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OF SOCIOLOGICAL STUDIES

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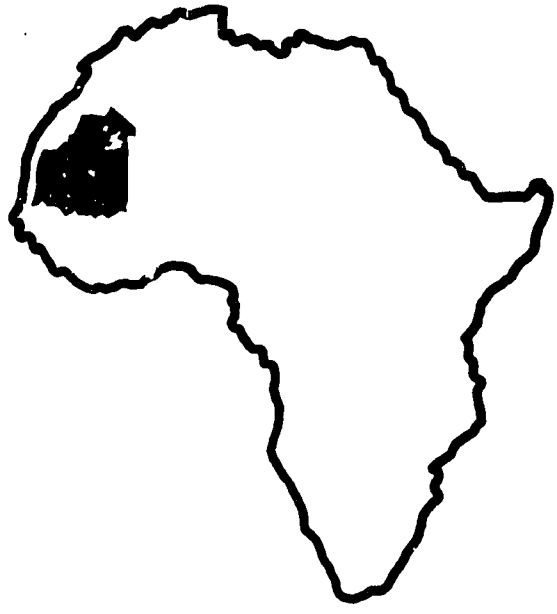

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Sociological Unit
R A M S

1980

S Y N T H E S I S

O F

S O C I O L O G I C A L

S T U D I E S

August 1980

SOCIOLOGICAL UNIT

LIST OF STUDIES

Synthesis

Sociological Profiles

The Moors

Black African Mauritanian

Studies in Social Change

Population Movements and Migration in Mauritania

Social Organization of Agricultural Production

Pastoralism Today: Three Case Studies

Evolution of Modes of Accumulation and Social Transformation

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S Y N T H E S I S

O F S O C I O L O G I C A L S T U D I E S

Introduction

The studies undertaken by the sociological unit were divided into two sections as defined by the terms of reference of the RAMS Project: Sociological Profiles and Studies in Social Change. All the studies had one goal : to present an overall picture, from a historical and a contemporary perspective, of the extremely complex Mauritanian society, as a means of understanding the social factors - both positive and negative - of particular interest to the present as well as to the long term process of development in the country.

It is important to note from the outset the two major constraints placed on the sociological team, besides time and lack of researchers in relation to the goals set within the unit:

(1) The lack of available research, particularly of modern-day Mauritania, greatly limited the possibilities of in-depth analysis and thus much time was spent gathering necessary primary data for all studies

(2) Much time was spent in synthesizing widely scattered information necessary for the sociological profiles taking away time from essential fieldwork. A basic error in the terms of reference was the insistence of studies on Sociological Profiles which could have been more profitably integrated in the second part of the research, "Social Change", thereby allowing more time, breadth and depth in fieldwork analysis.

Nonetheless, the unit has maintained its goals of presenting all major sectors of activities, pastoralism, agriculture, commerce and their related problems as practised by the major ethnic groups - Moors, Toucouleurs, Peulhs, Wolof, Soninke - most concerned by these activities.

Two basic premises guided the research of the sociological unit. On the one hand, the need to identify the specific forms of the historical evolution of the country and its peoples and, on the other hand, the need to understand the mechanisms of changes particular to each of the ethnic groups, as a consequence of the historical and developmental processes that have taken place in the country.

The historical evolution pertinent to Mauritania required such an exploratory procedure. Two examples will highlight such a necessity:

(1) As part of the Sahelian context, Mauritania was also part of the general colonial system typical to the region for over a century and until the 1960's. That colonial system had, moreover, its own particularities for it was fundamentally different from that which was applied on the West African Coast. Whereas the development of the individual ownership of land was instituted for the plantation economies of cocoa and coffee directed for export in Ghana and the Ivory Coast, for instance, no such development existed in the Sahelian countries, and in particular Mauritania, and no similar technical agricultural improvements were introduced. Stagnation of agricultural production was further reinforced by an ever growing rural exodus, (reinforced also by ever increasing monetary needs) and was exacerbated by the drought of 1968 against which the populations had lost the traditional resi-

lience of adaptation known to them during previous droughts.

(2) The national space of Mauritania - inhabited by ethnic groups which originally migrated from neighboring countries - took shape through its particular historical evolution of traditional migration and sedentarization, of conquests and razzias, of power tensions and defeats. Its final geopolitical contours were molded by the time of independence. But it also gave its populations characteristics different from their brethern ethnic groups in Mali, Senegal and Morocco.

The mechanisms of social change and various impacts and the sociological studies were aimed at three levels of analysis:

(a) changes in the social relationships <u>within</u> each ethnic group;
(b) <u>divergent impacts</u> as reflected in each of the ethnic groups and as affecting production systems; and
(c) similarities in the impact of change relevant to all the ethnic groups.

For example:

(1) Changes due to the drought of 1968 were first reflected in a mass migration movement within and outside of the country, increasing various kinds of tensions between the social classes of each ethnic group. This created a greater awareness of new social and political rights paricularly among the servile classes of each of the groups.

(2) The consequences of a galoping demography and an anarchic migration have created pressures on a land become less and less amenable to cultivation and pasturage. Social

relationships within the systems of productions - livestock and agriculture - particular to all the ethnic groups are going through major social mutations. In all aspects, women are acquiring a new economic dimension.

(3) Tenacity of traditions vary from group to group, and are a reflection of the internal power structure of the patriarchal organization within each group. Whereby the Soninke society perpetuates its social structure for a greater control of its economic and productive systems, the power structure of the Moors and Toucouleurs has been, at different levels, far more seriously weakened as a result of the impact of migration and sedentarization.

(4) In all the societies concerned, the economic evolution of the merchant classes has led to greater speculative tendencies, perpetuating and increasing an already begun pattern of consumption behavior during the colonial era. This trend has various consequences on the various systems of production on which the development process of each group, hence the entire country, must be based.

A final word must be said about the methodological approach adopted by the Sociological Unit. The method has been anthropological, that is, rather than the use of fixed questionnaires to be filled by various interviewers, direct observation and interviewing of individuals or groups by one or two trained researchers in the field were undertaken. This led to numerous fieldtrips to rural and urban areas. The approach was decided upon for two major reasons:

(1) The lack or fragility of available normative and quantitative data necessary for the definition of fixed questionnaires.

(2) The more convincing and more appropriate technique allowed through the anthropological approach in acquiring an understanding of the needs, values and structural mechanisms of social change. This far more complex and far more rigourous and disciplined method makes it possible, however, for the researcher to convey a global vision of the society within which a variety of social factors, divergent and interrelated, must be simultaneously comprehended.

A series of questions precede the presentation of the section on Social Change. We aim to highlight in this way the most pertinent social factors affecting the process of development as well as the impact which development, as presently conceived, has had on the society as a whole.

SOCIOLOGICAL PROFILES

Introduction

The goal of these two reports - The Moors and Black African Mauritania - was to present a socio-historical description of the various ethnic groups within the Mauritanian nation. They were based on available and accessible documentation in Mauritania. A rapid survey of the literature quickly indicated the heightened importance given to historical and geographic research, especially in relation to the Moors (see bibliography of Study), at the expense of both qualitative and quantitative socio-economic research. Indeed, two of the standard analyses on the current evolution of the Moors and the Peulhs of Mauritania were done by two geographers, Toupet and Hervouet.

While the Moors could trace their origin to arabo-berber tribes of Morocco and the Black African groups to ethnic groups in Senegal and Mali, this did not facilitate the task of delving into the abundant anthropological and sociological literature of all these groups in these three different countries. From their earliest migrations, sedentarizations, conquests and losses, exchanges and commercial endeavors, as well as because of their very particular geo-political and ecological characteristics, the different social groupings of Mauritania acquired particularities distinctive from their groups of origin. For the Beidane Moors, the expanse of unlivable desert was overcome by astute commercial initiatives and by a mode of life - nomadism - molded by the rigourous climatic conditions which, nevertheless, historically never isolated them from either their northern or southern neighbors. For the Black African Mauritanians, the Senegal River, a natural

division with the neighboring countries, acted as an umbilical cord, a hyphen between themselves and their origins, a link still maintained in spite of the political imposition of a frontier. The artificial separation is still incomprehensible to cultivators and nomads alike.

