned, with no fixed goals. It expressed, however, an important reaction common to all social classes: more than the will to reorganize a new society was the apparent rejection of the nomadic way of life. For those who have sedentarized, there is no possible return to nomadism today; for those who are still nomadizing, there is a greater attraction to sedentarize

because of the general degradation and difficulties of subsistence. Finding solutions alone to the agricultural sector will not solve the overall problems of the country. Indeed, it is only through rational, urgent and immediate actions to support both nomads and their livestock - and not only through vaccinations - that the constructive development of the country will depend. Yet, no such development can take place without a rational equilibrium between herding and agricultural production.

MAP

LOCALITIES VISITED



# MAGTA LAHJAR

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## MAGTA LAHJAR

### Introduction

The essential objective of this mission was to evaluate the changes nomadic society has gone through these last several years. Nomadism here is understood to mean a particular form of mobility, as well as a lifestyle embracing a specific techno-economic organization in which sedentary populations are found associated with nomads.

The disastrous dearth of rain these past several years caused massive deterioration of ecological conditions throughout the area. It also turned the rural exodus and the process of sedentarization, which started in the colonial period and found a powerful channel in the Nouakchott-Kiffa road axis from 1975, into a movement of unprecedented size.

Our field observations very quickly convinced us that among the region's economic activities, pastoralism has increasingly come to be relegated to a marginal, even residual status. Very clearly, the dominant pursuit here now is dam-irrigated farming.

Naturally, this evolution creates tough problems of adaptation and reconversion in areas as varied as legislation (regarding traditional prerogatives and forms of property), administration and public facilities (especially for education and health). Additionally, there are the effects of the steady and, at least from the point of view of those in a position to gain from the old dispensation, painful disintegration of traditional ideological and mental frames of reference, within which slavery and caste divisions had definite roles, under the universalist and egalitarian onslaught of the market economy.

Our report will concentrate on a delineation of occupations and people. Finally, we shall probe conditions necessary for the region's socio-economic improvement in the light of the preceding delineation.

Our main objective is not so much to produce a definitive monograph on the region as to gauge the effect of the society's organization and evolution on the economic pulse of the areas examined. In this text, therefore, we shall restrict ourselves to points relevant to that objective.

If, by way of conclusion, we were pressed to make a general assessment, we would state that the wide-ranging (and therefore necessarily somewhat pointillistic and impressionistic) information-gathering process imposed on the mission by the lack of time and resources had the advantage of providing an excellent bird's-eye view; but there was a twin disadvantage: this impressionistic procedure forces a reliance on vague approximations in cases where precise quantification is called for. In particular, we have in mind the potential usefulness, from the point of view of a methodical evaluation of rural forms, of a scrupulously detailed report on farmers, the extent of their holdings, a breakdown of the numbers working the land themselves, sharecroppers and farm laborers; on the reasons why some resort to hired or other labor to work their lands, whether from incapacity, old age, or because they are absent from the area; on the social and family situations of farmers or landowners in the various categories, with exact information on caste, tribe, sex, age, marital status, number of children, supplementary income, etc.

Such a study would be a sine qua non for any attempt at agrarian reform.

## I. MEN AND THEIR OCCUPATIONS

The essential objective of our mission was to evaluate changes in the pastoralist lifestyle, defined to comprise both its inherent mobility and a specific form of social organization. The changes we refer to have, inter alia, been conditioned and dangerously accelerated by the drought of the past decade.

We stress this double characterization of nomadism, bringing out both the aspect of mobility and that of its socio-economic organization for two reasons. First, there are sedentary groups whose income, organization and status are closely linked with the immediate or remote presence, in terms both of topographical distance and social hierarchy, of nomadic groups. Secondly, sedentarization, as a relatively recent and fragile phenomenon, has not yet succeeded in transcending the fundamental social reference frames of sedentarized nomads, even if serious changes trending in that direction are afoot.

Granted, our aim is not to analyse nomadism per se. But we have found it useful to devote a portion of our probes and our deliberation to that mobility which impacts a rhythm to human and animal life in this context. The reason is that an essential part of the occupations and incomes of the rural sector in particular and of Mauritania depends on the nature, the size, the functions -- in sum, on the present status of this nomadic movement, and on its future status. It therefore dominates every attempt to improve nomadic living conditions as a negative controlling factor.

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roamed between the outskirts of Moudjeria and points about 60 kilometers south-west of Aguiert, around Tinguerechat. Mobility also varies according to seasons: in the rainy seasons there are more frequent moves over short distances first in order to take advantage of fresh pastures and secondly because animals and men do better on such short hops. In the dry season, on the other hand, all tend to stay put as much as possible.

In both cases, the movements have lengthened these past three years on account of the lack of pastures in the region.

The Skhaimat people we met were already planning to move down to the Selibaby area just as they had done last year, arranging to have only two men and a hired shepherd herd the livestock. As for the Mechdouf, for three years they had been sending their camels off all the way to Catf, in Mali, under the care of hired shepherds.

Nomadic mobility depends on traditional means of transport, and its essential motive is the search for water and pasture.

We noted that a great deal of settlement had taken place, a considerable part of it happening only during the last couple of years. The principal loci are along the Nouakchott-Kiffa road. Magta Lahjar itself was only founded in the late 1940's. By 1977 its population had already reached 3,821. We are informed that since then it has increased by at least a further 33%. Moussa Ould Kebd, an Idegmolla dignitary, told us: "Until 1969 ours was the only family in Magta Lahjar." The first house in Sangrafa was put up in 1964; today Sangrafa is a spread out township. In 1977 its population was 1,240. It has almost certainly doubled since then.

There is also some settlement around dam sites like Oued Amour, which had a population of 1,081 in 1977, and Dionaba, whose 1977 population was 1,122.

The main reason those we spoke to gave for settling down was the drought. This was true even in cases where people admitted having come to town around 1960, as an old man from the Torkoz tribe of marabouts did.

Naturally, livestock losses are part of the picture: many of those recently settled had lost all their livestock. Cattle losses were particularly heavy, the more so since they used to make up the bulk of livestock holdings in the region. That preponderance even gave rise to a proverbial saying: "Ma tlat bagra hamvra mahi l'Taggat", meaning "Nowadays not a russet zebu but belongs to the Taggat".

The nomadic life also presents its own inherent hardships: privations, constant movement, the search for lost animals, friction with farmers, etc. Add to this list the flight of the youth into the urban areas, the imposition of consumer patterns emanating from these same urban areas, and the escape of slaves who formerly herded the livestock; and the harsh assessment the nomads themselves give their traditional living conditions, as well as the strength of their desire to break free of these conditions, become easily understandable. Nor must we forget that now the nomads seem to have become aware that their own access to the small quantity of Mauritania's amenities, in particular health and educational facilities, is quite marginal. A goodly proportion of travellers we met at the Magta Lahjar road terminal were travelling to seek medical care. (For example, the Magta Lahjar Prefecture is an administrative district containing

33,937 people according to the 1977 census, of whom 20,050 are nomads; but in that whole district there is only one nurse, 2 orderlies and a driver in the Medical Corps.)

The desire to give children an education is sometimes a direct motive for sedentarization. This is particularly true of the Mechdouf of Sangrafa. At first these people settled in Aguiert, a well 35 kilometers north-west of Sangrafa. Their sole motive for the move, they said, was that they wanted to be able to educate their children. In fact this initial settlement was a tentative first step on the way to a definitive sedentarization: the Aguiert well, far from the road artery, was still within their usual pasture zone. The Mechdouf had numerous disputes with the Taggat, a tribe of marabouts who owned the well. The Taggat refused to allow the Mechdouf to construct a school building on their land. But in the end permission was granted after several palavers and hearings during which both traditional and modern hierarchies were appealed to, with a rich Mechdouf merchant from Nouakchott managing to win over a religious potentate from the Taggat side. The schoolhouse was built, and for five years (from 1973 to 1978) classes were in fact held there.

But at the end of these five years the well at Aguiert ran dry, and once again the Mechdouf were obliged to move. This time they settled "in town", that is to say, in Sangrafa. And once again it just so happened that the land they settled on belonged to the ubiquitous Taggat. Fresh disputes, one more round of private and official arbitration hearings.

This time the newcomers wanted to build their own well on a drilling site managed by the Brazilian Company Mendèz Junior International, the builder of the Nouakchott-Néma road. They also wanted to build school premises for their children and to build homes for themselves. The Taggat took a rather dim view of all these aspirations of the newcomers. Finally the government stepped in -- the usual government representative was a police guard -- and undertook to pay the cost of building a well on the Mendèz drilling site (letter from the Governor of Brakna to the Minister of the Interior, No. 58 RB/A/CF, 24 April 1979. Regional Archives, Dossier 9-6. "Litiges Dominaux"). The Mechdouf were allowed access to water in Sangrafa, where they were given compounds on the western outskirts of the township. Still, they continued to complain about their hosts' meanness, pointing out that they even sold them even the banco with which they made the bricks for their houses.

No doubt out of a desire to avoid antagonizing the Taggat, the government officials do not want the Mechdouf to build a school which would belong to them exclusively. (For a few weeks at the start of the school year, it was the Mechdouf's turn to give up land for school premises. They have been promised that a public school will be built. When is the unanswered question.)

Meanwhile, the Mechdouf are settling down. Our chief informant among them himself has opened a shop, and plans to sell his livestock when the price is right.

These nomads now attempting to settle down permanently, face a number of problems. A mishap that happened to this our informant may help illustrate the new hazards involved in the use of hired shepherds.

Apparently they charge high prices, and oblige their employers to give them a constant stream of gifts for fear they might otherwise abandon the herds. Our informant had since last year hired a herdsman from the Idekchemma clan, dependents of the Oulad Ebieri, to look after his herd of 75 to 80 camels in return for a yearly fee of one two-year-old camel (higg) plus three old guinea coins. Not long ago this herdsman was grazing the camels in the Aoukar area, near the entrance to the well at Afreyinna, when the police arrested him on a charge of theft. The police did nothing at all about the camels. Only a Hartani who happened to have been in the herdsman's company, also looking after livestock, succeeded in bringing in part of the herd. But thirty-some camels, including a female which had just delivered offspring -- a most precious animal indeed -- were left out there on the range, if that is not an overly optimistic assumption. They had scattered at a point five days' journey on camel-back from Sangrafa. How were they to be retrieved? And how was their owner going to look after them when he had his shop in mind at Sangrafa, and was anxious to give his children an education? How was he to find a trustworthy herdsman, an experienced one who would not hold him to ransom with incessant demands, and who would above all be dependably stable?

Among the nomads we interviewed, young and old, there is a consensus to the effect that the authorities are indifferent to the fate of nomads in general. People smiled when we brought up the issue of governmental action in the area of veterinary health. And then would come the retort: "These government officials don't give a damn about the health of human beings. How do you expect them to

worry about animal health?" Veterinary services for the entire Magta Lahjar region comprise 6 people. As if that were not bad enough, they have no transport, no fuel, no money, no vaccines. Not surprisingly we found these people generally pessimistic about the prospects facing the nomadic life.

