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### **FROM CAMEL TO TRUCK: THE BEDOUIN IN THE MODERN WORLD.** By Dawn Chatty

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#### **A CLASSIC STUDY OF CULTURAL ENDURANCE AND RADICAL CHANGE IN THE ARABIAN DESERT**

*The Bedouin tribes of Northern Arabia have lived thousands of years as pastoralists, migrating across the semi-arid badia in search of graze and browse for their herds. Romantic images of Bedouin – black tents, robed Arabs and camels – still persist. However, mobile pastoral livelihoods have come under pressure to change in recent years. The modern nation-states of the Middle East view pastoralism as anachronistic and encourage Bedouin to become settled cultivators. An even more dramatic shift has taken place within the last few decades: the Bedouin have traded in their camels as beasts of burden in favour of the half-ton truck. The ship of the desert is now a Toyota, Datsun, Nissan or General Motors pick-up. Nevertheless, many Bedouin continue to herd livestock – sheep, goat and camel – at the same time as engaging in new economic activities. They have been open to remarkable change whilst firmly holding onto their culture, and their traditional moral and value systems. The truck has allowed many the possibility of interacting with the region's modern economy while still pursuing their mobile pastoral livelihoods.*

Dawn Chatty is University Professor in Anthropology and Forced Migration and Director of the Refugee Studies Centre, Queen Elizabeth House, University of Oxford. Her research interests include coping strategies and resilience of refugee youth, nomadic pastoralism and conservation, gender and development, health, illness and culture. Her most recent books include: *Dispossession and Displacement in the Modern Middle East* (2010); *Dispossession and Forced Migration in the Middle East and North Africa* (ed. with Bill Finlayson, 2010); *Deterritorialized Youth: Sahrawi and Afghan Refugees at the Margins of the Middle East* (ed. 2010); *Nomadic Societies in the Middle East and North Africa: Facing the 21st Century* (2006); *Children of Palestine: Experiencing Forced Migration in the Middle East* (ed. with Gillian Lewando-Hundt, 2005); and *Conservation and Mobile Peoples: Displacement, Forced Settlement and Sustainable Development* (ed. with Marcus Colchester, 2002).

*Extensive field research underlies anthropologist Dawn Chatty's comprehensive study. She examines contemporary Bedouin society of Lebanon and Syria in the contexts of history, economy and political and moral culture. She details the consequences of motorized transport for this community - and she draws some surprising conclusions about its future viability.*

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