

Mauritania Technology Fosters Tradition (TFT)

Fact finding and site identification tour, 10 April 2004

Hans-Werner Wabnitz

Following earlier fact finding tours in 2003 of the task manager, a team consisting of Lars Soeftestad, Consultant, Cherif N'diaye, GTZ Regional expert for biodiversity, Hans-Werner Wabnitz, task manager and Dih O/Meddou, driver and guide, set out on 10 April 2004 to inspect potential target areas and familiarize the Consultant with the general aspect of the area the Initiative will evolve in.

The tour proceeded along the following route, visiting the following villages / sites:

1. East on *Route de l'espoir* past PK 10, the start of earlier GTZ dune fixation activities to the north of the asphalt (*Auberge Sahara*); past Akjert; past Agava (village of the current President of the National Assembly); past Moulabahl (more GTZ financed plantations, watering point for herders – area of *transhumance* crossing north/south) leaving the asphalt shortly thereafter to the south (approx. 60 km).

2. Chlim : (name of small village, an artificial earthen dam and a wetland with trees, called *Tamourt*) relatively small area “fenced-in” by approx. 50 cm high earth wall protected by two lines of barbed wire and thorny bushes to prevent entry by cattle, intended to store *ruissellement* of rain water; has not filled in the 2003 season and only one family planted, could give room for about twenty families; another fenced-in area near by, where water naturally congregates, here plantation took place (*niebé* = beans), one family in a tent nearby who is said to have cultivated the place. Area belonging to the clan of the *Kounta*; investments such as dam building, off-fencing and cutting branches and bush for fences need prior consent of the “land-owner”. They also need consent by the *Hakim*, preceded by a feasibility analysis of government experts whether the prospective benefits outweigh the environmental damage: suitability of soil and intended plantation, suitability of general outlay, probability of capacity of applicant to carry out the project, expected environmental destruction etc. Rarely done in practice, according to Cherif.

Chlim the village seems inhabited by Haratin, mostly. The *Tamourt* (*Akazia nilotica tomentosa*) bone dry. The area is said to be the territory of four tribes. Here (?) it is also said that – whereas all herders have free access – the so-called “property rights of ownership” have become a litigious issue because the tribes have realized that benefits may attach to them once and if outside donors begin investments in an area.

3. Passing village of Timsin

4. Solid dam near the village of Mabrok (PGRNP inscribed in cement): relatively solid dam of about two meters height, inside protected with flat rocks, cement spill way, mashed fence (traditional water hole *aval* fenced –in; dam approx

1 km long, about two hundred families can cultivate fields of approx. 10 sqm; rests of *niebé*; a guardian chases goats because harvest not totally finished (beans hardly discernable).

Problem is that dam is built *en amont* of the next wetlands, which therefore lose feeding waters (evaporation).

About 800m off the dam direction WWS a relatively small village, Mabrok. Approx. one km further Tadert (looks more solidly implanted). Tadert means grave: there is a graveyard to the south of the village, on a small dune, next to a fairly big wetland and big old Akazia trees, a colonial time vaccination park, colonial well (water level at about three meters, rock in horizontal layers, greenish) and a very recent charcoal mount being built (!) Disaster !. (cattle in the shades; vaccination park has fallen into disrepair, encroaching sand) (instead of shoveling the sand away, closing gate with a tree and fencing off w/ bushes).

The place is called <grave> because a holy man (_____) is buried close by and his grave has become a center for pilgrimage and veneration. The tribe is called *Tenwajib* and originally settled (and still lives in part) in the village of *Gleibatt* (now in Mali, *commune de Legliegue*) and had moved through the area since long and when the holy man died, some settled around the area.

5. Well of Sâouana: built in about 1942 by Lemrabott Ould Salah (Ouled Nassr), about 25 m deep (?), sweet water, built with cement carried on camel-back from Mali, water level at about six meters, smooth round shaft about 1 m in diameter.

Rachid O/ Salah (petit fils of the well builder) is currently _____; *Le vieux* in the village past who would know about the history: Mohamed O/ Salah.

6. Gâat of Sâouana: having traversed an area with trees and flat-lands (partly stony and bare of all vegetation: *Gâat* of Sâouana – rimed in by small dunes to the north and south: a long, flat depression which fills with water (same stream as the cement dam near Mabrok) to allow for cultivation. (approx. 3x1 km), currently rests of vegetation, NO trees.

7. Parque de vaccination: built 1998, financed by GTZ and inaugurated by Ambassador Joseph Krier; school of two classrooms and Nutricom lunch-preparation cabin.

8. Tamourt de Oum Lelli: trees, rests of water, herds & herders and women burning an old tree for the purpose of making charcoal. Downstream: puisards – approx. ten water holes, about two to three meters deep, serve to water cattle; so may because aquifer is shallow and thin, runs dry once the *tamourt* dries out.

Whereas earlier the area was peacefully divided into pastoral use and planting, Thomas said that, since some time the planters have further encroached and the partition has become disputed. For reasons not exactly clarified the request for “fences” has arisen – the underlying aspects of this request may merit to be probed.

Ouled Nassr and Ouled M'Barek used to have undisputed common access to the area.

9. Continuation due SW to Hassi Abdel Ahmed Bechna, on the Aioun – Niore de Sahel road (in construction: herder's country, flat, sandy, lots of grass, "plantagenet-bushes" – about 30 km. In Hassi Abdel: four-o'clock prayer, big well with wheel, drawn by a camel, goats and then camels being watered, in the distance similar well and camels, on foot of red dunes; place has seen *reboisement* activity – trees on dunes still standing.

10. Due north about ten km to *Tamourt* Goungel. No water. *Maraicages* close to the village. On the south side no fence (fields have protection). Fence starts NE of village, and rounds the area to the street. No intentional gaps for cattle access visible – which means the water is totally fenced- off, for all practical purposes (cattle would need to make a three km deviation). Not much visible rests of planting or vegetation.

11. Asphalt ends after about five km; access of crocodiles to mountains unclear, possible through the small bridges - . Road leads straight to the house of Thomas Sommerhalter, GTZ manager of GIRNEM.

Start at about 9:00 AM, return at about 6: 00 PM, total about 200km.

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