## 2. Mobility Among Farmers

Farmers also work to the rhythm of periodic movements closely bound to natural agricultural conditions. Using the criterion of magnitude, we have distinguished two types of mobility:

(i) Very short range movements of between a few hundred meters and a few kilometers. Such movements, like those of the dam-site farmers in the Magta Lahjar area, take farmers from their houses in the ksar hamlets or their rainy season stations about a dozen kilometers off, to the immediate neighborhood of the fields. Right up till the end of the harvest season, they form a sort of ring of habitations around their farms, creating an enclosed area.

Among these farmers a few rare ones continue to keep livestock, sending them off to distant pastures in the planting season, under the care of herdsmen. These days most of these herdsmen are at least partially paid in cash. Moussa Ould Kebd, a local dignitary, told us: "In the beginning -- he meant some thirty years ago -- only a few people went to work on the farms. Today the situation is reversed: only a few people are sent to look after livestock."

Most farmers have only a few goats or sheep, which they feed for the greater part of the year on agricultural by-products.

(ii) There are also seasonal movements among farmers which range over longer distances than those described above. These are the movements which take farmers from rainy season farms to dam-site farms, or even, in some cases, from one rainy season farm to another. A settlement of Haratin from the small marabout tribe of Abul Cheikh Ould Menni, which we found in Oued Amour, provides a good example. The people there spend the rainy season at Agureymin, a riverbed belonging to their tribe, situated a dozen kilometers north of Oued Amour. Come winter's end, they move to the area around the Tamourt de Gadel, a permanent pond which they own jointly with the Taggat clan of the Ideinnib. There, as a rule they plant some winter crops; similarly, if the rainy season has been good enough to make it feasible, they do some planting on the tribal land they own on the White Gorgol riverbed, less than 10 kilometers south of the Tamourt de Gadel pond. The total distance of their range, then, is about 40 kilometers from north to south.

We must add that in addition to all this, some are obliged to migrate to Senegal during part of the year. There they work as laborers, water carriers, retail sellers of crooked meat, etc. to support their families.

### 3. The Rural Exodus and Labor Migrations

Another form of mobility of varying amplitude and history involves labor migrations.

Here we may distinguish two types of mobility: first, movements dating relatively a long way back (that is, from the late 1950's), directed mainly toward the Senegal River valley and Senegal's urban areas, principally Dakar; these movements were originally linked with trade and the livestock export business.

Secondly, there are more recent movements feeding the rural townships along the Kiffa-Nouakchott road, as well as new cities like Nouakchott, Nouadhibou and Zouerate.

The exodus seems to involve mostly young males. At first, and as far as the earliest of these movements go, young people drove livestock, sometimes bought on credit, into Senegal at the end of the rainy season and at the start of the cold season. With the proceeds of livestock sales they bought cereals and assorted goods either for themselves and their relatives, or for resale in Mauritania, or even, with increasing frequency, in Senegal itself, where a number of former herdsmen have taken to trading. As a matter of fact, the dominant tendency nowadays is to buy goods for resale, not for one's own consumption needs. And many are the "wealthy" Moorish traders today who began in just this style.

As a rule, these traders came back home during the rainy season. The fact that they live in Senegal gives them the prestige of people who have lived in far away places, quite apart from the weight of any property they accumulate, though in truth these people live very parsimoniously when they are abroad. All this works to aggravate inequalities already characteristic of their home societies -- inequalities between men and women, between free and dependent people. The dependent groups also migrate, especially the Haratin. For the most part they too head for Senegal, where they do poorly paid odd jobs, portering, carrying water, and working as domestic servants.

We must point out that as a result of the recent drought, numerous families reduced to penury left this region to go and settle permanently in Nouakchott's slums.

## B. Resources and Occupations

In the prefectorial district of Magta Lahjar taken as a whole, according to 1976 national census data, farming very clearly dominates other occupations, though animal husbandry and commerce also play considerable roles in the regional economy.

In this region cattle, mostly of the Peulh and Moorish zebu type, and small ruminants were the chief animals raised. These animals proved much less resistant than camels when several years of drought followed in succession, as happened this past decade.

The ravages attendant on the chronic drought of the 1970's affected the above species most severely. Large numbers of recently sedentarized people lost practically all their livestock. In addition, herds of camels came down from the north, since they also had to range much farther south to find pastures. It should be made clear that the drought does not make its effects felt solely in the direct decimation of herds. It also affects the entire range of processes including the growth, reproduction and marketing of livestock. (Young animals and aged beasts, the first victims of climatic disasters, were usually those first selected for sale.)

Social conditions have also been changed. Traditional norms still govern livestock ownerships within families, with each member owning private herds, while the overall management was left to the family head. But herding practices seem to be evolving increasingly in the direction of wage labor. There are two kinds of payment:

(i) The first kind uses the resources provided by the livestock herds themselves. For instance, the owner of a herd of camels might offer a herdsman a higg (a two-

year-old camel) or a jda (three-year-old) per year, in addition to milk, wool, etc. Additional perquisites may, depending on particular contracts, include tea, clothes, and cereals delivered in bulk at more or less definite periods.

(ii) The second kind of payment is cash. In this region, cash payments range between 1,000 and 2,000 ouguiya per month.

These changes, linked to the emancipation of the slaves and the townward flight of the youth, occasion bitter thoughts among livestock owners on the topic of the insatiable demands of today's herdsmen, and their unstable character.

#### 1. Pasture Lands and Water

As a rule, the attitude of nomads toward pasture is typically to use it for the immediate gratification of their herds' needs. Beyond that they show a very great, if not total indifference to the future upkeep of these pasture lands. The concept that pasture could be treated as a capital resource, could be maintained in good order, and could be used in a planned, systematic manner, with stands of fodder fenced off and harvested with scythes for instance, is always greeted with the most thorough-going cynicism. The use of synthetic fodder is insignificant, limited as it is to the feeding of a few head of milk stock kept in the urban areas by big shots.

As we discovered in the course of our various interviews and trips, the problem of water remains the nomads' number one worry. Tribal land tenure systems and ownership of watering points often seem to create problems for nomads on the move, since they are practically forced to depend permanently on watering points they do not own.

A young Peulh we met at Magta Lahjar actually told us his group was sometimes forced to pay for water to give its livestock.

These problems of pasture lands and watering points crop up again in the continual disputes between farmers and herdsmen. Such conflicts become all the more serious to the extent that they assume the character of class, and even tribal struggles, with the farmers mainly being Haratin, while the herdsmen are usually "white" Moors.

## 2. Livestock Products

As is practically the case everywhere in Moorish society, no part at all of the milk produced in this region is marketed. As for livestock, it is sold throughout the year, with August being its busiest month. Those animals bought in August are often obtained on credit by middlemen, who then transport them to the markets of Zouerate and Nouadhibou, selling them there before paying the herdsmen. In general, these middlemen are known and trusted by the herdsmen. Some livestock are sold on the local market.

In normal times, the animals sold are mainly young males, sterile females and aged beasts. But, as we have already pointed out, the disastrous conditions of these last few years have instigated the livestock owners to sell all grades of stock indiscriminately.

## 3. Farming

For a substantial portion of the year, between July-August and the beginning of March, most of the population is involved in farming.

In February, the month in which we conducted our study, rain-irrigated crops had already been harvested.

What remained to be harvested, were the dam-irrigated crops, by far the larger amount.

Techniques used on these farms are strictly traditional, the equipment being no more than hoes, hay-forks, etc. The farmers use no fertilizer, except that after harvest time livestock graze on the farms and leave their droppings as compost. No form of systematic crop rotation is practised. The farmers usually intercrop millet (especially the talghalhit variety, sorghum gambicum with niébé); this has the advantage of making nitrogenous substances available to the millet, since the niébé's radical nodes contain such nitrogenous matter. Plant care is rudimentary and inefficient.

Areas of individual farms on dam-irrigated land that we saw varied between about 1 and 2 hectares. Yields were mediocre: from 300 to 400 kilograms of millet per hectare.

The farmers have a habit of eating the growing crops piecemeal as they mature. Then there are heavy debts to pay, since the traders give credit at loan-shark rates, with commodities getting sold on credit for 200% their market value. In addition, there is the portion of the crop the farmer owes the landlord. On account of all these deductions, come harvest time, there is nothing much left for the farmer to sell. Hence the fact that millet prices remain practically unchanged at harvest time. In February, a moud of millet sold for 60 UM at Magta Lahjar, and the traders told us confidently that there would be no change in this price after the harvest.

#### 4. Social Conditions Governing Farming

Here, as elsewhere, the dam-site farms as well as the dams themselves are collective tribal property. The dam at Magta Lahjar, built in the late 1940's by the marabout

tribe of Idegmolla on their own land, today irrigates an area of 1,400 hectares.

Both tribal dignitaries and ordinary Idegmolla stress the fact that they had to put a lot of effort into the building of the dam, and that they in fact made material and human sacrifices to achieve the project. Officially, all members of the tribe, including of course the Haratin and the slaves, were summoned to participate in the actual labor, or, if they could not participate physically, at least to make a financial contribution. Some in fact did both -- providing physical labor as well as a cash contribution. When the project was finished, those who thus made a double contribution were awarded 2 coud each (a coud being a plot of land); the location being determined by casting lots. Those whose input was only either labor or cash got a single coud each. Naturally, only adult male members of the tribe were involved, to the number of about a thousand beneficiaries to start with. Slavery was still a going concern of widespread incidence at the time, and it is most likely that at distribution time very few slaves and freed slaves got counted in. It was also laid down that whoever wanted to sell or hand over their plots should deal only with other members of the tribe, which meant that no stranger would be allowed to own land in the Idegmolla domain.

In the course of time this stipulation was to contribute to the widening of inequalities between landholders. It enabled the wealthier people to acquire relatively large tracts of land which they could not directly work themselves. In addition, an appreciable number of the original participants aged, died or otherwise left the scene. Furthermore, schooling and the attraction exercised by urban life over the younger

generation (who should be farming the land) have taken their toll of the population. In the light of all this, it becomes easy to understand why sharecropping arrangements and wage labor have come to play such an important role in agriculture at Magta Lahjar.

In effect, it seems that more than 80% of the dam-irrigated farmland is worked either by sharecroppers working for a 50% cut of the harvest or by farm laborers working for a daily wage of 100 to 150 ouguiya. These sharecroppers and farm laborers are almost all Haratin. Some of them come from outside the Idegjmolla tribe, being members of marginal groups in the region such as the Ahel Babiyya and the Ahel Cheikh Ould Menni. The drought has put them through terrible changes.

In places other than Magta Lahjar, social conditions governing farm labor vary. At Oued Amour, there seems to be more wage labor than sharecropping. At Dionaba the brutal truth is that the Haratin simply work for their masters. At Bidjingal, on the other hand, they are self-employed. At Chogar Gadel, farming activities were interrupted for two years running on account of a land dispute between Haratin and white Moors.

In addition to traditional farming activities, we must mention truck farming notably at Magta Lahjar, though attempts at this type of farming in the area are still very limited. The extreme poverty of the people, plus problems of water availability militate against the expansion of this kind of enterprise. For instance, potato seedlings issued by the local Agricultural Service in the hope they would be planted, got eaten; only the skins were planted.