Mauritania has two outstanding characteristics, one historical, the other social, rendering it a unique example in Africa and distinguishing it from the other Sahelian countries. Mauritania was a conquered territory and it was only after 80 years of a "politics of pacification" - 1850 to 1933 - that the French were finally able to impose themselves as a colonial power. Even then, Mauritania became a colony without an autonomous colonial administration. The French powers administered their Mauritanian subjects from outside of the Mauritanian territory - from Saint-Louis!

The social particularity of Mauritania is in its ethnic composition accentuating the split between the North and the South - those with affinities to the arabo-berber culture of the Maghreb and those with a cultural and social reality linking them to the Sahelian cultures. Yet, two factors unite the five major groups - the Moors, the Toucouleurs, Peulhs, Soninke and Wolof. Mobility and migration are the essence of their particular historic, cultural and economic evolution, forcing them into constant contact through both partnership and enmity. Moreover, Islam was an overriding factor in creating links between them and was not certainly the most unifying impulse in the historical evolution of the society as as whole. The very long history of Mauritania, particularly in its modern context, cannot be comprehended but through the intertwining aspects of these two socio-political factors : waves of migration and settlement and within

each of these the evolution of a religion of immense socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions.

Yet, a third aspect should here be added for in spite of the profound differences in the social workings of each group, a striking similarity molds them into the Sahelian socio-political context: a highly formalized social and political structure is expressed in a social hierarchy of nobles, marabouts, artisan castes and servile classes, each of which is strictly controlled within each group by a set of well-defined social, political and economic relationships.

THE MOORS

The destiny of Mauritania has been set since the earliest of times, as far back as the paleolithic era when, even then, the Mauritanian Sahara appeared as the ethnic frontier between whites and blacks. It may well be that the latter became the first vassals and servile classes of the conquering Berbers from the North. These migrant Berbers, through the large-scale offensive of the Almoravid movement in the 11th century contributed towards the definitive introduction of Islam in the entire area. The first part of this report brushed over the extremely complex and stormy historical evolution of the country, with the conquests and triumphs of the Arab tribes of Beni Hassan from which the warrior social class of the Hassani (the noble Beidane) originate. It briefly dealt with the emergence of the emirats - Trarza, Brakna, Adrar . . . - and their coalition as well as dissolutions. The importance of these historical events lies in the fact that they had a profound impact on the migration movements of all the regions as well as on the commercial evolution of the country later itself profoundly affected by the slow process of colonization. The centralisation of power brought in by the French colonial administration had an irreversible impact on the economic and social structures of the Moors' way of life, affecting the cycles of nomadism, the patterns of pasturage, the increase of large herds, contributing to desertification. It changed the Moors' concept of space and frontiers, created new centres of power, new commercial clients, a new dependency on a system of monetarization and new consumption patterns.

The study of the economic process of production within the Moorish society, and particularly as it related to their main resource, livestock, highlighted the progressive

and generalized deterioration of the traditional mode of production to the benefit of an ever-increasing domination of a market economy.

Not one aspect of the nomadic way of life is not affected by its livestock, and in the case of the Moors, their camels. The close proximity of man and animal is expressed in all aspects of the society's economic, social and cultural activities. Indeed, the traditional techniques of pasteralism express the close links between the Moor and his herd of camels. These herds have remained through changing times, the frequent method of savings for the family. Beginning with colonialism and exacerberated by the drought of 1968, however, the ostentatious and speculative trends encouraged by a market economy have shaken the concepts of herding as traditionally conceived within a self-perpetuating and self-sufficient system of livestock production once adapted to harsh climatic conditions.

Besides camel herding which shaped a nomadic mode of life for part of the Moorish society, oasis small dam irrigation and recession agriculture are another important set of activities of a major part of that society: the servile class of haratine. The study focuses upon the social evolution of these three types of agricultural pratices, an evolution begun with the first years of colonialism, and accentuated by the social, economic and ecological events of the past few years. Sedentarization and migration towards the southern regions by Moors, particularly by the haratine, had already begun during colonial times. The protection the colonial administration lent to this social class indeed encouraged the movement towards a break with the ties of dependency and servility and the creation of numerous independent villages of haratine. It is during these times

that their first claims to land ownership appeared. Today, the Beidane have also migrated en masse since the drought, seriously reversing the population trends, sedentarized today outnumbering nomadic peoples. Moreover, the exodus of the servile classes created a gap in the labor force which pushed many a Beidane to cultivate the land himself and turned many a haratine into salaried laborers.

The mode of life of the Moors, centered around pastoralism and nomadism, has been irreversibly affected. Since the 1970's massive sedentarization and rural exodus further changed the concept of space for the nomad, so important in his daily relationships and work conditions. The upheaval was far more drastic for the Moors than for the river people for it affected their habitat, their food consumption, their marriage patterns, their hygiene, their forms of production and commercial exchange, their fundamental attitude towards mobility. All of the social classes were affected by these sudden changes, yet one class became the most stable and, indeed, may have gained from the process - the marabout class which is synonymous with the merchant class.

The climatic catastrophe of the past ten years was the catalyst for the final imbalance of the traditional internal equilibrium within the Moorish society. The most positive factor may well have been the push towards the freeing, even at the expense of greater pauperisation, of the most dependent and servile classes, the Zenaga, the haratine and 'abid.

This study has attempted to distinguish clearly between the state of non-development of the Moors' society versus its present state of underdevelopment. This situation cannot be seen as having resulted only from the drought or because of the lack of development and initiatives of

the Moors. Rather, it was created by the brutal change of economic and political forces, introduced as far back as the 18th century, through the market economy supported by the colonial system, and perpetuated under present conditions of increasing economic dependencies as well as climatic disasters.

BLACK AFRICAN MAURITANIA

The four major ethnic groups of the Mauritanian bank of the Senegal River were described in their historic and social context.

The brief historical description aimed at explaining the makings of these societies in their process of perpetual change while also attempting to bring out the interpenetration of the Moors with these southern populations. Already in the early part of the 16th century, commercial contacts between Moors and Toucouleurs had begun. The mechanisms of economic exchanges, of political alliances and tensions of wars intensified especially between the upper strata of both societies, that is the emirs and marabouts of the Moors and the powerful clans of the Toucouleurs. These alliances evolved for the common purpose of preserving the economic and political privileges of these classes in opposition to demands placed by tributaries, political dependents and colonial powers. Various levels of rivalries often linked Moors with Toucouleurs, overcoming their power struggle in the unity against common threats.

It was in the middle of the 19th century that French colonial policy took a decisive turn as a reaction to the economic strength both Moors and Black leaders were imposing, not only on their own populations but also on the rich foreign merchants of Saint-Louis. That colonial policy took 80 years to the 1930's to reach its ultimate goal of "pacification" and colonisation of the country.

Nevertheless, in 1925, a systematic policy of importation of commercial goods began to affect the economic and social patterns of all the social classes of the different ethnic groups. Local production of all sorts diminished

drastically and no attempts were made to fill the gap of needs except through imports. A vicious circle of an irreversible trend settled: the need to buy for consumption forced the search for paid labor, leading to rural exodus and the abandonment of cultivation. The search for means to pay taxes newly imposed by the colonial powers, the need to pay for food for family subsistence, etc., all led towards the weakening of the traditional economy without the counter-balancing action to stabilize and render production more profitable. The society remains fundamentally traditional and conservative in its mode of life while losing its productive impetus.

Four major aspects reflect the impact felt by all these ethnic grups as a result of the colonial system:

(1) The political organization of the Toucouleurs was deeply unsettled towards the end of the 19th century and a great majority of the nobles, the "Elected Nobles", saw their lands confiscated for insubordination.

(2) Slavery was abolished in 1905 setting into motion a migratory movement of a large sector of the servile classes.

(3) The "pacification policy" put an end to intertribal wars and raids, allowing a peaceful increase of herds but also encouraging sedentarization. Thus began the process of desertification in areas not amenable to large herds nor large settlements.

(4) Colonial taxes, as mentioned above, created a new need for salaried labor, thus, of rural exodus.

