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052138561X - The Bedouin of Cyrenaica: Studies in Personal and Corporate Power - Emrys L. Peters
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Cambridge Studies in Social and Cultural Anthropology

Editors: Jack Goody, Stephen Gudeman, Michael Herzfeld, Jonathan Parry

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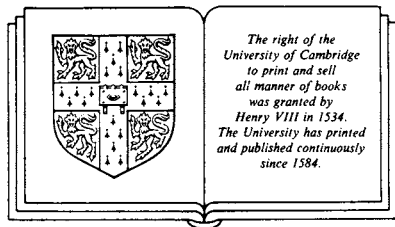
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THE BEDOUIN OF CYRENAICA

*Studies in personal
and corporate power*

EMRYS L. PETERS

Edited by Jack Goody and Emanuel Marx



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*The author would have dedicated
the book to*

Stella

who shared so much in this work.

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The photographs were taken by Stella and Emrys Peters.

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Cyrenaica in the 1950s.

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Foreword

I met Emrys Peters in Cambridge when I returned there in 1946 and began to read anthropology. At that time Evans-Pritchard came across each week from Oxford where he was about to take up the chair in Social Anthropology previously held by Radcliffe-Brown. His lectures were a breath of fresh air, standing out head and shoulders above anything else on offer in the field. But quite apart from their intellectual qualities, his analyses of the internal and external struggles of the Nuer of the Sudan and the Sanusi of Libya were of deep interest to those of us who had spent much of our adult lives engaged in war or war-related activities. And this was especially true of those who had passed part of that time in North Africa.

Like myself, Peters was among the latter, having served in the desert in the Royal Air Force. His previous interest in human geography, which he had studied at Aberystwyth under Daryll Forde, at this time the very enterprising director of the International African Institute, combined with his wartime experiences gave him a deep interest in the Bedouin, which he shared with the rest of us. Indeed, then and later, that voice with the pronounced Welsh lilt engaged us in the evening hours with many a brilliantly recounted tale not only of Libya and the Near East, but of life in the R.A.F. and, more deeply felt, in the depression of the early thirties in the coalfields.

With this background, it was inevitable that, having finished his degree, he took the path, like many others including his close friend Godfrey Lienhardt, to join Evans-Pritchard in Oxford in order to undertake research among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica in the newly independent kingdom of Libya. I myself lost touch for awhile as I had taken up work of a different kind. But on returning to academia and to anthropology, I met him again in Cambridge in 1951 where he was a temporary lecturer in the department that had recently come under the headship of Meyer Fortes.

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During his year there he was a great stimulus as a teacher but also in many a lengthy discussion about the feud, the lineage and kindred topics, each carefully and constructively dissected. I gained much from our friendship and it was sad for me when, in 1952, he went to the Department of Social Anthropology and Sociology recently set up by Max Gluckman at Manchester.

That city became his home from then on, and he devoted his energies to teaching as well as to academic life, not only in the University but on the national level in committees of the Social Science Research Council, the University Grants Commission as well as of professional bodies. In 1968 he followed Gluckman as Head of Department.

Emrys Peters retired from the chair in 1984, hoping to complete the writing up and publication of more of the extensive research he had carried out in Libya and in the Lebanon. His death in 1987 was both a personal loss and an academic one. He had presented his thesis in 1951 and some of us had hoped he would publish at that time. Emrys was of a different mind. He spent the next thirty years rethinking the material, and the result was a remarkable series of articles, some published, others not, which are presented in the present volume.

He did not get the opportunity to do further fieldwork among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica after 1950, but he continued to carry out research in Tripolitania as well as in the Lebanon for the rest of his life, and as a result his understanding of the Bedouin was enriched by the comparative material he brought to bear. This comparative work is represented in the chapter on the status of women, which first appeared in 1978, and he pursued the project in other papers that we have listed in his bibliography. But for his illness he would undoubtedly have gone on to expand this aspect of his work for he was totally dedicated to understanding the Arab communities of the Mediterranean world within a general framework of social theory. It was the intensity of this commitment, combined with the humour with which he would put up with new or difficult situations, that made this Welshman from Merthyr Tydfil so fine a fieldworker and so thorough an ethnographer.

For some years I had been hoping to include his essays in this present series. While the collection would obviously have been greatly improved had he been able to edit the material himself, I am pleased that we have been able to get together a volume of his work not simply as an act of homage but because of its high quality both theoretically and in terms of a sympathetic understanding of the Arab peoples. We decided to leave the published papers as they appeared in print since they have already made their mark on regional and theoretical studies and have been quoted extensively.

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Three unpublished papers and one chapter of his thesis are included, and we are grateful to Ernest Gellner for working on the manuscript of chapter 1 on the Sanusi, and to Paul Baxter for doing the same with chapter 5 on the shaikhs. The major section on Bedouin ecology came from his thesis and has been edited by Emanuel Marx, who is largely responsible for getting the book together. But above all we have received great help and encouragement from Stella Peters, who shared in the fieldwork in Cyrenaica and herself produced a fascinating thesis on the Bedouin *bait* or tent (Oxford 1951). In addition I am sure the author would have wanted to thank profoundly the members of the communities with whom he worked.

Jack Goody

Preface

My field work among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica consisted of two periods. My first year's work in 1948 was made possible by a Studentship awarded me by the Emslie Horniman Anthropological Fund Trustees. In October 1949 I returned to Cyrenaica, and remained there until mid-December 1950. This second period of work was financed by the Treasury Committee for Studentships in Foreign Languages and Cultures. To the trustees of the Horniman Fund and the Treasury Committee I wish to make grateful acknowledgement.

During these two periods in Cyrenaica, I lived for two years among the Bedouin, and spent my time mainly among the Sdaidi of the 'Awaqir, the Jululat of the Zuwayya, the Shamakh of the Magharba, the Tamiya section of the Bara'asa and the Baraghla section of the Darsa tribes. I visited other sections of these tribes, but stayed with them for very short periods, and of the tribes I resided with for any length of time, my longest residence was with the Magharba and the Bara'asa. Of the semi-sedentary plateau tribes, I lived only among the Darsa' and my stay with them lasted only two months, but this was at the end of my second tour and was more profitable than if I had visited them earlier. I am however, aware that two months is a short period and have confined my remarks about the Darsa' to general statements. My work, in short, was confined almost exclusively to the more southern and mobile sections of the tribes.

During the first three weeks of field work in 1948, I was fortunate in having the services of Muhammad Kadiki, then an official of the British Military Administration, as an interpreter. We travelled together from camp to camp for these weeks, and after that I went to live with the 'Amarna folk of the 'Awaqir tribe, and spent three uninterrupted months with them learning their language.

Emrys Peters, Oxford