## II. SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

### A. The Family and Marriage

Traditional ritual observances and endogamous exigencies remain generally unchanged. There has been an apparent upward shift in the age at which women marry. No doubt this is partly because the men have gone off to the urban areas, where it takes them an increasingly longer and longer time to save enough money for the dowry payment, a payment that has been getting steadily inflated.

In Dionaba we heard of a young man who spent 10 years away in town, then came back to the village to get married. In two weeks he squandered 100,000 ouguiya on the dowry, the wedding reception, gifts, etc. Penniless after all that, he was obliged to borrow the fare back to Nouadhibou. No doubt he will think twice before venturing back home. We were told of numerous other cases, involving equally extravagant spending sprees. Not all dowries are so disastrously large, however, still there is universal dissatisfaction with the increasingly high cost of marriage.

Bloated dowries and all notwithstanding marriages continue to be very shaky affairs. In a way, it seems as if in imposing catastrophic expenditures on their husbands at wedding time, the female of the species were taking momentary but heavy revenge on men for making them live under the constant threat of divorce. The motto seems to be: get them while you can.

Sedentarization and the rural exodus have resulted in the almost complete emancipation of the slaves. They have also brought the youth an increasing degree of independence. But women, the least mobile group, are still kept in their traditional place. The domestic division of labor which confines women to the responsibilities of

the hearth while mainly reserving power over every other domain for men, remains intact.

These remarks, though, should naturally be nuanced according to the peculiarities of the different groups in Moorish society discussed in the Sociological Profile.

### B. Ethnic Groups and Tribes

The frames of reference of social solidarity and traditional modes of organization seem to have preserved a good deal of their old functions, specifically in relation to:

- Tribal land tenure;
- Collections and contributions to aid victims of disasters, those obliged to pay fines, etc.
- The role of the elders' assembly in the settlement of internal disputes, etc.

We must point out that in many places the government maintains only a sporadic presence; in some places it is altogether absent.

Tribal frames of reference also reveal a remarkable currency where such enterprises as cooperatives and preparatory cooperatives are being organized. They immediately acquire a tribal character, and are thus very likely to perpetuate tribal forms of organization (cf. the 3 pre-cooperative groups in Magta Lahjar). However, those interviewed generally agree that governmental authority is superior to traditional tribal political power.

From the ethnic point of view, the Moors constitute a large majority in this region. There are also a few Peulh groups. The Peulh community has a marginal status in the region. Sometimes it faces problems when trying

to find water for its livestock. It does not have watering points of its own, and in the eyes of the Moors who own such watering points, the Peulhs are more "foreign" than other Moors. But the Peulhs do provide a few paid herdsmen, generally much appreciated by the wealthier Moorish livestock owners.

### 3. The Social Hierarchy

The division of the society into more or less hermetic professional groups (warriors, Marabouts, craftsmen, Haratin) is changing. Those groups that traditionally suffered the grossest exploitation, especially the Haratin, are eager to see these changes speeded up.

In fact, in this region where farming has been an important economic activity for several decades, it was quite common to find "white" Moors, especially those from such marabout groups as the Idegjmolla, the Taggat and the Torkoz, working on their own lands themselves. We also noted that the craftsmen sometimes do some farming in addition to their traditional work.

Still, the fact remains that to this day the donkey's share of domestic and farm work is done by Haratin laborers. They are becoming a progressively refractory work force, aware as they are both of their oppression and of the key role they play in the Moorish production system.

Here and there can be discerned the first faint glimmerings of a coming resistance struggle over land tenure and against slavery. These signs are already helping change the self-image of the Haratin as well as their former masters' conception of them. These former masters are disturbed to see the corrosion of exploitative dependency bonds which they want to perpetuate in new forms under the guise of wage labor and sharecropping arrangements.

The traditional ruling groups, especially the Marabouts, also manage sometimes to make their ideological ascendancy felt in local state institutions. It is likely, for example, that the Cadi of Magta Lahjar, the son of the region's leading marabout, is sometimes called upon to judge cases in which his relatives and their Haratin dependents are on opposite sides.

### Concluding Points

1. From the inception of this report we have made it clear that authentic pastoralism of the kind in which a mobile community lives principally on animal husbandry resources, is now only a secondary, even a residual part, of economic life in the Magta Lahjar region. Nowadays farming is the region's chief economic occupation. As if to underscore this point, the area's sole government development projects have to do with farming; specifically, these projects concern the building of new dams or the repair of old ones.
2. Pastoralism per se, to judge by the evidence, leaves the authorities cold. In its present state, especially if climatic conditions remain as unfavorable as they have so far been, pastoralism seems bound to vanish from the region, at any rate as a lifestyle involving a significant portion of the people. What remains of it will doubtless suffer the same fate as the species of pastoralism observed around Nouakchott: remnant herds end up in the hands of businessmen or bureaucrats wealthy enough to employ well-paid herdsmen as well as to supplement scarce fodder with packaged feed bought on the market.

3. On the assumption that nomadism is the most rational way to exploit a natural environment with scanty resources, if the fate glimpsed above is to be avoided, the government should make available to the nomads the help and the health, education and other services they so urgently need. And this should all be made available to the nomads where they actually live, by means of mobile teams.

4. In our opinion, it would be quixotic to think that any really significant portion of the recently sedentarized groups would be likely to revert to nomadism should climatic conditions improve.

5. All educational campaigns should give special consideration to the role of women. In this connection, radio broadcasting enjoys very wide coverage in the rural areas, and could play an interesting part.

a. Women constitute the group that is least involved in migrations into the urban areas. It is therefore upon them that the local group's social and economic life increasingly depends.

b. If the cultural level of women were raised, it could help mitigate the effects of such phenomena as inflated dowries and showy, expensive behavior patterns, in the development of which female attitudes play a central part, quite apart from other beneficial effects in such areas as hygiene and child education.

6. As far as farming is concerned, it may be said that the current system of farm wage labor and sharecropping arrangement linked as they are with tribalist land tenure practices, works against the growth of the regional economy wherever it prevails. (Incidentally, this tribalist system is also a class system: land ownership

is mainly prerogative of "white" Moors). In truth, the system yields only paltry incomes to the primary producers, and the returns the sharecroppers get are equally meager.

7. The system's absurdity becomes even more patent when we consider that those who insist on perpetuating it, and for whose benefit it is supposed to operate, are themselves obliged to migrate to help the system survive. Because the fact is that a considerable number of landlords are hustling in Senegal, Nouakchott and other places as traders just to satisfy needs, their farm production is unable to meet. (Here a precise statistical survey would be most useful).

8. The choice before the government is clear: it can either help the present system to stagger on by maintaining existing dams, building new ones, giving loans or grants to those communities who now own these dams, chiefly for the construction of fences, as in the case of the Magta Lahjar community; or reform the land tenure system to ensure that the primary producers get a better return for their work.

# NEMA

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## Introduction

This region's remote location and the difficulty of maintaining communications access to it in the past condemned it to an isolation whose effects are still felt to this day.

To a great extent, it is this hemmed-in situation that accounts for the fact that here long-range nomadism has survived almost intact, with 69% of the population in 1976 being underdeveloped in all areas, including health, education, communications, etc.

This study was designed primarily to provide information on the current development of nomadism. Since the fundamental defining feature of this nomadism is its inherent mobility, our first concern will be to examine the nature of this mobility.

As we pointed out in our previous mission report, nomadism is also a form of economic and social organization which always involves sedentary groups. And this form of economic and social organization sometimes remains operative even after the dynamic aspect of the nomadic lifestyle -- its mobility -- is, for one reason or another, blocked.

It is to this economic and social organization that we shall devote the balance of our study.

### I. Mobility

As we did in our previous report, we have classified nomadic mobility separately from other forms of mobility affecting nomadic society, such as the seasonal movements of farm laborers, and labor migrations. Partly, also, we have done this in the interests of a clear exposition.

## 1. Mobility Among Nomads

We have paid particular attention to the movements of the great nomadic camel-herdsmen. In this connection the region we visited is a specially interesting observation area, since it shares the distinction, with the Dhar of Qualata area in particular, of being the region where the traditional pasture ranges of the last of Mauritania's genuine Bedouins are to be found. Among the leading Bedouins there is the great Mechdouf clan of the Hmennat warrior tribe. The nomadic cycle followed by these pastoralists, who combine the rearing of sheep and goats with camel-herding, is very regular.

They move in small groups, with isolated tents a frequent sight on their ranges, where settlements rarely contain more than a total of five tents. In the cold season they stay in those areas where the hadh, a salty plant much relished by camels, and the sbat (*Stipagrostis pungens*) grow. Often these areas are several days distant from the closest watering point. In this season, the animals are capable of going several days without water. People also do without water, drinking only milk.

On these winter pastures the nomads move quite often, staying at the most a fortnight in one place before moving on. The only animals guarded with any great care are those producing milk. The others are sometimes left to fend for themselves all winter. At the beginning of the warm season they are rounded up as if by previous arrangement at well-known watering spots where they habitually converge about the end of March, just as people also do. To maximise their autonomy the nomads have been using European-made metal casks for storing water, since these casks keep water much longer than the traditional goatskin containers (singular: guerba;

plural: greb) which tend to lose all their water through constant evaporation. In order to stay near their pastures, even during the dry season nomads remain quite far from watering points.

We had neither means nor time to go and observe these nomads in their winter habitat. So we have simply relied on information supplied by those nomads we were able to meet in the Néma-Qualata region.

We met a police squad whose members gave us some information on a lone tent belonging to a man, a woman, two young girls and a boy from the Dlakna clan of the Hmennat tribe. This family, now situated a two-day camel ride from the nearest watering point, had come back from the neighborhood of Agoueylil-en-Nmadi, about 120 kilometers to the north, where it had camped all winter. In a normal year this family would spend the dry season on the Cliff of Tagouraret near a well bearing the same name; with the coming of the rains they would travel back steadily, moving almost every day, toward the pasture ranges of Hadh, far to the northeast of Dhar, arriving in winter.

This year it practically did not rain at all in the Qualata region. So this family plans to keep moving south till they reach the well of Noual, some 76 kilometers west of Néma, in the Baten area. They might even range farther. By then they would have covered almost 300 kilometers starting from their winter habitat. We met a young shepherd at Ouinat Rajjat, about a dozen kilometers south of Néma. He had come down with his family from the same area as the Dlakna family we have just mentioned, travelling some 400 kilometers in two months with his relatives. The young man admitted they had no idea where their final destination would be. Perhaps they might end up as far

away as Ras El Ma, Lake Faguibine. In that case, their search for southern pastures would have taken them a distance of over 800 kilometers, and they would have to go back over the same distance with the first rains, because camels are extremely vulnerable to the tabourit disease (trypanosomiasis), an endemic disease rampant in the Sudan region during the rainy season.

We also found a Mechdouf camp site not far from the Mabrouk well, some 300 kilometers south of Néma. Its owners were members of the Chouamat clan, travelling with 5 tents from the Tiguignet region west of Oualata. They too will have to do the return trip when the rainy season starts. In this season, though, the nomads move little, about once a month, covering short distances, between one and two kilometers at a time. But during the remainder of the year, especially in the rainy season and at the time of the great North-South trek, they move almost every day.