The intensification of this cumulative and intertwined series of impacts becomes apparent over the last twenty years and particularly since the drought of 1968 which, in 1980 still persists carrying devastation for

humans, herds and agriculture alike:

(1) An anarchic and abrupt uprooting of masses of the population to the urban areas created a dependency with which the traditional modes of production were unable to adjust.

(2) The new needs created by the urban or new settings found no solutions within the traditional context.

(3) The rural exodus seriously affected the availability of agricultural labor along the river.

(4) A new form of social and economic parasitism, without the traditional system of support, was forced upon the new urban social classes, often creating new social (particularly family) tensions.

It is extremely difficult to generalize about the populations living along the Senegal River, not only because of the differences existing between each ethnic group but also within each group living in different regions. The Peulhs are a good example of such a case (differences between the Peulhs Walo and Foulabes, for instance), but the same could also be said about the Soninke (of Guidimakha and Kaedi) and the Wolof, though less so with the Toucouleurs. Yet, resemblances do exist in the social and economic structures of all these groups all molded by social hierarchies which deeply affect their economic and political structures. All are presently going through profound social changes which affect individual and group relationships at all levels. All practised a major traditional activity of crucial importance - agriculture and cattle herding - which the drought brutally put to a test: either heightening the value (cattle) or devaluating it (agricultural labor, though even unirrigated land acquired value with the hope of irrigation). Commerce, however, was the most consistent activity

to flourish, especially as a consequence of the drought.

Traditionally, land is central to all political, social and economic power of each of the ethnic groups discussed. Indeed, among the Soninke, we have seen that the social hierarchy of the individual determines the very position he occupies in a field and on a type of soil prescribed by the group. Moreover, all the groups define their habitat as being the center of their social unit (the galle the foyre, the ka) from which emanates a whole system of economic and family relationships.

The drought, migration a changing economic system... all have had an irreversible impact on the different ways of life of Mauritania, north and south. The consequences of these changes are yet to be fully comprehended. This leads us to conclude that no development process can be constructively defined without seriously understanding that which most profoundly affects all these populations their habits, their social mechanisms, their attitudes, their needs.

II. STUDIES IN SOCIAL CHANGES

INTRODUCTION

SYNTHESIS OF QUESTIONS RAISED

The sociological unit does not pretend, in the time allotted for its studies, to have covered all the themes or answered all the questions necessary for an understanding of Mauritania's complex reality. In effect, its ultimate hope was to touch upon a multiplicity of factors with the goal of raising pertinent questions relevant to problems of development and to the very mechanisms which allow such a process to take shape. The studies are to serve as a springboard for further well-defined research in hopes of reaching more profoundly the needs of a population in constant search of an equilibrium between its resources and its production system, that is, its very survival.

A basic premise is set and emanates from all the studies : no development - whether rural, urban, industrial - can take place without being preceded or accompanied by institutional changes and institutional support to ensure the success of the program. Moreover, a condition for this success is that the program be understood and approved by the people most concerned, those, in fact, who must implement and put into action the directives of change which could hopefully lead to a rational development. For the conceptualization of such development, the values and goals of the people must be integrated in the planning process. To understand these values, the mechanisms of disruptive as well as cohesive elements of change must be understood.

Of the numerous questions raised in our series of studies, four will be briefly discussed within the context of Studies in Social Change as a means not only of synthesizing the various interrelated elements in the studies but also of highlighting fundamental problems of change felt to be essential to the future of development in Mauritania

(1) Social relationships in the land tenure system : what are the factors of perpetuation and changes as a result of the evolution of traditional forms of dependency and new forms of labor organization and the impact of the draught on production ?

Land ownership, everywhere in Mauritania, is based originally on the extent of power a tribe or a clan was able to acquire through conquest, usurpation, imposition and dependencies of others. The maintenance of the power structure and pressure of the group depended on the maintenance of that spatial entity - the land. The very meaning of the social organization of each of the ethnic group emanated from the interrelated dichotomy of ownership versus the organization of labor around that land. Relationships of dependencies and servility developed within an overall system of strictly conceived and perpetuated social hierarchies. Ownership was, therefore, synonymous with political power but also acknowledged, materially, through the imposition of tithes and obligations on those cultivating the land on the basis of usufruit rights - slaves, haratine, zenages.

The system has not yet broken down. It has been profoundly shaken by various elements whose source can be traced to the very beginnings of the colonial past and the "double dependency" system it led to : dependency on an exterior market whose real prices are maintained and on a local market where local production is highly

devalued. Today, two factors, however, have served as a catalyst of change and mutations within the organization of production which traditionally supported that system: the drought and migration.

The wave of migration had already set in as far back as the 1940's as a result of the drought and the international crisis, and had especially centered around the dependents and the haratine of the Moors. But it also touched all the other ethnic groups. The search for salaried labor began to be widespread and, in effect, led to the "liberation" of the labor force in general. However, the land tenure system and its atavistic organization based on dependency has not been profoundly touched. It is the drought of the 1970's that created the first deep crack in the long established relationships. The very need for cash to survive forces all levels of dependents as well as masters to go elsewhere. As a result, agricultural labor begins to be renumerated and salaries change the relationship between owner and cultivator of the land. In no way should it be implied that dependencies disappear for they are nevertheless maintained, even at a distance, through the old but weakening system of payments of tithes by slaves and ex-slaves to their masters. A declaration on July 5, 1980, reiterates the government's will to abolish this system of dependency and indeed may help give the necessary impulse for a final break of the enslavement and dependency problems.

Migration and drought may be the catalyst of general change but irrigation and tensions, the latter resulting around property rights, dramatized the degree of changes that had taken place. Irrigation projects may well have been initiated before the drought but they began to extend over the Mauritanian bank of the Senegal River in the mid-seventies. They instituted a new though not alien, concept of individualized land ownership often at the expense of

communal property. This set into action a new level of tensions within the system of production: a friction, if not an opposition between owners and non-owners of land. Is the land to be owned only by those who cultivate it? And how will the traditional owners accept this loss of power? What about the new cultivators or herders, such as the Peulhs who have become agriculturists? Numerous examples - of which the Gorgol project and the forthcoming project of the Black Gorgol at M'bout are cases in point - express not only the seriousness but also the difficulty of the problems raised.

This leads us to a final point on which the whole success of production and of agricultural development rests: the need for a land reform system meaningful to the Mauritanian context. Three constraints should be immediately formulated and taken into consideration by those most responsible to finding solutions, the policy makers:

(a) Expropriation cannot be enforced without compensation.

(b) The limited land available today for irrigation (for long-term plans cannot satisfy the peasants' immediate needs of survival) renders a unilateral individualization of ownership unprofitable to a community used to communal property rights: parcels are too small; marketing of products too erratic, etc.

(c) Inheritance rights on newly distributed land must be ensured providing a sense of continuity and needed encouragement for profitable investments on the land.

Both livestock and agriculture are old traditions in Mauritania but in both sectors the means of production have remained archaic. However, changes in the means of production, in attitudes, habits and concepts have suddenly sprung up on herders and peasants alike who are told that

it is no longer adequate to serve only for auto-consumption but also for surplus to be sold. Government initiatives are taken outside of the realm of understanding and conceptualization of the peasant (and hardly anything has been done done for the herder). Tools and machines are given, even if elmentary for some; yet they are new to the peasants and awkward to adjust to. The expenses and maintenances needed for these tools are foreign to their understanding of a personal budget. The support, observation, popularization through education which are desperately needed do not exist. It is not difficult, therefore, to imagine that social constraints develop and slow the development process for a more elementary step must first be acted upon : the persuasion and adherence of the peasants to that very process.

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(2) Difficulties of profitable productivity in the private and public sector of rural development (agriculture and livestock) and the impact of technical changes on production.

It is not possible to relate the impact of development of these past few years to problems only caused by the drought thus affecting productivity. The beginnings of national development in Mauritania had already taken shape in the 1960's in the form of an emphasis placed on the modern sector at the expense of the rural sector. A World Bank report of 1971 raised the problem that the highly capital-intensive projects then led to a great deal of money being spent with few results achieved, none of which affected the bulk of the rural population. It added, "In part,

the planners did not know enough about the ecological possibilities of traditional livestock and crop agriculture and, in part, they placed excessive reliance on the stimulative effects of infrastructure investments."

