

BAXTER, P. Obituary: Emrys Peters.
Anthropology Today, 3 ii (1987) pp.21-21

exact vowelings in the more obscure phrases. But some of the latter are simply too obscure by half, and the overall impression of the book (heightened by the anonymity of its authorship) is that a wide-ranging card-index has been emptied into its pages: what human editor would expect us to want 'van-mounted computer centre' when the claim in the introduction is that words in common use have been omitted?

In general, these dictionaries are lists of nouns; one scarcely sees a verb, even such basic ideas as 'to program', and the emphasis is strongly on the science of computers rather than their use. 'Spreadsheet' is nowhere to be found, and Firas Ali omits 'word-processing'. We must hope that both works will play a useful part in stabilising Arabic usage in the computer field, but the prevailing uncertainties seem to be so great (and most of the translations available so ponderous) that transliterations must surely be increasingly adopted. If, at this stage, there is no agreement even on words such as floppy, hard, disc, software and hardware, there seems to be little alternative.

UNIVERSITY
OF EXETER

B.R. PRIDHAM

AFGHANISTAN: AN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE. A GUIDE TO U.S. OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS AND GOVERNMENT-SPONSORED PUBLICATIONS. By JULIAN W. WITHERELL. (Near Eastern Series, no. 3.) Washington, Library of Congress, 1986. xiii, 158pp. U.S. \$5.00.

A GUIDE TO 'DOCUMENTS FROM THE NEST OF SPIES.' By GIORGIO VERCELLIN. (Occasional paper, 26.) New York, Afghanistan Forum, 1986. 29pp.

Witherell's bibliography documents the relations between the United States and Afghanistan as reflected largely in U.S. government publications. The 631 items are arranged under forty-two subject headings so that the number of items to be scanned on any given topic is never unwieldy. For example, the chapter on assistance programmes has two sub-divisions, United States programmes, and programmes of Communist countries, the former being further divided by specific fields, such as economics, health, and transport. The same kind of treatment is accorded to the section 'Politics and Government' of the period from 1979 to 1984.

The brief annotations are sufficiently comprehensive to allow a proper assessment of each bibliographical item. For example, the author indicates when a publication is superseded by another one. Since the compiler has supplied selective locations, his bibliography is important also for libraries outside the United States. Multiple access to the material is assured by an index in one alphabetical sequence combining personal and corporate authors, subjects, and titles.

It is pleasant to acknowledge so much unique bibliographical information. The survey shows that there is a large corpus of literature to be documented which falls outside the scope of *Index Islamicus*. This applies particularly to the articles translated into English from the Western—including Russian—as well as from the Middle Eastern periodical press.

Under the title *Asnād-i lānah-i jāsūsī* ('Documents from the nest of spies') the Iranian government has so far published a series of fifty-four volumes of the documents seized during the takeover of the American embassy in Tehran in November, 1979. Numbers 29 and 30 of this series, which were published about 1981, contain telex messages sent to or from the Kabul embassy. Since these two volumes were difficult to obtain in North America (they were readily available at the Cité Universitaire, Paris, and elsewhere in Europe), Vercellin considered it convenient to list the documents in the order in which they appear in the books, but, for lack of space, supplying only the following information: date, origin, name of the sender, type of classification, and the subject as stated on the document. The author rightly doubts that these are all the documents on Afghanistan seized at the Embassy. Evidence for his assumption are the occasional documents from Kabul contained in volumes 47–53 of the same series, entitled *U.S.S.R.: The Aggressive East*.

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WOLFGANG H. BEHN

EMRYS LLOYD PETERS
1916–1987

EMRYS Peters, Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Manchester from 1968 to 1984, died on 16 February 1987.

He volunteered for the R.A.F. in 1939, just after graduating from Aberystwyth in Geography and History, and served throughout the war in photographic reconnaissance in the Middle East and Mediterranean theatres. There was a time when it seemed that his aptitude for this work might lead him in the direction of archaeology, but his interest in social anthropology had already been awakened by Daryll Forde, and so consonant was it with his innate gregariousness that his choice of career was never really in doubt. As soon as he was demobilized he went to Cambridge to sit at Evans-Pritchard's feet and followed him to Oxford in 1947. In 1948–50 he spent twenty-seven months on fieldwork among the Bedouin of Cyrenaica, with an interval in Oxford devoted to the study of Classical Arabic, knowing as he did that the present state of a people is not fully intelligible to those with no knowledge of its past. He took his D.Phil. in 1951 and after a year of teaching at Cambridge went to Manchester as Lecturer in Social Anthropology. There were subsequently periods of fieldwork in southern Lebanon (1952–53, 1956 and 1967) and Libya (1964 and 1969).

He had learned from Evans-Pritchard to regard social anthropology as an art, whose practitioner must immerse himself in the ways of thought of 'his' people deeply enough to know, as if by instinct, how they would behave in a given situation. Once, at an Oxford seminar, Emrys was asked whether the rules he had stated about Bedouin marriage were invariable; were there no circumstances in which a Bedouin girl might be given in marriage without the payment of bride-price? To the astonishment of the questioner and of the others present, the reply was an outraged 'Do you really expect to get one of our girls without camels?' Few scholars have approached him in his grasp of the Bedouin attitude to the blood-feud, to lineages or to life in general.

A founder-member of our Society, he served on Council for many years before and after his presidency in 1975–77 and was chairman of a committee set up by the Society in 1978 to survey developments in Middle Eastern studies in British universities since the Hayter Report. The Peters Report was a model of its kind and cost infinitely less to prepare and produce than its governmental forerunners.

His publications were not bulky but they were seminal. And he was one of the great teachers of his generation. To listen to him talking, both *ex cathedra* and over a pint, was a joy as well as an education, whether the subject was his—and his beloved Stella's—experiences in the field or odd encounters in the souk or aspects of rank and status among Muslims in a Lebanese village or his boyhood in Merthyr. He put me in mind of the Captive in Kipling's poem of