These movements have one sole motive: the search for pasture. The decision as to when to move, where to move, and how far to move, is taken by the most experienced nomad, not necessarily the oldest nor the richest, after deliberations with other members of the group. Right down to this day the nomads travel on foot and on camels, just as in the past.

Cattle herdsmen do not move over such wide ranges. Moreover, the pasture areas covered are much smaller, around fifty kilometers annually.

In this region the raising of cattle often goes along with permanent settlement. The marabout tribe of the Ijouman El Arab, for instance, who have been settled on their land in the Ouinat Rajjat area for over sixty years, owned large herds of cattle before the recent drought.

Right now, though, only a very few of them still own more than a few head of cattle. It needs to be mentioned that the ravages of the drought have been added to by the intensified North-South (or, to be more precise, North-west to South-east) movement of nomads driven from Mauritania's western and northern regions by the scarcity of pasture. The livestock driven by these nomads, sometimes joined by herds based in Mali, eat up the young plants on their path before they mature. In this way, year after year, they jeopardize the reproduction of these pastures, since seeds are simply not given a chance to appear.

## 2. Rural Exodus -- Labor Migrations -- Sedentarization

The great nomadic groups maintain only minimal contacts with the urban areas, generally limiting these contacts to shopping visits for the purchase of clothes, tea, tobacco, cereals, etc. Among them one can find entire families who have settled in such towns as Oualata and Néma, as a rule because they have been rendered destitute. But apparently they offer scarcely any examples of individual-type migrations involving one particular age category such as the youth or one particular sex, males. We use the word "apparently" advisedly, because we could only make a categorical statement on the basis of a statistical survey. Nevertheless, we can highlight the fact that according to the document entitled Second résultats provisoires du recensement général de la population, published by the Ministry of Planning and Mining, Nouakchott, January 1977, this is, after Atar (the former 7th Region) the region of slowest sedentarization. On the national level, the average annual attrition rate among nomads is 3.1%; but for this region (formerly known as the 1st Region), the figure is a

mere 1.25%. (This figure does not include the region's 49,175 nomads on transhumance trips in Mali).

In our opinion, the sedentarization advances reflected in these figures refer more to cattle-herdsmen, who were clearly harder hit by the drought's ravages, than to camel-herdsmen.

Among those herdsmen who were either already settled or on the point of getting settled before the recent climatic crisis, there has been a noticeable extension of migratory movements toward the urban areas or even abroad.

Seasonal movements among farmers like the Haratin fraction of the Ijoumman El Arab we interviewed collectively at Hassi Chicba, connected with the end of farm work and with the increasingly low income from livestock sales, now tend to involve more and more people, young and old, male and female; they also have increasingly distant destinations.

In this Chicba community, for instance, when the harvest ends in September-October, all that remains is a tiny cluster of tents. And the inhabitants thereof set out every day either to cut wood or burn charcoal for sale in Néma, or to work full time in town as domestic servants, laborers, "masons", etc.

Some have to travel all the way to Mali to find work. In the nearby village of Ouinat Rajjat, whose inhabitants are also of the Ijoumman tribe, but mostly from the "white" Moorish branch, there is a long-standing tradition of migrations, connected with the export of livestock to the Ivory Coast. Nowadays, these migrations involve almost all the area's young men. Most of them have settled in Abidjan as traders, leaving their families behind at Ouinat. They return home from Abidjan for a month or two each year around the end of the rainy season, or in winter.

To conclude the section on mobility, let us note that among the great nomadic groups we encountered, none wanted to settle down or to swap its lifestyle for life in town, even though they admitted theirs was a tough life. This contrasts with the information gathered during the 1976 census, according to which 9.2% of nomadic households in the 1st Region said they wished to settle down.

## II. The Economic Resources of Nomads

### 1. General Data

The Regional Animal Husbandry Officer gives the following livestock inventory for the Eastern Hodh region:

- 425,000 cattle
- 3,500,000 sheep and goats
- 216,000 camels
- 2,150 asses
- 375 horses

(Race horses, those animals of power and prestige, are still to be found in Oualata and Timbédra). Estimates arrived at from a study of the area's cattle herds -- government officials have a history of being more interested in cattle than in other livestock -- yield the following age distribution table for the region's herds:

- Cattle less than 1 year old : 25%
- Cattle to 3 years old : 35%
- Cattle over 3 years old : 40%

In the opinion of our informant, these proportions reflect the anxiety to accumulate herds which works against the rational use of livestock resources.

A significant effort in the area of preventive veterinary work seems to have begun in 1979, with modest personnel and material resources. 34 officers were involved, including a construction engineer specializing in the building of livestock facilities and 9 veterinary assistants. The campaign succeeded in vaccinating 210,748 cattle against rinderpest -- a particularly noteworthy achievement. However, only cattle are involved. The attention given to camels, and especially small livestock, the essential resource of the poorest people, is far from adequate.

Data available at the moment are not adequate or sufficiently systematic to facilitate estimates about the economic benefits derived from livestock.

Officially supervised livestock slaughterhouse statistics represent only a tiny fraction of real meat consumption. In 1979, these figures indicate that the slaughterhouse business contributed 1,430,030 ouguiya to the regional budget. 1,827 cattle were slaughtered, together with 8,678 sheep and goats and 960 camels.

As far as sales are concerned, livestock exports were suspended by official decree, but a few months ago they were resumed in accordance with agreements sanctioned by the West African Economic Community, C.E.A.O. Official statistics for the last months of 1979 indicate sales of 2,247 cattle and 2,400 sheep and goats. These figures reflect only a fraction of the real numbers of livestock transported to the Ivory Coast and Mali.

It is equally hard to estimate precisely the numbers of livestock transported for sale in other regions within Mauritania. But this trade is clearly destined to grow as the Nouakchott-Néma highway gets completed. Already,

semi-trailers are being used to transport sheep and goats; sometimes even cattle, from Kiffa to Nouakchott. Official sales figures for 1979 indicate 39,061 sheep and goats plus 350 camels sold.

## 2. Livestock Ownership and Herding

In this region, as among Moors elsewhere, the bulk of livestock is owned by "white" Moors. The Haratin, for the most part, are sedentary or semi-sedentary farmers owning just a few sheep and goats.

The Mechdouf, a warrior tribe that has dominated this region since the 19th century, are the principal camel herdsman. But there are also the Oulad Billa and Abdel Bou Radda warrior clans of the Oulad Daoud tribe, as well as marabout groups such as the Glagma and the Tinouajiou. There is no particular specialization as far as cattle raising is concerned, even though it seems that the marabout tribes have a greater penchant for cattle than for camels.

Within families, traditional rules governing ownership remain in force: husbands, wives and sometimes children each have their own animals. But it is mainly the family head who decides the sale or sacrifice of livestock. It is rare to find a single family owning more than fifty or so camels. Most of the region's camel owners do their own herding and guard duty. This was true of all those we met or were informed about, with the exception of a single family. The employment of paid herdsman, which is a normal practice around Nouakchott, and becoming rapidly widespread in the Magta Lahjar region, to date seems to be practically nonexistent here.

There is also a strong impression that among the great nomadic groups, or at least among those who habitually trek down toward Néma in the dry season (the only ones we

interviewed directly) slave labor is clearly on the wane. We were informed that the nomads we met generally had no slaves, and divided herding chores among themselves.

The traditional usufruct loan system called mniha remains current in this region where rustling is rampant<sup>1/</sup>, and which around the 1930's used to be the happy hunting grounds of cattle raiders from the North. The system operated by sharing out risks while providing poor relatives or clients with some resources.

### 3. Water

Even more than access to pasture land, access to water sometimes confronts nomads in transit with problems, especially where tribal ownership of watering points is reinforced with individual ownership of wells. At Ouinat Rajjat, a place owned by the Ijoumman el Arab, we were present when a dispute began between an elderly man of the Oulad Ebieri tribe settled among the Ijoumman and a young Hmennat herdsman who had brought his camel to drink. This was at a time when it was already necessary for them to space their water intake, drinking once or twice a week. The old man forbade the young herdsman to use a well, saying, it belonged to an absent friend of his. He complained that those who came to use the well had a habit

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1/ At the market in Néma we met a group: accompanying livestock on trek, composed of people from different tribes (Oulad Billa, Tinouagiou and others). These people claimed the Nemadi were the main culprits as far as rustling was concerned. We interviewed a few Nemadi in Qualata; not surprisingly, they denied such accusations indignantly. One fact remains, however, the incidence of rustling is relatively high.

of carelessly shifting the flagstones encircling the well, thus risking its collapse.

Nowadays most of these shallow wells dug by families or small groups are sited within fenced-off compounds designed for truck farming.

Quite clearly, if all or most shallow wells undergo this kind of development, nomads are going to face increasingly insoluble problems on their pasture ranges.

According to available data on the region's water reserves, there are two water-bearing underground strata one of which referred to as the Pelites, lies quite close to the surface, that is, 20 to 35 meters deep in the Baten area; 60 to 70 meters deep in the Dhar area. It is this shallow reserve that supplies the 600 to 700 wells now functioning in the area. The second, much deeper stratum, situated on the continental divide, lies under much of the Dhar area's pasture land.

The shallowest wells tapping the Pelites stratum, between 20 and 35 meters deep, cost between 600,000 and 700,000 ouguiya each. With depreciation factored in, they cost between 1,000,000 and 1,200,000 ouguiya each. They provide a water turnover of between 2 and 3 cubic meters per hour on the average. According to the Water Works Department, they are in fact overused.

Wells in the Dhar area may reach down as deep as 70 meters, each of them costs nearly 4,000,000 ouguiya.

In 1967-1968, digging operations for 20 wells in the Dhar area began. The wells were in fact dug with financing provided by the European Development Fund. But then their maintenance was neglected, and today only 3 or 4 of them are in working order. The others have gotten clogged up with sand.

As a result of this experience the local Water Works official's response to the UNDP's proposal to dig wells using mechanical pumps has been rather lukewarm. "People have to learn to maintain simple wells first", he said. "Then we can consider more sophisticated equipment later."

We should point out, in addition, that outside the urban areas no mechanical or commercial well-drilling equipment at all is used. Furthermore, the prevalent attitude of most herdsmen toward the environment is to exploit it for the gratification of instant needs. As for the future, no one seems to care much.

#### 4. Products

Animal products such as milk, wool, meat and hides still make up the basic elements of nomadic diet and equipment. Let us take the liberty of referring to our introductory text on Moorish society. The remarks we made there on this subject are very relevant to the current situation in the Eastern Hodh region.

Except for wool, none of these products is sold in any significant quantities. Even wool is having a tough time keeping up with stiff competition from cotton tents. Cotton entered the field of tent-making quite some time ago, and among certain tribes, for example the Ahel Bou Radda, it has completely ousted wool.

Still, wooden tents retain a certain prestige value in some circles. For instance, a Mechdouf family we met in Mabrouk, south of Néma, bought a strip of woolen fabric measuring about 4 meters by 70 centimeters for 4,500 ouguiya, paid in cash. The family's tent is made of seven such strips, and every year at least one of them has to be replaced to keep the tent in good repair. The furniture

in this Mechdouf tent also demonstrates that traditional leathercraft is alive and kicking in the area. The lady of the tent household owns a camel saddle which was bought last year for 1,400 ouguiya, cash down.