Thus, by the time the drought unlatched its disruptive mechanisms, the rural sector found itself practically dispossessed unable to pursue its traditional system of production : it forced people, especially the active population, away from agricultural labor: a massive migration limited the numbers of hands available and, as a result, putting aside the constraints due to climate, a limited production prevailed. New rural development projects, centered on irrigation, were ambiguous and unadapted to a population generally conservative and limited in its technical know-how.

Unresolved land ownership claims arose in irrigation projects and many a potentailly cultivable land remained dry. Moreover, an important consequence of migration was the désintegration of the family unit (especially among the Moors, Toucouleurs and Wolof) which traditionally relied on its youth and servile classes to work the land. Their exodus could only exacerbate the lack of productivity already affected by the drought. But their choices were limited.

Irrigation introduced mechanization and water control. Both techniques require an expertise demanding supervision, control and education, that is a working support system which, in effect, does not exist. As a result, a lack of confidence in the projects underway developed among the peasants. Yet, because of the limited choices, the persistence in the hope of better subsistence forced them to pursue their efforts. Moreover, the extremely high expenses incurred on the rice paddies (rice being the only crop encouraged on a large scale in all irrigated perimeters) have

created a vicious circle of dependency and limited desires of private innovation.

It may not be an exaggeration to say that private investments placed in agricultural and irrigated endeavors are but a handful, not only because they require a large capital with slow returns but also involve acquiring a necessary and alien know-how through a process of a risk-laden experience: an acceptability of risk because of the lack of technical expertise, the lack of understanding of water management, the financial insecurity as a result of relatively low returns from irrigation, the technical difficulties unresolved. Even the rich peasants are not investing in agriculture. The savings of a community are placed elsewhere - a concrete edifice, starting with a religious center, a mosque, symbol of social cohesion and identity - and those of individuals are channelled in speculative ventures, such as habitat or trade.

The marketing of livestock has afforded, however, opportunities of attracting investments to an important, though small, sector of the population. The significance of the trade has, indeed, led to the formation and institutionalization of a social class, a new bourgeoisie, especially among the Moors. But this was made possible through a network of political, economic and social relationships. The monopoly of livestock commerce is far easier to pursue and to accept than a monopoly of land, far more obvious and easier to contest. Moreover, the latter is more difficult to pursue. The problems of technical control and know-how have not touched the livestock sector. Yet its system of ownership has been affected by two important trends.

(a) The drastic loss of cattle by a majority of pastoralists has forced them to sell their cattle for survival, often becoming salaried herders for the new owners, and

(b) The monopolization of the trade has allowed enrichment and, thus, investments in a "revolutionary" transportation system, the use of trucks for the transport of herds to central markets, instead of the far-riskier tracking of the animals. The investments in modern cattle management, fodder, pasturage protection and in rational herd accumulation have not made a significant impact as yet. The most important impetus in the trade is its speculative tendency.

On the basis of this background of instability - from the lack of trust and know-how in a new agriculture to an overwhelming and unproductive tendency towards speculative activities - how can innovation and change be channelled into productive sectors? The total lack of consideration in projects of the traditional interrelationships which exist between agricultural and pastoral activities has also heightened the problems. Added to this are marketing and storage problems.

The problems dominating social relationships regulating production can only be resolved if the technical and material means of production are also resolved. This cannot be envisioned unless a firm national policy deals with the elementary problems of infrastructure, support and well-defined rights of land ownership.

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(3) Where do women fit in the process of development?

Youth and women are usually grouped together in development projects or in the conceptualization of projects.

The error is gross. Women's function, role and needs in the traditional as well as in the context of change are different from those of youth, and, in deed, may be closer to those of men at the same level and status educationally and culturally. Details on women's status and changes as a result of the drought and migration have been discussed in each of the studies presented. It is however, relevant to breifly highlight those aspects most pertinent to development.

The drought and migration have had a profound impact at various levels on women in the different ethnic groups, creating greater idleness for some and greater responsibilities for others.

Undeniably, those most hit by the drought were the Peulh women, the transhumants, who lost their herds and thus their trade -- selling milk and leathergoods. Moreover, since they were not agriculturists, their integration in the agricultural labor force was only marginal. The Soninke, Toucouleur and Wolof women, on the other hand, found themselves, through the massive migration of their men, assuming greater labor and domestic responsibilities. In many cases, particularly with the Soninke and Toucouleur, women began to cultivate land which traditionally they were never able to fully take the responsibility of cultivating, though labor participation was a general generally enforced rule. The lack of other labor and the difficulty of paying salaried laborers were the reasons for the extension of their roles. But the attraction to the city, whether in or outside of Mauritania (especially Senegal) has led many a woman to migrate with her family or, if she was unmarried, alone. T This has been particularly true of the Toucouleur. For the Beidane women the life of leisure for which they were brought up since their childhood was seriously perturbed -- though the values of such a life may still persist. Yet, it is the urban setting which has enabled the Beidane woman to expand a potential she already had traditionally acquired: an economic autonomous activity -- -- trade - - - encouraged

(as with the Peulh women) by a life of mobility but also separation from the nomadic male population of the group. The haratine and zenaga women also reinforced their integration in the agricultural labor force as part of the process of sedentarization with their families, while setting up, as with the Beidane, small trades in markets of villages and towns. The most interesting commercial response to the urban setting, however, has been that of some of the Beidane women who set up large trade and real estate businesses that take them as far away as Las Palmas, Dakar and Abidjan.

Women are, therefore, active, in an unstructured manner, in the productive and commercial circuits of the country. If some are still being forced into a "gavage" system (forced feeding), the tradition is disappearing and women themselves are reacting if only because of the economic burdens imposed by such a tradition.

On the whole, the picture does not express optimism. As with men, women are also caught between the two extremes of stagnation in the rural sector and speculation in the urban sector. Their own potential in developing their skills remains untapped -- whether artisanal, agricultural, commercial or educational. Attempts everywhere are made by women to reinforce their economic independence from their men on whom they must rely - through income earning from migration - because of the general problem of lack of production. Saving associations, based on parental and communal ties, are created as a means of self-support and stability. This is an important measure for, traditionally, among all the ethnic groups, women have the responsibility of providing for their personal needs while rarely ever gaining inheritance privileges accorded by Islam.

The potential of the integration of women in the development process is great. It is not a potential as yet

understood by either Mauritanian policy makers or development institutions. Indeed, this is not a problem particular to Mauritania but to the underceveloped world in general. If traditionally women were integrated in the economic and labor force of the family and community, today they are being marginalized in development programs; sometimes activities for women, as distinct form those of men, are thrown in as an afterthought. Women who are carrying greater burdens in the family unit are being excluded from cultivating or owning irrigated perimeters, while at the same time participating in various tasks as defined by men. As a measure of partially solving the problem of enforced dependency, women must be accorded those rights as a matter of policy. Indeed, this could enable them to maintain their traditional freedom of action within the family.

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(4) How possible is the transition between traditional forms of cooperation in production and new forms of communal association?

We cannot speak of the existence of meaningful and functional cooperatives in Mauritania for none exists, except maybe for the cooperative of the State Farm of M'Pouric and the so-called cooperatives that assemble adherents of the village irrigated perimeters. Embryos of attempts at the organization of precooperatives have begun here and there but their significance is limited.

The question should first be answered: Why the need for cooperatives and what is the function of a cooperative? Guy Belloncle in his book on Cooperatives et developpement en Afrique Noire Sahelienne, 1973, clearly defines the problem

at the outset (p.1):

> Il y a un développement possible pour les pays du Sahel, mais il faut pour cela changer de politique. . . . J'ai en effet acquis la conviction qu'on ne peut trouver de solution à aucun des grands problèmes du développement qui se posent aujourd'hui dans les pays du Sahel (à commencer par celui de la sécurité vivrière) sans la participation volontaire des populations directement concernées: cette participation à son tour ne pouvant être assurée qu'à travers la mise en place de véritables organisations de producteurs.

