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Vanessa Maher

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Preface

This study was carried out in three phases: a first year during which I studied Berber and classical Arabic, and acquired a grounding in North African and Islamic sociology and history; I then spent nearly eleven months in the field interrupted by a long period of illness; and finally two years on research and writing a Ph.D. thesis (if the period of illness is included). This book is based largely on the thesis, with quite radical re-proportioning, so that the emphasis should fall on women rather than 'social stratification'. I am indebted to the British Department of Education and Science for a three-year Hayter Studentship, to the Wenner–Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research for a generous field-work grant, to the Faculty of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge, for awarding me the Anthony Wilkin Studentship in 1970–1, and to Girton College, Cambridge, for the J. E. Cairnes Research Scholarship which was generously awarded to me in 1969, 1970 and 1971.

My intellectual debts are many and their value more difficult to measure. I have to thank Dr James Bynon of the School of Oriental and African Studies for a patient and expert introduction to the subtleties of Berber language and culture, and Dr Robin Bidwell of Cambridge who generously opened his entire bibliography to me, commented with humour on some of the preliminary chapters and even acted as my supervisor at one stage. I am grateful too to Commandant Malekot and the staff of the Centre de Hautes Etudes sur l'Afrique et l'Asie Modernes in Paris for making available to me the memoirs written by French administrators of the Protectorate, and to Colonel Guy Boula de Mareuil for giving me the benefit of his immense experience of Morocco. I am indebted to Dr Debbasch of the Centre d'Etudes et des Recherches sur les Sociétés Méditerranéennes in Aix-en-Provence for allowing me to make use of the Centre's excellent library and for his kind hospitality. I have derived many insights from discussions in the Research seminars at Cambridge, the 'Sociology of Islam' seminar at the London School of Economics and particularly in the 'Anthropology of Women' group

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established in London early in 1972. While the stimulus and analytical perceptions of many friends and fellow-anthropologists have been invaluable, I would like to thank especially Dr Audrey Richards for her 'training', Dr Esther Goody for her encouragement and Anne Whitehead, who read the thesis in draft, for her astute and valued criticism.

My parents heroically visited me in the field, surrounding me with an aura of respectability, and undertaking major haulages of field-equipment. Their comments on how Akhdari society looked to them, and my father's insights into the agronomic aspect of things were as valuable as their moral support. But there would have been no play without the 'actors'. My debt in general and in particular to the inhabitants of Akhdar is inestimable, and I will always wonder at the way in which my friends and adopted families took me into their midst with such tolerance and sympathy and 'told me things'. I have the greatest admiration for the intelligence, imagination and humour with which they live their hard lives.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge a debt of gargantuan proportions to my supervisor, Dr Jack Goody, whose interest, careful criticism and friendship have been a constant source of inspiration, and to thank Mrs Edna Pilmer and Mrs Varney for their painstaking work in typing the various drafts.

V.A.M.

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NOTE ON ORTHOGRAPHY

I have used the French transcription for proper names, as is done in Morocco; I have attempted to avoid the orthographic confusion over Berber and Arabic transliteration by keeping as close as possible to the phonetic transcription. I have used the roman capital letter H for the voiced ح and the capital letter T for ط.

Most of the place-names and personal names are fictitious. However, I have not changed the names referring to cities (e.g. Meknes, Rabat) or tribes.

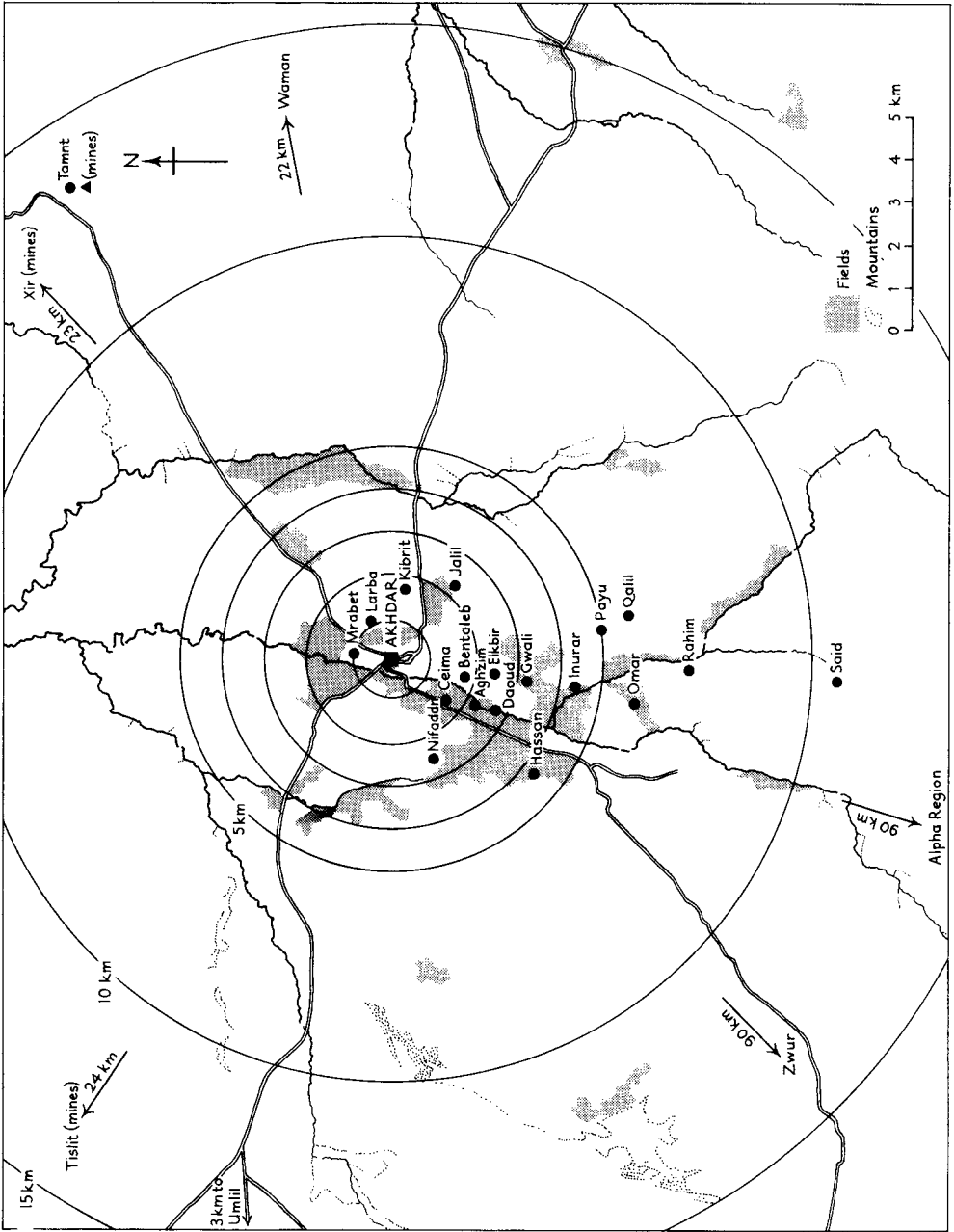
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Map of the Akhdar region