The only way these nomads make money is to sell some of their livestock. In this respect, it is advisable to follow their practice of distinguishing between compulsory sales (baïc el vardh) and voluntary sales (baïc el gardh). Compulsory sales are forced on people by emergencies, such as natural disasters, illness in the family, etc., and might involve any portion of the herd. Voluntary sales are resorted to for the gratification of normal desires, such as the need for clothing, cereals, tea, etc. They only involve aged beasts, young male and sterile female animals, as a rule.

In the past the great size of the region's livestock herds used to attract the covetous attentions of raiders. Today it still stimulates the adventurous spirit of some livestock drovers. Risking dangers comparable to those faced by raiders in the past, these drovers convoy camel herds as far as Zouerate or Nouadhibou, where they sell them for double the price at home.

### III. The Region's Other Economic Occupations

#### 1. Farming

Farming here is practically limited to rain-irrigated agriculture. Until 1966 the only implements used were such traditional tools as hoes and digging poles.

The Haratin are the principal farming group, tilling land belonging in theory to their tribes. In this context each farmer personally owns a private field, on which he owes no fee or tax to any traditional authority.

Sharecropping is rare if not altogether absent in this region. The cultivable areas are varied, and yields are low. But the peasants do distribute a portion of the harvest among sundry mendicants, healers and marabouts. In quite a few cases some of these happen to be the peasants' former masters.

Women do farm work, just like men. In addition, they have homekeeping chores to attend to.

The main crop is millet. Normal yields are estimated at 400 kilograms per hectare.

In 1966, a series of experiments in the use of plows were conducted in Mali, a neighboring country whose influence was reinforced by the traditional affinity the Haratin of this area's adouaba villages harbor for it. The experiments were apparently successful, and in their wake the region's administrative officials decided to launch a similar "Operation Plow" on the Mauritanian side.

Let us just say that this operation was designed to stimulate a general involvement in plow-based agriculture in a number of the region's rural communities. And it did succeed in popularizing the use of plows, so well in fact that all the farmers we met think that is the only way to make farming a paying proposition. They say plows help both to increase yields and to extend the arable area. Using traditional methods, one man may, with a great deal of exertion, produce a harvest somewhat more than 400 kilograms, equivalent to 100 mouds or thereabouts. Using a plough, we are informed, one man can produce a harvest of 5,000 mouds, equivalent to 20,000 kilograms.

But plows are costly, at 5,700 UM a piece, apart from requiring draught animals. But for those who can get their hands on them, ploughs are really valuable capital equipment. Sometimes they hire them out to those who lack them. In Hassi Chicba the daily rental for a plow complete with harness is 600 UM plus fringe benefits: lunch and tea for the owner. Sometimes a plow owner will team up with an owner of draught animals. It is also quite common for the wealthier farmers to lend both their plows and their draught animals for a day, gratis, to the poorer farmers in their adabaï.

On the whole, however, earnings from farming are low, so most farmers are forced to take on supplementary jobs for the greater part of the year. Seldom do they find such jobs at home.

When they do not go to work in town as well-sinkers, laborers, "masons", movers or domestic servants, etc. they tide themselves over the dry season by selling wood of charcoal. This is a hazardous way to earn a living involving some risk: we are informed, for instance, that the constant staring at the furnace fires it involves impairs vision. On top of all that the income from charcoal sales is meager. Some Haratins we interviewed at Hassi Chicba pointed out, in this connection, that license fees were heavy.

Equipment used in this trade is relatively costly, and it wears out very fast. Sisal sacks used for carrying charcoal cost 50 ouguiya each, but on account of the charcoal's heat they last only two trips. The corus used to tie wood cost 150 ouguiya a piece, and they wear out just as fast as the sacks. Then there is the necessity of searching farther and farther for wood which is getting increasingly scarce, with donkeys which must be fed in

town on expensive fodder.

It is an awful lot of trouble for just 2,700 to 3,000 ouguiya a month, lean year or fat.

In places where the means exist, in other words, mainly in places where water is readily accessible, such as in Néma and Ouinat Rajjat, there is a modest amount of truck farming, able to provide the farmers with a pretty respectable amount of supplementary food and cash.

## 2. Trade and Transport

In the camps we visited, there was no trading of any sort. People there invariably went either to the closest villages or to the nearby towns, especially Néma, to buy whatever they needed. Apparently the situation was the same in most other camps.

The capital for the Eastern Hodh region is a center for a regional trade system in no way different from those in Mauritania's other regions. The main commodities traded are foodstuffs such as rice, millet, tea and sugar. There is also a noticeable trade in clothes. In the market stalls, generally rather unpretentious, one also notices a few craft products: camel-saddles, cushions, bags, sandals, cordage, etc.

At the market in Néma there is the same sexual division of labor as in Nouakchott or Magta Lahjar. Men own the "shops". Women, generally from the Haratin group, sell ready-to-eat food, condiments, jewels and oddments.

By the calculations of the local Internal Revenue Service, the wealthiest traders here gross between 6,000,000 and 7,000,000 ouguiya. Nine of the richest ten are from marabout backgrounds: four being of the Chorfa

tribe of Qualata and Tichitt, 2 of the Ahel Taleb Moctar, 1 of the Ijoumman El Arab. The tenth is a Teknaoui, from the Tekna warrior tribe of Oued Noun. There is not a single Hartani among the big ten. Here too, the market economy has superseded barter, which now only exists in vestigial, marginal forms.

In the regional commodity distribution system, caravan transport still plays a key role. Traders in Qualata and Néma get a substantial part of their goods by caravan transport from Mali.

Those traditional specialized occupations linked with the caravan business are in the main still carried on today. Thus the warrior tribe of the Oulad Billa maintains a near-monopoly of caravan transport between Qualata and Mali right down to this day.

We are appending a price list for the most common staples and for produce in Néma and the region. One noticeable feature in the various camp sites and villages in this area is that the staples of traditional nomadic diet as well as other consumption items remain relatively stable. This applies to food, the staples being dairy products, millet, tea, etc., as well as to clothing: Guinea fabric, costing 500 UM the melhafa, is still the universal material for women's clothes, while the percale robe, priced around 300 UM, is the most common form of men's clothing. In this corner of Mauritania, rural tastes present an image of stability rarely observed elsewhere. Housing has on the whole remained unchanged for the last few decades: the dominant form is now the round cotton tent, imported from Mali, which has superseded the woolen variety. (Short-haired white sheep are more numerous in the region than sheep with black wool).

#### IV. The Society

##### 1. The Family and the Tribe

Traditional marriage rules remain generally in force. A number of features give clear indications as to the stability of the fundamental characteristics of marriage in nomadic society: caste-endogamy is still relatively prevalent; a Kounti elder informed us that only members of the Chorfa group, who are said to be descended from the Prophet, and who have no qualms about marrying slave women, have the right to marry women from all the other groups, whether they be marabout or warrior groups; women get married quite early: at a Mechdouf camp we were informed that girls could be regarded a nubile from the age of nine, and the size and contents of dowries have remained essentially true to traditional form.

To this day dowry payments are valued by reference to Guinea coins called "baisa", a modification of the French word "pièce".<sup>1/</sup> The value of dowry payments has remained relatively stable over several decades, and today,

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<sup>1/</sup> The Guinea coin was an essential item in the trade with European merchants along the Senegal river. It became legal tender especially after the initial trade agreements concluded between the first Moorish chieftains and the French Company traders of Saint-Louis, Senegal, in 1785. In these agreements the power of the institution of chieftaincy was itself expressed in terms of Guinea coins: in effect, that form of currency headed the list of the notorious "Customary payments" the Saint-Louis merchants used for greasing the palms of Moorish dignitaries involved in the gum trade.

among the marabout and warrior groups it is fixed at an average of 25 Guinea coins, roughly equivalent to the price of 4 camels. By contrast, elsewhere in Mauritania the dowry has become bloated through unprecedented inflationary pressures. All these instances give further proof that among the nomads of Eastern Hodh, marriage customs have put up a strong resistance to time's attrition.

Again, in this region, matrimonial exchanges have remained more of a negotiated transaction; with ostentation relegated to a secondary status -- a situation different from that in Nouakchott, where showy behavior looms so large.

The Mechdouf families we interviewed at Mabrouk, some thirty miles south of Néma, gave us the following information on gifts and expenditure connected with marriage: the hairdresser is entitled to a gift (leurvaya) comprising one Guinea coin, 1 sugarloaf of bread, and 5 glasses of tea. The Master of Ceremonies (diebbab) who controls the music, receives two and a half Guinea coins.

The bridegroom also has to make presents of variable worth to his friends in return for their help in guarding the bride against the constant threat of ritual abduction (tirwaq) during the honeymoon.

We were further informed that it is the bride's parents who supply animals slaughtered during the festivities, plus butter, while the husband supplies tea and sugar.

Among the Haratin, by contrast, there have been significant changes in this area. Formerly, Haratin dowry payments comprised a variable amount of labor done for the

bride's owner if she was a slave (khadem). Traditionally, also, the bride was given a number of items obviously symbolizing slave status: a tether (darka), cords for hanging up leather containers (cra), the part of the meat normally reserved for Haratins when an animal was butchered (slalikh), etc. But these days, as an old Haratin woman from the Kounta tribe told us, Haratins were straining to rival white Moors in the area of dowry payments.

In Haratin communities like the one at Chicba, people no longer distinguish between the slaves (Abid) and freed slaves (Haratin). And the master's permission, which Islamic religion makes a prerequisite in all legally valid marriages is no longer sought when a slave woman gets married.

Divorces seem quite frequent, perhaps more so among sedentarized nomads than among genuine nomads. When they happen, it is quite common for the husband to demand the whole of the dowry back.

As for the traditional domestic division of labor and its hierarchization, they have hardly changed, according to those we interviewed. Women still exercise a modicum of control over purely domestic matters, but within the family real power remains in the hands of the husband.

One peculiar trait of Moorish nomadic groups we met or heard of in this region is that their women pound their own millet. More surprisingly still, men also do this sometimes. An interesting sign of change this, because this work, which is not merely backbreaking but also stigmatized as degrading, was traditionally reserved for slave women.

On a more generalized plane than the family level, the tribal context is still a meaningful one, though in a somewhat muted manner. We have already seen how tribal land tenure practices remain operative; we have also seen that the custom of making mniha-type usufruct loans survives, with tribal connections playing a preferred role. In addition, the traditional ascendancy of certain families continues.

From the evidence, the way central government authorities are perceived in the remotest nomadic circles is extremely vague. Mostly, the government is thought of as the embodiment of a more or less distant threat of repression. At times this is the only operative image. Nevertheless, those we interviewed were on the whole in agreement on one point: the government is considered higher than the traditional centers of political power.

## 2. The Social Hierarchy

We devoted our attention chiefly to the evolution of relationships between the Haratins and "white" Moors. We also considered selected aspects of marabout power.