These "organisations of producers" are the needed cooperatives but constraints common to all the Sahel and Mauritania in particular are a set-back to their organisation : lack of knowledge, lack of practice and lack of information on the part of the personnel. And yet, the agricultural cooperative or organisation must be the activating impulse to development through which are centered and channelled new agricultural know-how, training, integration of women, innovation, competition, cooperation, investments, both communal and individual, etc. However, in addition to these constraints, four basic problems must be taken into consideration before the creation of a cooperative :

(1) the definition of the relationships between traditional structures and the cooperatives ;

(2) the role of the cooperative in the management of the land, that is, in the means of production;

(3) the problem of credit

(4) The necessity of equality in the access to land ownership, and thus equality of participation in the decision-making process without social status becoming a constraints.

Traditional associations exist in all ethnic groups, for men and women, either on the basis of age-groups or on a general communal level for spontaneous as well as defined mutual aid of different types. All have an important goal: social cohesion and a common purpose. Because of migration, exodus, growing differences in values and attitudes between, and even within, age-groups, the communal common goal has been shattered; many of these traditionally-defined groups have lost their impact, often maintaining only their socializing funstion.

A few associations of agricultural producers exist, but they are exceptional and their case cannot be generalized (example of Dieuck, a Wolof village) for they are not a result of the organization and structure of the association as such (or pre-cooperative) but rather because of the dynamism, experience and wealth of the community. Motivation within a community is essential in the sustenance of communal associations, and while it is high at Dieuck, it is not so, a few miles away, at Garak, also a Wolof village. The general lack of motivation in agricultural endeavours that presently prevails, diminishes investments and innovations: this results also in the lack of success of initiatives in the creation of communal associations or cooperatives.

The assumption that ethnic groups still exercising strong social control, as the Soninke, will be the ones most successful in operating a cooperative has proven to be the opposite in actual situations.

The enormous problems of social tensions, of mistrust, are of competitiveness directed for personal benefit rather than group benefit, have destroyed the arguments of a correlation between traditional social control and implicit social cohesion. For the Soninke the effort is

placed entirely on the nuclear family's production. Individuals feel that group participation is enforced upon them and all admit unwillingness in such participation yet the impossibility of contesting it because of patriarchal control.

As noted above, the creation of a common need and, indeed, the individual and communal acceptance of that need for the group concerned is a sine qua non for the effectiveness of any association. On the other hand, an example of a "successful" association is that of the weavers of Boghe : based on one caste, one ethnic group, one area, one goal (better marketing of goods), the group has succeeded in increasing its production. Another example is that of the agricultural association of Soninke slaves at Kaedi which had refused to include any of their noble masters in their midst. Again, it was based on one class, one ethnic group, one area, one goal: self-support, cohesion, marketing of their production, independence from their masters.

An ultimate goal of cooperatives is to function as social equalizers, as income distributors among its adherents. This has not been as clearly seen in rural areas as it is obvious among savings associations in the modern urban sectors; these appear among the Toucouleurs and Soninke than among the Moors.

It is not easy for us to answer the question raised above for the diversity of the social realities of Mauritania makes a generalized response difficult. Yet, we can say at this point that the solution to development problems can only be found through those most concerned in that process. Thus, the institutionalization of producer associations of all types should not be conceived without proceeding in the most micro-level possible: reaching indi-

viduals in the understanding of common needs which will ultimately benefit them, institutionalize the necessary support to pursue their interest through the creation of educational and training activities; establishing a profitable distribution and marketing system as a means of encouraging production- all of which may lead to motivations which will result in investments and innovations where productivity, rather than just immediate profitability through speculation, is the ultimate goal.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS AND MIGRATIONS IN MAURITANIA

Mobility and movements of the different populations of Mauritania have gained a new importance in the past few decades. However, this mobility is the expression of the society's traditional economic and social organization for the country has always known important population movements.

Mobility is one of the fundamental characteristics of pastoral societies for both Moors and Peulhs (that is, nomadism and transhumance). As for the Moors, mobility was linked to a given territory and, thus, it was submitted to control within the framework of a political organization (the Emirats). The decline of this political control during the colonial period restored the ancestral movement of pastoralists towards the South.

Extensive agriculture has been practised in the South of the country and as a result, greater population movements were encouraged by the fact that, during the colonial period, new land was brought into cultivation. The Senegal River Valley, therefore has a high density of both production (two crop cultivation) and population. This relatively high concentration of people has induced important migratory movements, the last one being at the end of the 19th century under El Haj Umar.

Throughout its history the Moorish population has known diasporas which dispersed them all over West Africa. These movements contributed to the diffusion of religious sects giving shape to today's West African models of Islams. During the colonial period, this dispersion was

intensified by their commercial function: transporters (peanut trade) and cattle breeders. Trade was organized within a liberal and hierarchical network assuring the financing and the credit of commercial enterprises.

It was also during the colonial period that Senegal became the center of economic development (exportation of agricultural produce and reactivation of ancient urban centers) which rapidly incited the Mauritanian laborers to migrate first to the peanut cultivating areas (navetanes) and then to the towns. The first regions concerned were the River Valley area, the south of Trarza and the Guidimakha. The direct reasons for these migrations were, on the one hand, the increasing monetary needs (taxes; imported goods) and, on the other hand, the stagnation of a marketable production.

The independence of Mauritania encouraged the reorientation of migratory movements within the country itself creating a communication network and constituting a local market. They themselves were encouraged by the extension of the national market as mining towns were founded in the north of the country. Due to new contingencies and new structural factors, migratory movements began to increase as of the 1960's.

Increasing rural exodus is not only a result of greater monetary needs which are not satisfied; it is much more the consequences of new economic and social structures introduced by colonialism which led to what has been referred to as a "double dependence" phenomenon. This dependence leads to price devaluation of rural labor and its produce while favoring low prices of local production destined for exportation. In Mauritania, this happens indirectly by providing a cheap labor force and food produce, mainly cattle. This dependence also requires the creation of a social class of local merchants able to

exercise pressure on prices for their very profits are a result only of commercial activities. This situation facilitates the "liberation" of the labor force from its former social relationships. The evolution of the different forms of dependent labor is seen in the breaking away from tithe obligations, in the decline of slavery and in the increase of share-cropping and salaried work. Changes in the organisation of domestic labor evolve differently according to the local population. In case of a crisis (such as the drought) the development of production and of mercantile relationships among the pastoral Moors undermined the economic function of these domestic relationships, thus allowing massive expropriation of the pastoralists' capital, their herds. In Black African societies, domestic labor continues to be the basis of the production system while increasing contradictions and conflicts (between the generations, between men and women, etc. . .) which favor migration.

The appearance of a modern sector of salaried labor (mining industry and public administration) in the early 1960's accelerated the migratory movements. It carried along the first wave of migration towards urban centers in Mauritania. The growth of the working class in mining towns facilitated the stabilization of the urban population.

The drought of the late 1960's and the food crisis which resulted from it are other reasons for the speeding up of migrations towards urban centers (within only a few years Nouakchott quadrupled its population). All the regions of Mauritania became, from then on, affected by this phenomenon.

The political choices made after Independence, especially the options set for planning purposes, not the least of which being the "laissez-faire" policy as adopted

in the First Plan for the rural sector, have also contributed to further the progress of migration.

The conditions under which migrations took place in the original milieu are analyzed. In all instances, the process is one of an accumulated series of events: migrations become extensive; they bring about changes in the economic and social organisation which, in turn, contributes to the increase and acceleration of migratory movements.

Among the Moors, migrations primarily involve men, especially the young men, of the hassan, or warrior group, and the haratine, the latter being the former slaves. In their new surroundings, the migrants maintain a high degree of mobility. Very soon, this leads to family migrations which literally become a relocation of population. Such transfers of habitat were facilitated by the tradition of mobility, the high flexibility of the social organisation, the scale of economic alternatives (work, trade, religion). The drought has reinforced the Moors' sedentarization in urban areas. Family, tribal and sectarian solidarities, however, are perpetuated in urban areas. They are less important among the haratine. Consequently, a radical break occurs with their social milieu of origin.