To start with, let us note that the educational level of people in rural Eastern Hodh is very low. The literacy rate is the very bottom in all Mauritania. In 1976 it was estimated at 2.5% (Seconds résultats.... p. 41) as compared to a national average of 10.4%.

What this figure indicates above all else is the flimsiness of the traditional educational system. Yet in spite of this parlous state of affairs (or maybe because of it) marabout groups continue to exercise a great deal of power.

In connection with marabout power, people made it a point to remind us that the Kounta tribe, which combines both the warrior and priestly vocations, still wield pre-eminent power over the Hmennat.

Another manifestation of marabout power is the farming community of Agoueinit, about 30 kilometers west of Néma. Started in 1932 by Cheikh Tourad Ould Abbas Ould Cheikh Mohamed Fadel, it depends essentially on the yield from the dam-irrigated farms of Agoueinit, plus assorted grants and gifts from disciples far and near. The intended recipient is Cheikh Saad Bouh, the community's director, who succeeded his father in that position.

The community seems very well organized. It has a sort of General Steward, who receives and conducts visitors around as well as overseeing the efficient operation of the rest house which the community maintains as a free service -- a popular one. The village of Agoueinit functions simultaneously as a tool of marabout power and as evidence of that power. There, everything depends on the power of the Cheikh. His disciples support him with practically free labor; in their eyes he is a magnanimous benefactor both to themselves and to all the destitute people he shelters and feeds.

On the whole, it seemed to us that belief in traditional magico-religious ideas and practices, the basis of a considerable part of marabout power, remains unchallenged.

This is not to imply that the hierarchical structures of Moorish society as we delineated them in the Sociological Profile have remained entirely the way they were in the past in the Eastern Hodh region. On this point we have to place special emphasis on the increasing

desire of the Haratin for emancipation. This increasing desire is expressed in the trouble the Haratin now take to distance themselves, both physically and hierarchically, farther and farther from their former masters.

For example, a group of Haratin from the tribal community of Ijoumman El Arab moved from the Ouinat Rajjat area, taking its baggage and weapons to go and settle at a place called Chicba, which also was on tribal land. Having arrived there, this group on its own initiative dug a cement-lined well in the name of the Haratin, the better to demonstrate their independence from the "white" Moors of Ouinat. We had a discussion with these Haratin, in the presence of a "white" Moor of the same tribe. They constantly went to great pains to emphasize differences between themselves and the "white" Moors, and in their discussion of the exploitation and domination they had suffered in the past, their statements were carefully weighed but still quite unequivocal. They also admit sheltering and supporting runaway slaves in their adabaï. One further significant indication of the currency of the idea of emancipation among the Haratin is the effort they put into attempts to establish psychological contact with a time antedating their enslavement. That far-off era gets adorned rather readily with the halo of a golden age. For instance, in the course of long talks with 3 old slaves, we found the same phenomenon of a search for primal memories that we came across among the Haratins of Magta Lahjar. The three slaves were 2 men and one woman, aged between 70 and 80 years, belonging one to the Mechdouf tribe, the second to the Chorfa of Néma, and the last to the Kounta. The first, a beggar who was practically blind, admitted being legally fatherless -- a common enough

situation among slaves. But the other two claimed royal pedigrees. One, with Bambara roots, told us that his grandfather had been "a prince named Srama". This prince was killed by Samory Touré, who sold his children at the Ségou market. Among the infants thus sold had been our informant's father. The woman slave, for her part, used to belong to the Kounta. She had moved with her daughter to live in Néma three years back, earning her living as a grain-pounder. She says her father was a Peulh prince kidnapped at a tender age from his home.

#### Concluding Points

Taking into account the modest means and time at our disposal during our short stay in Néma, the work accomplished there could hardly provide a basis for anything more ambitious than a rapid, impressionistic survey of a practically roadless region of vast distances. Still, we succeeded in gleaning a few significant data on the evolution of pastoralism in a region which seems to have been largely insulated from the impact of external contacts.

True, it is possible to discern a certain vigor in nomadism here, viewed both as a lifestyle and as a particular form of social organization. But the price paid for this vigorous survival is that this region has been left quite far behind by the rest of the country.

These two aspects are Siamese twins; paradoxically, they are also in conflict. Pastoralism as it exists today cannot help but be affected by progress in education and health, and by changes in the present hierarchical structuring of the society. If, on the other hand, the aim is to preserve an extensive style of animal husbandry

involving the people, then the modes of adaptation which pastoralist society had itself developed for the exploitation of an ungenerous and capricious environment must be taken into account.

This is a profoundly hemmed-in region. It has to date been spared the almost total drought that has hit the rest of Mauritania these last years. Quite possibly, then, pastoralism could adjust more deliberately and smoothly. At any rate, we have not yet seen in this region such a wholesale transfer of livestock into the hand of rich merchants and bureaucrats as has happened in the environs of Nouakchott -- a process that turns animal husbandry into a petty capitalist business, with herdsmen paid cash wages, animals kept on commercial fodder, communications with the town assured by motor transport, etc.

It is possible, too, that the advance of the Nouakchott-Néma highway, which to date has been paved as far as some thirty kilometers west of Tintane, and which already serves as a channel for many nomads, encouraging them to get settled, might operate as a disintegrative factor with regard to the traditional pastoralist lifestyle.

At any rate, for the time being no clear official option has been adopted by the authorities as far as the future of pastoralism is concerned. Except for preventive veterinary work, which in any case is in danger of getting interrupted with the stoppage of F.E.D. aid, and the sinking of a few wells, the prevalent impression is that nature and the nomads are being left to their own devices.

With regard to those already settled or about to get settled down, the regional authorities have been talking of resuscitating the "Operation Plow" campaign.

Should this happen, it could affect the development of animal husbandry in significant ways, connected with an increase in numbers of draught animals and fodder production, as well as with a shift to intensive modes of animal husbandry.

There is also talk of giving aid and encouragement to small-scale truck farming projects.

# KANKOSSA

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KANKOSSA

Introduction

Like the previous ones (Magta Lahjar, Néma), this mission aimed at collecting precise information on the present development of nomadism in a region which traditionally passed as being one of the most important centers of cattle breeding in Mauritania.

We have not thought it necessary to emphasize the desolation, the disorder, the poverty which characterized the natural and human environment that we observed.

It must, however, be remembered that it is against this background of a sparse and considerably impoverished vegetation where old tree trunks can be seen here and there amid the rotting remains of animals; where dying animals wander in search of elusive grazing grounds; where badly fed men and women, who are often sick, do their best to survive in an atmosphere of both resignation and pessimism; it is against such a background where in several places the urgency of getting immediate help (it is a question of survival) renders practically ridiculous any reflection on development, that it is necessary to read the remarks that follow.

The order in which the following presentation is made coincides with that already used in the previous reports. We will first discuss movement within the nomad society; we will then go on to the resources and activities; finally, we will discuss the development of social relationships.

## I. The Movement

The herders from the Kankossa region are by an overwhelming majority traditionally herders and owners of sheep and goats.

Their transhumance during years of rainfall remained very limited and in many cases even tended towards sedentarism.

In a Peulh family (Foulabe of the Nianikobe clan) established today at Sani, some 15 km northeast of Kankossa, the head of the family, who is about 35 years old, explains to us that he arrived with his parents about ten years ago from Varc, Oulad Elemin, 2 km from Kankossa. This land belonged to the Moorish maraboutic tribe of Messouma: "Our herds never moved from there during the year, and we cultivated it during the rainy season. After a few years, the Messouma people, fearing that we would proclaim that our long stay in this area gave right over the land, forced us to move away. At that time, over a whole year, our movement did not extend beyond 5 km."

It was in 1969 that this group with its herd of cows and a few goats came to settle in Sani, on land claimed by Lemjajta (a fraction of the powerful Moorish tribe of the Ahel Sidi Mahmouds who have dominated the whole of Assaba since the XIXth century), but on which other Foulabes, who had decided to remain, had already settled. The disputes which at that point brought the Moors and Peulhs into opposition; disputes which were to lead to the recognition by the authorities of the right of the Peulh community to cultivate the Oued Sani bed, are evidence of the importance of land ownership and agricultural work for these herders in the process of settlement. Whatever the case, despite

the growing impoverishment of the pasture lands linked with the drought of the 1970's, the settlement of these people in the area was not accompanied by any greater mobility. Our informant told us that, since his arrival, he and his family have practically never left the immediate surroundings of the wells of Sani, to the point that their cattle were practically entirely depleted by undernourishment and disease. He was of the opinion that towards the south the grazing lands became less and less beneficial to the animals, who were not used to them. Moreover, he said, there are insects in these southern regions where everyone runs to these days "whose bites are more dangerous than the bite of any wild beast". There are, however, among the Peulh inhabitants of Sani, families which have kept the remainder of their herds and who at the time of our visit had already sent them south of Ould Yenge, more than 80 km away. These herds were driven by a few young men from the group who would not bring them back before the rainy season.

There was another Peulh, Doro Hamadi (a Foulabe from the Oulhabe clan), about 65 years old, whom we interviewed at Kankossa, on 5/4/80. When he came to the Kankossa region 24 years ago, he owned about 50 cows. Today, he has 20. At the time of his arrival and up until the years of drought, transhumance was as follows: during the rainy season the cattle, except for a few milk-cows, would move from the north to the area around Kiffa, driven by a few young men who would take them in the rainy season to the village of Kelebele, situated about 10 km southeast of Kankossa where the majority of the people from his group are permanently stationed. This is where their farms are situated.

During our interview with him at Kankossa, Doro Hamadi explained that all the animals belonging to the inhabitants of Kelebele (that is, cows and a few sheep and goats) had left for Frayfira, 70 km southeast of Kankossa, two months earlier and that they were likely to go beyond the Malian frontier which most of the Mauritanian herders had crossed, in the quest for grazing lands.

A closer study of this movement would, in fact, lead to the distinction between the management of the traditional kind of family herd and cattle kept by a salaried shepherd.

While in the traditional system the decision to travel depended exclusively on the most experienced people in the group, in the salaried management of the herd, the owner (or trader) usually lives in town, controls the movement of his animals from his urban residence, or if it involves travel across very long distances, he personally comes to direct operations on the spot.

Five kilometers south of Lebraj (about thirty kilometers southeast of Kankossa) we came across two Haratines accompanying a herd of cows which belonged to an Idawali trader (a Maraboutic tribe) from Tidjikja. Having left this area three weeks earlier, they were making their way towards Selibaby and the Malian border.

The owner would precede his animals every day by car to find water points on grazing lands. He would transport millet for the weakest animals and sometimes he would carry in his vehicle an animal that could no longer walk (about fifteen of the animals out of a herd of 80 which left Tidjikja had already died on the way).

Because of the means used and the form that it takes, this new movement of the herd is clearly different from the traditional nomadic manner on the hoof or on animal back. There are even new elements within the latter. Thus, for example, more and more often, one comes across Peulhs moving on camel back, more or less recently bought from the Moor herders.

Yesterday, as today, the quest for grazing land and water remains practically the sole reason for the nomadic way of life: mobility.

It must be said that this year the situation in the region is particularly worrisome in this respect. Indeed, during the last rainy season, Kankossa received only 151 mm of rain, whereas in a normal year it receives about 400. The breeders emphasize, in addition, the very harmful effects of one or two "winter rains" which are said to have drained off all substance from the soil of this region.

As for water, this also poses very difficult problems in many places. Generally obtained from permanent ponds or from shallow wells, often with insignificant yields, it demands long and taxing effort. We witnessed the watering of three herds of cows (two of them with fifty heads each, belonging to Moor traders and kept by paid Haratine shepherds; the third with more than a hundred heads maintained by its Peulh owner) at a place called Bou Habsa about 40 km southeast of Kankossa.

During this season, the animals look for grazing land farther and farther away from the water points, around which the deforested or open spaces stretch across wider and wider regions. As a result, during the day, journeys become longer and longer and the effects of this contributed to the already weak condition of the animals.

The shepherds had already arrived at Bou Habsa well before us, when we arrived at 1:30 p.m. and were awaiting the return of their herd which had left very early in the morning and which only began to arrive at 5:00 p.m. The drawing of water, practised according to the Peulh system of bagal (a container made of wood or enameled steel, with a volume of 2 to 3 liters tied to a wooden stem about 1-1/2 to 2 meters long by a length of rope equal to the depth of the well and which serves as a lever), continues for over two hours, and, as the shepherds tell us, the well will be dry before all the animals have had enough to drink.

These wells, which can be sunk on land belonging to a community other than their own (the Peulhs of Bou Habsa owned wells sunk on land belonging to the Ahel Sidi Mahmoud) are, as a general rule, private properties. Either they are dug by the owners or people are paid to do it. It seems that only the Peulhs or the Haratins do any sinking work, and they charge around 1,000 UM per well.

With the arrival of the hot season, that is, around April, the system of producing water from the wells becomes clearly inadequate, not only for the animals but also for the men: in the village of Chkata, not far from the Malian border, the inhabitants, Haratins from the warrior tribe of the Oulad Leghouizis, complain of thirst and demand permanent coffered wells.

The general condition of the animals suffers quite obviously from this lack of water, especially their health, which on the whole is extremely poor.

A large number of animals die daily of disease, and the work of the Regional Health Services is practically exclusively limited to prevention, that is vaccinations.

There are no complete statistics on the regional livestock and even less complete data on its pathology. The Regional Directorate of Animal Breeding does, however, provide the following figures concerning the prevention and treatment of animal diseases in Assaba: between October 1979 and April 1980, 150,438 cows (about 2/3 of the regional herd) were vaccinated against bovine plague; 27,433 against peripneumonia; 26,813 against botulism; 3,500 against symptomatic anthrax; 480 against bacteridian anthrax. Over the same period, the following numbers were treated mainly against various varieties of parasitoses: 1,735 cows; 4,732 sheep and goats; 327 camelines; 308 sheep, 17 horses.

We were able to observe during a two-day journey in the company of the local representative of the Department of Animal Husbandry that the stock-raisers' traditional prejudice against modern veterinary medicine (not too long ago, vaccinations were often refused) seems to have completely disappeared; indeed, our companion was distributing tablets against various parasitoses, and everybody was eagerly requesting them.

It must be said that livestock losses suffered over the last few years, due not only to the drought but also to disease, have been considerable. We have mentioned the Peulh shepherd from Sani who today is a farmer and who, since 1970, lost all of his 200 cows; of another, interviewed at Kankossa itself, who has kept 20 out of 30. We can also cite the Moorish breeder, former auxiliary in the guards and a 65 year-old bachelor, who had converted all his savings into cattle and who, out of the 30 cows that he still had at the end of the last rainy season, now has only 17; of another Moorish shepherd, looking after on

behalf of a relative, a herd of sheep and goats which two years ago counted over 400 head and which today is reduced to about sixty skeleton-like animals, some of which are already suffering from the illness that has killed all the others.

We can go on drawing for several pages this gruesome picture which represents what for some years has been the daily lot of Mauritanian herders. However, let us simply say that the losses vary according to the species (cows and sheep are the ones most affected), the areas, the means available to the herders (one rich trader can provide supplementary food in millet or artificial fodder for his cattle, the former costing 25 UM per kilo and the latter 500 UM per bag of 50 kilos), but they also vary depending on the journeys made: if it is done too late or in the wrong direction, it goes without saying that the losses are greater than if it were done in time and in order to reach a place which justifies the journey (which, for example, shows the interest there is in having an Information Service for grazing lands); the length and pace of the journeys also affect the condition of the animals.

Generally speaking, we can say that the lengthening of the journeys, the absence of any specific destination noticed amongst many of the herders in the region, give to their movements an aspect of a disorganized and exhausting search which most of them would like to bring to an end, if they could.

Despite a deep attachment to pastoral life, many nomads do indeed show their weariness and their desire to finish with the animals once and for all, if they could

only image what else they could do. During our brief stay in the Kankossa region, we had neither the time nor the means to assess in a precise manner the phenomena of sedentarization and rural exodus nor the seasonal migrations for work, especially towards Mali, which concern the majority of the borderline villagers, cultivators as well as small-scale herders.

It is obvious that an exhaustive analysis of pastoralism must include a systematic examination of all these points which concern not only the demographic significance of nomadism but also the activities and resources of the nomads (situation of the labor market for the payment of the shepherds and well sinkers, the role played by the monetary contribution of the migrants, the development of the social relationships and the modes of consumption).

## II. Resources and Activities

### 1. Livestock Raising

Cattle constitute, of course, the principal resource of pastoralists. Before the drought of the last few years, family herds, especially among the Peulhs, sometimes reached considerable numbers; it was not uncommon to meet families owning 300 to 400 head of cattle. Among the Moors a herd of about one hundred animals could be considered an appreciable fortune.

This difference in the number of cattle is reflected in the techniques of training, which appear to be more superficial among the Peulhs than among the Moors. This, at any rate, is the opinion of the local representative of the Department of Animal Husbandry (a Soninke), who had the time during vaccination campaigns to test the respective

"wildness" of the Peulh zebus and the Moorish zebus. Indeed, the contrast in the size of herds reflects a whole network of respective differences relating to the perception, meaning, the function and characteristics of both Peulh and Moorish herding styles. In brief, it could be said that the care of these differences lies in the fact that the Peulhs limit their rearing to cows - prestige animals - around which ritualistic (marriage, sumptuary ceremonies) and psychological significances greatly exceed their economic role; whereas among the Moors, cows are not different from other animals, whose herding and breeding is very often associated with that of sheep and goats indeed even with that of camels.

In one of the groups as in the other, yesterday as today, the individual ownership of cattle within the family unit is, in principle, fully recognized, even if the head of the family is the effective manager of the domestic unit. The limits to this principle of individual ownership sometimes entail conflicts of such violence that they can result in murder.

In relation to distinctions in ownership characteristics it has already been noted that the Peulhs, in the estimation of the Prefect of Kankossa, represent 25% of the 31,000 inhabitants of the department, and own practically only white-skinned gobra zebus with big horns, more profitable for butchering than the Moorish zebu (with an average weight of 40 kg for the Peulh zebu as against 330-380 kg for the Moorish zebu) with a lower rate of milk production. The Peulhs also own a few sheep and goats, a few donkeys and horses and have even begun in recent years to buy from their Moorish neighbors camels for transport, equipped with the Moorish harness, the "rahla".

As for the Moors, they own all the cameline livestock in the Department, nearly all the sheep and goats as well as herds of cows.

Pastoral activity among the Moors gave rise to the following traditional division of labor: watching over, watering and milking of the livestock were generally performed by slaves or dependents (Telamid or Aznaga) and sometimes by the owners only, themselves men, while the processing (milk for the production of butter, wool, tanning of hides, etc.) was done by either the Moorish women (most often the case) or by slave women.

Among the Peulhs who also practised certain forms of slavery, watching over and watering the herds were (and still are) generally done by the young men, whereas milking can be done where necessary by women (something which is rare among the Moors). It is equally the duty of the women to take care of products, especially milk, part of which they can trade for their own needs in the form of milk curds, butter, etc. The task of looking after the young cattle, whenever there were any, also fell to them (a task that was somewhat disdained).

The Peulhs like the Moors also practised forms of association that one can be tempted to call salaried; the relationship between the shepherd and his "employer" was never reduced to the simple and cold demands of cash payment but were always woven in a web of family relationships, sentimental and tribal ties, dependent and clientele roles, where the cash element was only one consideration among others.

Traditionally, among the Peulhs of the region (Foulabe) it is said that a shepherd should earn every 3 months and

10 days a two-year old calf, in addition to his clothes.

The traditional payment of the Moors vary: looking after a herd of camels, they talk of a higg (a young three-year old camel) plus a variable number of guinea pieces, for the maintenance of a herd of cows, they will speak of a jdac (three-year old cow) per year, in addition to clothes, a few goats or sheep are also given for the surveillance of a herd of sheep and goats.

Today, with the progressive disappearance of slavery and the increasing ascendancy of the market economy, payments tend to be made directly in cash, even if the work contract continues to call widely for other services (it is especially the Haratins and former dependents who hire themselves out as shepherds) and for "patriarchal and idyllic" relationships characteristic of the pre-capitalist social order.

In its new form, the salary of shepherds in the region will be around 1,000 U.M. per month, to which various forms of payment in kind will always be added (tea, cereals, clothes, etc.).

The massive transfer of cattle these last ten years into the hands of traders living in town and, for the most part, belonging to the maraboutic tribe of the Idawali (which largely dominates trade at Kiffa and Kankossa) is a decisive contributory factor in the acceleration of the monetarization of the payment of shepherds.

The farming techniques that these latter practise and which alone would have been worthy of detailed study, are very similar from one community to another, whether it is a question of tending, watering, milking, techniques

of weaning, of training, of branding, even when their psychological and ideological results differ.

Without going as far as to say as J.P. Hervouet that the "principal bond between the Moorish farmer and his herd is monetary" (Types d'Adaptation Sahéliens, Rouens, 1975, p. 152), we must consider with specific attention the particular psychological and sentimental bond which unites Peulh breeders with their herds.

A bond which has not suffered the effects of the transfer we are talking about has resulted in the accumulation by a few rich traders in the region, of a considerable part of the local livestock. Indeed, the latter are Moors and the Peulhs zebus are of hardly any interest to them, with specialization, practically without exception, in the raising of the two types of zebus (Moorish and Peulh) remaining practically the rule. We must also note the appreciable differences in the use of animal products and their commercialization.

During this season of the year, we did not meet a single family of stock-raisers who obtained a significant part of their food consumption from animal production. Even among groups which own relatively numerous herds, there is not enough milk to feed the children, who generally manifest very clear external signs of undernourishment (thinness, distended stomachs, etc.).

Slaughtering is extremely rare and is hardly likely during this period to give meat or even passable quality, for the animals are for the most part very thin.

Among the Moorish raisers, even when they are plentiful, these products are not traditionally commercialized except for a small quantity of melted butter (dhen).

Among the Peulhs, on the other hand, milk, when it is produced in sufficient quantity, is often sold by women who enjoy total freedom in the spending of the profit which this trade enables them to make.