Among the Toucouleurs it was men who migrated, seasonally or temporarily; this type of migration was predominant up to the end of the 1950's when the migration of families towards the urban areas became more and more important. These family migrations finally led to population relocation away from the River Valley. The maintenance of a strong ethnic solidarity, pursued in urban areas, has helped sustain the continuity between their rural and urban settings. Thus, the social and economic system of

of the Toucouleurs is proven to be more stable even if the lack of locally available labor - concealed by the drought - has contributed to its social transformation.

As for the Soninke, it is above all the young who migrate. This greatly affects the extent of authority the elders have on their dependents. Moreover, the lack of manpower leads to the stagnation or regression of production. Nevetheless, the collective control of the extended family, as well as that of its head of family is maintained and even strnghtened by migration, in so far as the migrants' family stay put or men return to make their own family. The tensions raised by the way the migrants' incomes are spent clearly show the increasing contradictions between the individualization of the labor force and the collective and hierarchical structure of local production.

Migration is also a phenomenon in itself, and, within the society, the migrants have their own specificities.

The extent of rupture between the migrants and their original social environment becomes even more radical when seasonal and temporary migrations lead to the physical relocation of entire families. Even then, the ties are not entirely broken, even if, as in the case of the Moors, the migrants' insertion in the urban area becomes definitive. Periodic returns to rural areas take place, thus leading to marriages, and eventually the family settles back in the rural area.

Temporary or seasonal migrations always imply the return of the migrant to his original milieu, even if the migrations lead him far away, as in the case of the Soninke. A part of the migrants' income is therefore destined for his reintegration in the village. A relatively high return rate of migrants occurs in the Soninke villages which helps maintain their society on monetary bases while

also highlighting the contradictions emanating from these migrations (collective village budget, mosques, increasing mutual aid, etc. . .).

It was necessary to make a distinction between the migrations and the phenomenon of mass sedentarization experienced by the Moors. Sedentarization is always linked to the development of agricultural practices although there are pastoral activities which allow sedentarization (short distance moves, salaried work, etc.). If sedentarization is only caused by the loss of herds, it may, nevertheless, be difficult to distinguish it from migration and urbanization.

The last decade was also characterized by a migration towards secondary urban areas. Their immense growth created major problems in lodging, water and food availability. A part of the population, therefore, remains migrant, depending on the season and the year and it is difficult to appreciate the future evolution of this phenomenon and questions remain unanswered: will there be a return to the rural areas? Will departures to cities be definitive?

The effects of further development of infrastructure projects, especially the construction of the road Nouakchott - Nema, have a contradictory impact on migration. Today, it encourages migrations towards Nouakchott, but in the future it may lead to administrative, cultural and economic activities which will incite people to settle around these centers.

Finally, it is interesting to question the reason for which people migrate to Nouakchott. Besides economic (work) and administrative (education, health) factors people seem to migrate to the capital because of political reasons. The patronage system inherent in the social and political system of Mauritania functions most effectively

in Nouakchott.

In almost all cases, migrants end up in the cities and, with their integration in the urban setting, transitional social patterns appear.

This mass urbanization creates some general problems. Some of them are objective and result from the weak urban infrastructure (lodgings, water, food, work). Others result from the brutal conditions of migration. In all cases, the social and ethnic milieu will find its own answers to the difficulties arising from integration into an urban surrounding.

Among the Moors, these answers stress the importance of the family and tribal solidarities. These social systems, however, undergo fundamental changes. On the one hand, there is a certain individualization of social relationships (relationships between the sexes and the generations, increasing number of divorces and separations etc.). On the other hand, they help maintain important functions within the modern economic and political sector. The traditional relationships of dependency are likewise changing but they have contributed towards the establishment of new hierarchies.

Among the Black African populations and especially among the Toucouleurs, their integration with urban surroundings has led to new collective structures (sudu or mutual aid organizations, etc.) on the basis of which the ethnic group reorganizes itself. This highly structured ethnic organization continues to have its function in the urban setting.

A last point of the analysis deals with international migrations which during the past two decades has extended the frontiers of regional migration which has already gone beyond colonial concepts of national divisions.

The diaspora of the Moors all over Africa has become more and more significant. The two main functions of this migration are Islam but, above all, trade.

The very important migration of the Toucouleurs towards Senegal continues with vigor. Because of the above mentioned ethnic solidarities, the Toucouleurs were able to maintain a social structure which enabled them to create for themselves a world of their own in the Greater Dakar.

The Soninke migrations towards Europe are by far the most original and most complex of migratory movements. They are characterized by a very strong collective organization which enables these migrant workers to get adapted to the hard living and working conditions in France. However, the restrictions imposed by the French migration policy renders this movement increasingly uncertain.

No attempt was made to quantify analysis of the international migration movement of Mauritanians because the data available, even those submitted to utmost control (as that of the migration workers to France), show such great variations that any reliance on them makes all estimates impossible.

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Irrigation projects were the mobile force in Mauritania which raised three major problems:

(1) The meaning of a 1960 land ownership law as it affects the traditional land tenure systems and, consequently, traditional political power structures.

(2) The social relationships of servility which governed the strict hierarchical social structures within each of the ethnic groups.

(3) The effectiveness of irrigation on the agricultural process and needs of self-sufficiency in the country,

The traditional land tenure systems of the Moors, Toucouleurs and Soninke differ and render evem more difficult attempts at a unified modern land ownership law. Yet, each of the ethnic groups had its social organization fit around its particular concept of ownership rights. The Moors base their rights on the Islamic Malekite rite which accords communal and individual ownership while adjusting basic tenets, such as the habous, for purposes of political, individual and ethnic power than on its original rules of inalienability of property for the purposes of aiding the poor in the community. The Toucouleur, as the Soninke, concentrate land rights for the most privileged of social groups, the nobles. The Toucouleur have a system allowing the nuclear family independence in the decision-making process and accord individual ownership on certain lands, whereas, the Soninke's strictly defined control system enforces complete inalienability and indivisability of all lands on which only usufruit rights are accorded to all clan members. The land remains within the clan. All

the groups have important similarities:

(1) Inalienability and indivisibility of their best lands.

(2) Yearly tithes of various amounts for the privilege of usufruit rights, traditionally directed mainly to the servile and dependent classes who formed their labor force.

(3) A rigid control of the sale of land and if sale transpires as with the Moors, it is traditionally with members of the lineage and not outsiders.

(4) An important concept of space, determined by the extent of lineage ties, ultimately limits or extends the power base of each group.

Political power in each case is in fact the basic justification for ownership and not the mere fact of working the land.

It is not yet certain how profoundly the recent declaration of June 1980 abolishing slavery in Mauritania will affect the status of the servile classes of all the different sthnic groups. It is true that not all cultivators are slaves or ex-slaves, for even now the Beidane are forced into working the land because of labor shortage and economic pressures.

Yet, traditionally, and especially among the Moors, the haratine or freed slaves who remained attached to their community, were the sole cultivators of the land. The situation has not dramatically changed as yet. The drought however, served as an impulse for a migratory movement of the haratine and increased the already existing embryo of independent villages, especially in the south of the country and even farther away from their original home base in the Forlo of Senegal. The most obvious expression of power over the servile classes is in the

enforcement of tithes on agricultural production. A tremendous differentiation of the types of payments exists varying with the ethnic group, region, clan, lineage, type of soils, etc. Yet, winds of change, or, more correctly, a breeze of change, has already been felt as indicated by the various reactions of the servile and dependent classes, and particularly the haratine and Soninke slaves, who have begun to independently express antagonism, in small actions, against their masters. Only through the political will of institutionalizing land ownership will the prevailing and constraining problems begin to be solved.

Migration, education, the trend of individual ownership in irrigation projects, demographic pressures, as well as new motivations in agricultural labor all have helped to modify the organization of labor, especially in the south, along the river. The most important aspect observed is the shortage of family labor which is frequently substituted by salaried workers, young children and women. Women who have participated all their lives in agricultural labor - all except the Beidane women trained since youth for a life of leisure - now see added burdens in their lives not only in the home and family affairs, but also in the fields. Women among certain groups have even begun to cultivate land once traditionally forbidden to them. This was made possible only because of the growing shortage of labor and the need to continue cultivating the family's lands. Yet it has also been observed that in spite of the growing participation of women in the fields, agricultural development projects still appear reluctant to directly reaching out for women. There is no doubt that to include women on an equal level of importance as men in these projects can only

help speed up the general process of change, both social and agricultural.