Concerning the exportation of cattle towards Mali and across Mali to Senegal and the Ivory Coast, one could make no assessment. During this season, most of the breeders in the region have already crossed the Malian border in search of grazing lands. It therefore becomes practically impossible to determine the number of animals that have left the country to be sold.

At Kankossa, the prices are currently fixed, for sheep and goats at between 800 and 1,400 UM; for the young cows between 2,500 and 4,000 UM. Adult camelines and cows are hardly sold here due to the limited local market.

The most important transactions concerning cattle generally take place towards the end of the rainy season when the condition of the animals is best.

When the season has been particularly bad, as was the case last year and when the breeders (mostly the Peulhs) are not able to do any cultivation, they obviously tend to make up for the cereal deficit (doubled by an increase in prices) by selling more animals than in previous years. This need also leads them to sell animals (especially young females) that they would otherwise not have sold.

On the whole, the management of the herd differs greatly when one moves from a traditional family breeding to the livestock contractors, which is what certain traders and civil servants have become. This is particularly

noticeable when one examines the differences between Peulh stock-raisers and those now owners of cattle.

Here are two examples to illustrate this contrast:

-- Diabé, a Peulh (Foulabe of the Oulnabe clan), 42 years old, married with 2 wives and father of two children, interviewed 7/14/80 at Bou Habsa about forty kilometers southeast of Kankossa. Illiterate. Owns about sixty cows and a few goats. Last year, he lost about 10 head of cattle and sold 5: 3 heifers and 2 calves. Two of the heifers were sold to Soninkes from the Mali border who want to raise them; the three other animals were sold to Dioulas.

-- Aziz, a former employee of an oil company and the Regional Agricultural Services, born in 1925. Originally from Morocco, he too is polygamous. He began to be interested in livestock raising in 1969-70 "because people were abandoning it." Owns nearly 300 cows and 150 sheep and goats, a vehicle (landrover pick-up), an orchard where he also grows palm trees. Employs 4 shepherds, each one earning nearly 1,000 UM per month in addition to the cattle products. Last year, he did not lose any of his herd. Since the rains he has already lost about thirty of his cows, especially young ones. He figures that before the rainy season, half of his animals will have died. "The livestock raiser is a banker", he says. He himself sells nearly 100,000 UM worth of cattle every year. But he only sells the adult males in large numbers and this during the rainy season. He does not refrain from eating some of his animals, the oldest of which are made into Tichtar (dried meat) each year.

Stockraising needs, he believes, to be better organized and to be provided with more completed health services. There are also non-exploited grazing lands due to a lack of wells. He thinks that during bad years the authorities should make cheap artificial fodder available to the breeders.

We can clearly see the difference between this dynamic and commercial management of a big, recently acquired herd and traditional stockraising as practised particularly by the Peulh cultivators, which is characterized by an attachment to the animals, defying any bookkeeping.

For example, many breeders own a large number of males and aged females which are no longer productive and which sometimes die of old age. It has been outlined in the study on the "Sociological Profile of the Moors", an interpretation of this phenomenon which attempts to render less absurd what appears to be an absurdity today. Indeed, the observation did not become clear until the entire cultural, economic and political environment to which it was closely linked had itself disappeared or become outlandish in respect to the new type of economic or institutional rationality which penetrates all sectors of Mauritanian society.

We also asked certain breeders, particularly the Peulhs whether it was not better for them to sell part of their cattle during the in-season when they could still get a profitable price with which to ensure the means of getting the rest of their cattle through the dry season. Some of them answered that they preferred to keep their animals for as long as they could; others replied: "We would willingly do so if we were sure of being able to keep the money for the ends that you have mentioned, but we will not be able to; there are too many demands upon us and the money would be quickly eaten up..."

There is, at any rate, action to be taken by the authorities (providing a framework of information, of guidance, etc.) for the sale of cattle, just perhaps, as the creation of a rural and truly popular credit institution could contribute to the improvement of the lot befalling the breeders.

## 2. Agriculture

Apart from the products from animal rearing, the latter, and mainly among the Peulhs, could ensure themselves supplementary revenue by undertaking during the rainy season the cultivation of millet.

Practised with traditional tools, always on the same lands which the cultivators generally consider to be their own property, the rain-fed farm rarely yields enough to meet year-round needs of those who practise it. It is only exceptionally that it supplies a saleable surplus.

Last year, due to lack of rain, practically no one obtained a harvest in the region where the price of millet has suffered a high price increase for some months (a 4 kg container currently costs 100 UM at Kankossa).

Among the Moors, it is only the sedentary Haratines who do any farming, which is the principal resource. Owners of a few cows and sheep and goats, they are forced to leave their villages, accompanied by women, old folk and children for half of the year to go to towns in the region, to Nouakchott or more often to Mali. At Kankossa, where they do nearly all the domestic and manual work, it seems that salary earning has taken over the traditional slave relationships.

Picking during certain years may ensure a good contribution to food (small wild millet, jujubes, etc.) and even a small monetary revenue from the sale of pods of acacia nilotica (sallaha), of gum arabic, of the fruits of wild palm trees (doum) (Hyphaeno habaica). But with the succession of bad years, the results have become less and less significant.

Entire groups like the Haratine villagers from Agmamin, 6 km away from Kankossa, have turned the picking of doum into a speciality; they themselves eat it, due to "lack of other foods" (they complain moreover, of stomach-aches) and they also sell it (at 10 UM per kg) as fodder. The same Haratines from Agmamin who live miserably, also cultivate a sweet-smelling local root (Tara) which is highly valued by Black African communities (it is used to perfume the amulets of young children) who exchange it for double its volume of millet. The results from all that remains are very modest and, when it does not rain like last year, scarcity awaits both cultivators and stock-raisers alike. Only those who are involved in trade and have links with the city partially escape from these difficulties and may even benefit from them (drop in the price of animals, cost of manpower, draconian conditions of credit).

### 3. Trade

Given the increasing number of problems which we have demonstrated several times in this text between stock-raising and trade, especially in the form of a transfer of cattle from the hands of traditional raisers to those of traders, a study of the trading pattern will be very useful.<sup>1/</sup>

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<sup>1/</sup> The Moors started trading with livestock; most of their important merchants were first Dioulas and wholesale butchers. The transfer presently taking place with the hands of these merchants (as well as to bureaucrats) is the result of a logical evolution of a trade which integrated to Moorish society into a dominated and disarticulated economy. It is to be reminded that it was livestock trading which nourished trade for the Moors from their earliest beginnings.

We do not have the time to do more than undertake a rough outline of such a study. What we can say after a short and superficial study of the area is that there is no trade among the true stock-raisers and that the only significant trading is done at Kankossa itself. It is almost totally in the hands of "white" Moors, and remains within this latter group, which is largely controlled by men who come from the Maraboutic tribe of the Idawalis, which in Moorish society forms a kind of economic diaspora. All the "shops" of any importance are run by men and, as in all other markets of Mauritania, micro-commerce is run in the market center by the women (here only the Moorish women and quite a few hartaniats are active).

A few traders chosen at random confirmed when questioned that the purchase by the latter of a few herds, at the moment is more for reasons of comfort and leisure than towards truly commercial purposes. Essentially, it is again a question of what we have called "holiday herds".

### III. The Evolution of Social Relationships

The Department of Kankossa is inhabited by Moors (60 to 70%), by Peulhs (25%) and by a small minority of Soninke farmers who are not of direct interest to us here.

The relationships between the Moors and the Peulhs who arrived in the region in the 1950's even if not always free from clashes linked with land ownership seems to be leading if not to interpenetration; at least towards peaceful co-existence.

We have emphasized the Moors' adoption of the Peulhs' system of bagal of drawing water; the imitation by the Haratine of the Peulh hut style... It must be added that nearly all the Peulhs we have met understand and speak the Moorish dialect, Hassania.

With respect to the evolution of social structures, the two groups which present a few similarities, especially at the level of clan and tribal organization, experienced the effects of the same colonial and post-colonial situation: the weakening and diverting of the traditional social framework under the joint pressure of colonization and the invasion of trade (among the Ahel Hamma Khattar, the leading clan from the powerful tribe of the Ahel Sidi Mahmoud, the choice by the French of a chief devoted to their cause created dissension which till today has not been completely erased), gradual and as it seems at the present moment, nearly complete emancipation of the dominated groups, particularly the slaves (abid and matiube).

The ascendancy of the Moors in terms of population in the Department is reinforced by their total economic dominance (monopoly of trade), the heavy work, agricultural?

activities; domestic work remains essentially reserved for former slaves.

The Peulhs, who have always practised agriculture, together with pastoral activity, find it much easier than the Moors to turn entirely to farm work when they have lost all or a part of their cattle. We even saw former Peulh shepherds in the dried-up bed of Oued Sani indulge in pheniculture as if they were already beginning their integration into an oasis economy of the Saharan type.

In both communities, the essential features of traditional family and domestic organization are still strong: role of the parents in marriage, relative endogamy of tribe and castes, system of attitudes with regard to the married couple and the parents-in-law, inferior status of women and young people.

The local Moorish society, nevertheless, has one distinguishing trait due to its greater integration in the market economy of which it is the main agent; whereas, among the Peulhs, the dowry continues to be expressed in head of cattle and remains relatively stable, among the Moors, it is negotiated in currency and is subject to continued inflation. This is far from being an indifferent factor in the analysis of the total perception of cattle and its place in the social life of the two communities.

Finally, at the cultural and religious levels, we must distinguish, within an educational system which on the whole is extremely mediocre, differences in level which quite obviously cut across and reinforce the disparities and differences previously described. The

recent conversion to Islam of the Foulabes (it was only completed in the 1950's) sometimes accompanied by an affiliation more or less thought out along the "Orthodox" (El Hadj Mahmoud Ba) or Hamallist Hijania lines has still not completely changed their attitude to their cattle.

The commercial dynamism of the Moors and among them of the marabouts, the traditional specialists of knowledge, is perhaps linked to the former advantage of the latter in the field of education: knowledge, even rudimentary, of classical Arabic enables them to write letters, keep small accounts, etc.; it also confers prestige which is more resistant to the wear and tear of time than the material or institutional content of the relationships of domination that it establishes.

#### IV. Conclusion

Pastoral activity among the Moors as among the Peulhs of the Department of Kankossa has, over the last few years, suffered a very sharp decline due to the drought which has completely wiped out grazing lands and has considerably reduced agricultural resources, but is due also to the integration of the nomads into a system of exchange which becomes more disastrous from year to year.

This evolution which affects the material basis (resources and revenues, consumption) as well as the social organization of the nomads (social hierarchy, marriage...) seems, where the Moors are concerned, to lead towards a gradual disappearance of traditional family raising of livestock in favor of spare-time breeding and breeding for trade, controlled from the town, using paid shepherds and backed by imported logistic means (motor vehicles, artificial fodder...).

Peulh pastoralism seems, for many reasons and despite much change, to have resisted better as a system. Among these reasons, of which the very deep attachment of the Peulhs to pastoral life must be taken into account, must be included in larger sizes of the family units, which gives the management of the herds a clearly more community-based character, as well as the existence of a purely Moorish market of cows from which the Peulh zebu remains excluded.