Motivations in agricultural labor have greatly modified since the drought because many farmers have found themselves forced to leave their lands to seek salaried work in the modernsector as a means of survival. others such as the Moors and Peulhs, found themselves forced into cultivating also as a means of survival after having lost their herds. A substitution and a reorganization of the labor force is gradually taking shape with salaried labor slowly acquiring an as yet unknown importance. Material incentives push youth towards the cities and outside of the country but at the same time attract salaried laborers to the land through necessity. In both cases, new forms of dependency are created, based on a system whereby the monetarization of social and economic relationships prevail and, indeed, lead to a greater proletarization of labor (urban and rural) and a heightened pauperization of the individual.

The hope, of course, is that agricultural development, including irrigation projects, can liberate man from that new form of servility. Social constraints, however, exist and must be taken into consideration before hoping to solve agricultural development problems. One of the most urgent of these, heightened in seriousness through the drought, is the relationship between herders and cultivators who have always competed for the same terrain. The lack of pasture land and the fragility of the cultivated lands, as well as the increasing movement of the herds -- camels and cattle -- to areas new to them, especially in the south, have threatened the cultivators' sense of territoriality. This has, however, increased the herders' own difficulties of survival.

Certain questions still need to be answered: why has riziculture been the only choice for a desperately needed successful irrigated agriculture, locking the peasant in an ever-tighter system of dependency? And why, in spite of the increasing attraction to irrigation and the great demands made for irrigated parcels in most of the villages, are the negative impacts of irrigation so serious as to have the peasant still prefer his dry-fed agriculture?

The long list of negative impacts by far outweighs the positiveness of irrigation in Mauritania and are a clear reflection of the ill-defined and ill-studied problems of social and technical situations which should have been projected at the outset of all projects. The organizational mechanisms of support are non-existent or not sufficiently experienced to sustain change of such technical and human complexities. Land claims are not dealt with; mechanical problems remain as the greatest bottleneck for the continuation of cultivation; motivations become misdirected and, because of the complete lack of trust in the profitability of the agricultural sector, investments are placed on surer and more speculative choices ; fees emanating from irrigation render communities servile to an organization rather than to a social class, but also take away from them all initiatives for self-sufficiency as long as the feeling of dependency heightens and eliminates any possibilities of personal or group initiatives; the very sizes of the parcels are so minute as to render any global or individual self-sufficiency highly doubtful. Another serious and difficult problem to solve is the stagnant marketing circuit abnegating all incentives for the peasants to increase their productivity as long as they are incapable of selling their produce.

The positive aspects of irrigation and agricultural development cannot be ignored, however. The archaic system of cultivation of traditional Mauritania had to adjust to a new system of know-how. Motivations of interest developed if merely through the individualization of land ownership and, more importantly the HOPE that irrigation will be able to sustain the level of productivity of its earlier beginnings.

The social organisation of agricultural production has gone through rapid stages and upheavals which are still being felt at all levels. Social relationships and economic ties changed, modes of lives learned or are learning to adjust to different ways, old social classes are taking new shapes while new ones are being formed. How all these forces can best be channelled to positive purposes for agricultural development depends entirely on the level of support given to individuals and communities.

PASTORALISM TODAY : THREE CASE STUDIES

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

The three case studies presented were chosen on the basis of their different adaptations to changes within the pastoral mode of life : Magta Lahjar, on the border line of the Sahara and Sahel, along the new highway "The Road of Hope", had already had a sedentarized population of Moors, practising an agro-pastoral way of life; Nema, highly isolated yet expecting to soon become, in the next two or three years, the eastern terminal 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.

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 continous going back and forth between two lives, essentially for the psychlogical 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 also on an entire civilization still profoundly real. The catalyst of concentrated change is, indeed, the drought of the 1970's. Yet pastoralism had already been disrupted as a result of the earlier drought of 1942 - 43. A phenomenon of migration and sedentariztion already settled in and a beginning of urban centres 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.

It would be erroneous to assume that it is only the ecological cycle of droughts which is the basis of nomadic disruption. The heart of the problem goes further back, with the penetration of an alien economic system which pushes a whole population forcing them into abandoning traditional production. This point has been highlightened in almost all of the sociological reports and does not need to be further discussed here. It is significant to point out, however, that the social facts which helped perpetuate economic realtionships of loans and gifts, or patronage and redistribution traditionally limiting the risks of total impoverishment, considerably weakened in the past 50 years, rendering adjustments to traditional mechanisms of support difficult to implement.

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

in questioning a nomad is whether he plans to sedentarize. The inter-relationships of both phenomena - nomadism and sedentarization - are inextricably linked today.

Several aspects have been irreversibly modified in the very concept of nomadism. The most striking, if not also 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 Nema), the sedentarized nomads have been forced to extend their travel to places they have often never been to. The lack of pasture land and water availabilities 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 have set up business all over West Africa while the haratine usually worked as agricultural laborers in Senegal. Two point are relevant here: (a) both pastoralists 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 and (b) 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) seem eminently important.

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. The percentage may be small but the impact is important enough to already indicate a reorganization of the whole circuit of traditional commercial relationships.

The drought and the hope of salaried labor, urging a massive exodus from everywhere, have deeply affected the pastoral economy. The loss of labor, as in the palmgroves in the northern oases, has been devastating. The reasons for sedentarization, however, 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 constructing the "Road of Hope") around which nomadic camps are settling daily, to administrative and commercial centers; the desire to escape a way of life become harsher and more difficult to cope with. The nomads everywhere are feeling marginalized - precisely because of their growing contacts and more distant mobility - in relation to the rest of the settled population. Yet, once sedentarized, even if temporarily, they become even more marginalized both within their own traditional context which they may not be totally rejecting but at least wishing to escape, and within their sedentarized environment in which integration, especially in urban centers, is difficult.

The process of sedentarization is complex but one aspect is constant in this complexity : the seriously decreasing form of a mode of production - herding - which

relies on 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 proportions : diminishing water resources and pasturage lead to clashes between clans for water rights, clashes between old and new settlers (the latter being considered as intruders) for land rights: between cultivators and herders: 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 exacerberates an already critical situation of a way of life, without aiding in the constructuve preparation for its 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 on social class relationships, especially between the beidane and their dependent: in agro-pastoral areas. Greater financial needs have placed greater mutual demands but also a more urgent push to liberation and exodus, especially for the haratine.

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 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 the women the impetus to develop a trade which nomadic living had not allowed because of its mobility.

The dominant means of production and raison d'etre of nomadic society are centered around livestock, and through it depends the whole family structure, social conditions and political links of the group. Those with large herds were able to retain their servile labor and as a result better survived the drourht. Those with small herds, thus limited labor, were the hardest hit. The relationship defining production is wholly based on parental ties. The impact of migration and sedentarization has not altered this relationship since the need for firmer tribal or clan power and control was increasingly felt.

In the 1970's nomadic sedentarization was essentially spontaneous, unplanned, and lead 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 nomads, there is a greater attraction to sedentarize because of the general degradation and difficulties of subsistence.

Finding solutions to the agricultural sector alone 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 - will the constructive development of the country depend. Yet, no such development can take place without a rational equilibrium between herding and agricultural production.

EVOLUTION OF MODES OF ACCUMULATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Three reasons justify the importance of such an independent study even though the subject matter was touched upon in various other analyses of the Sociological Unit.

(1) A historical reason : there exists a part of an active mercantile economy in the Saharan and Sahelian zones of Mauritania which had important social and political ramifications.

(2) An economic reason: the commercial or mercantile relationships of that system dominate all productive sectors although they were created outside of that system.

(3) A social and political reason: the social group most involved in that system of capital accumulation has an important role in the process of social change, both economically and politically.

Though the study relies on a number of economic factors, it is not an economic study but rather one which centers on sets of social mechanisms which have shaped the internal market economy of Mauritania -- such as the evolution of the social status of the producer-merchant and of the social relationships defining the cycle of productive circulation of produce and money.

A brief historical description of the situation of the 19th century is presented as a means of better comprehending the impact the domination of a Western economic system then head on an ancient society whose commercial

system was already known since the 11th and 13th centuries, that is, during the Almoravide era. At that time, this domination was far less generalized and less obviously controlled by outside powers. As of the 19th century the importance of the system acquired new dimensions with the industrial revolution in Europe and the broadening of international commerce. The Mauritanian markets were directed from the outside - from France through French merchants in colonized Senegal and from Morocco.

A trade economy was established in the 19th century, with the export of gum arabica and slaves and the import of manufactured goods. The system was maintained by various fees paid to the colonial powers, assuring "freedom of commerce" for the sake of distributing European goods in the Moors' regions. The economic and political importance of this is not negligeable for it shaped emirates, developed religious movements, created new centers of social and political pressures, and established new needs among the Moors. From Morocco, various goods also had an irreversible impact on the society through the introduction of tea, arms, carpets, silverware, etc.

Two important factors distinguish Mauritania from other Sahelian countries in its economic and political reaction to the development of an internal colonial market economy:

(1) The existence of a strong military and political resistance to the colonial administrators and the perpetuation of certain non-commercial relationships of political and social significance.
(2) The non-existence of direct colonial political pressures as commonly practised elsewhere; thus, both forced labor of Moors and foreign investments were limited.

These factors placed certain constraints on the evolution of the market economy while at the same time, allowing Mauritania a specialization in two types of commercial production : cattle and saleable labor force.

The cattle market developed in the early part of the colonial era and was soon characterized by the creation of an important social class of intermediaries, merchants and brokers, as well as a complicated system of credit, often based on tribal affiliations.

The creation of a market of agricultural produce was more complex than that which concerned cattle trading. The resistance to colonial pressures along the Senegal River were identical to those cited above, however, the colonial presence had a different impact on the populations of the South:

(1) Taxes were paid by agro-pastoralists along the river on the basis of heads of cattle and a portion of the crop.

(2) Forced labor was imposed, yet there was no real political will to introduce the system of export production commonly associated with such a labor policy.

(3) Limitations of food supplies lowered selling incentives.

At the beginning of the colonial period, the Senegal River Valley was producing an important surplus of cereals. Its trading was active and highly speculative but the variability of the production level led to its progressive decline (especially as a result of demographic increase) and limited the size of its market.

The creation of an active market for agricultural produce began with the appearance of a shortage of labor and the importation of produce (particularly of rice). A general picture of the evolution of this market before

and after the food shortage crisis is briefly presented. It will be noted that the importance of speculation and hoarding of cereals by the merchants, in spite of the role of the State organization, SONIMEX, in charge of the regulation and distribution of cereals, will be highlighted.

The drought of 1929-31 plus the world crisis of that period had an impact not on the fall of prices of cattle and cereals but on a shortage of money, including foreign currency. Famine settled because there was a shortage of food. The situation was different during the crisis of more than a decade later, in 1942-48. The fall of the price of cattle was important and was essentially a result of the drought and of the closing of international frontiers during the war. This crisis was a definite setback and prices never seemed to rise to the levels of before. On the other hand, prices reached an unprecedently high level for imported essential goods (sugar, cotton, clothes, etc.). The impact of which was seen in two developments in market relationships:

(1) depreciation of agricultural and pastoral labor --

(2) beginnings of local capital accumulation which gave an impetus to the formation of a mercantile social class. A commerce of small "shopkeepers" developed at the expense of the previous large-scale commerce of food storage which allowed limited circulation of cash among both merchants and consumers.

This last development led to a transitional and locally-based system of capital accumulation : cash management, savings and distribution of profits in the hands of groups called <u>sharika</u> or savings associations. This was an adaptation to the non-existence of a banking system and corresponded to the steady growth of a salaried class

in the administrative and mining centers.

In the past ten years, 1970-1980, a profound change in the commercial distribution system has taken place. This cannot be as yet clearly analyzed because of the lack of historical perspective and the continuation of socio-economic mutations at all levels. However, certain tendencies have been observed:

(1) The elimination of the European commercial monopoly to the benefit of a small but important Lebanese commercial circuit. The bulk of commerce, however, is taken over by Mauritanian merchants

(2) a modern banking system allowing local merchants and contractors to enlarge their investment activities and to accumulate savings more rapidly.

(3) widening of national capitalistic activities nationwide centered essentially on the importation of goods. This was achieved through a small group of rich Moor merchants, further reinforcing the socio-economic hierarchical organization of the national marketing system.

(4) state intervention in the attempt of organising commerce, with the creation of SONIMEX for the purpose of distributing essential goods to the impoverished population especially since the drought of the 1970's;

(5) the widening of national markets and the capacity of capital accumulation were obstructed by the economic crisis which was in part a consequence of the drought.

During the entire history and evolution of the pre-colonial and colonial periods, and later Independence, a social class of merchants was formed through the process of an interior market system. This market is characterized

by the depreciation of prices of rural produce, depreciation of the traditional form of wealth such as cattle, and control of both production and marketing circuits by the local merchants. All this has led to specific characteristics which define the present mercantile modes of capital accumulation: tendencies of hoarding money and merchandise; investments in non-productive sectors (housing, commerce, transport, etc); perpetuation of the concept of accumulation as linked to the control of men and their production; development of a political and social system of patronage.

The studies of the social and economic crisis of 1942 - 46 provides an understanding of the formation of this new social class of merchants at the expense of the traditional merchants who originated mostly from "Moroccan" tribes which, until the 1940's, dominated the interior commercial circuits. The most outstanding feature of the 1940's is, therefore, seen in the decline of political power of both the Hassan (warrior) social class of the Moors and that of the noble elected class of the Toucouleurs. As in other parts of francophone Africa, the institutionalization of "chefs de canton", chiefs chosen by the colonial administration replacing traditionally acknowledged leaders, helped establish speculative "black" markets, taxation, levies, etc. which often benefited the new mercantile class. On the other hand, a very complex system of specialisation in commercial circuits was set up among certain Moorish tribes during that period.

The zwaya, or marabout classes, developed during colonial times a small commercial and production market linked to slavery. This was especially centered around cattle trade and the control of traditional caravan transport; new concepts of produce accumulation evolved through

private ownership of palm groves; the traditional djemaa, or tribal decision-making councils, extended their power to commercial circuits, etc.

The autonomous economic function of the marabout merchants created a new political perspective to this social class with definite anti-colonial positions. After independence new political associations were developed; yet, it was only through the explosion of migration and urbanisation, a consequence of the drought of the 1970's that the power of a new merchant class begins to be fully felt.

The question is put forth: what are the capacities today of the national private investments in the modern sector? Such investments still continue to be concentrated in the speculative sectors. This is a result of the growing difficulties of profitable investments in the modern production sector (agriculture in particular) overburdened by both social and economic constraints. Moreover, a growing tendency among that merchant class is to abandon the marketing of primary consumption produce to SONIMEX, the state distribution organism, while reinvesting in speculative activities on the periphery of that official circuit. Meanwhile important investments are concentrated in cattle trading and the hiring of salaried labor as well as smaller investments in privately owned irrigated perimeters. The latter investments are far too new to indicate whether they will encourage greater productivity in the rural sector mired in a stagnant economy and whether this tendency is linked to the revaluation of prices in cattle trading.

It is quite clear, however, that a national "bourgeoisie" has been formed in the past ten years as a result of both a salaried urban sector and speculative trade activities. It

is significant to note, however, that part of the accumulated capital fits, within certain social and political confines, into a redistribution mechanism of a wide social spectrum. As a result, except for a few ostentatious exceptions, and living patterns do not differ in apperance within the various social groups in spite of the growing impoverishment of the majority of the population. Moreover, common cultural values are important factors linking the various social classes in an expression of social unity. This is particularly seen through the growing importance religion - Islam - is acquiring everywhere at all social levels. Can a situation of social antagonism be apparent in this differentiating mode of capital accumulation? In the final analysis, it appears that in spite of the growing social conflicts that may be and are evolving today, such an evolution has not led to real or open social antagonisms based on economic disparities but rather to a growing acceptance of a bourgeoisie where social mobility is tied to both new economic and political orders.