

OBITUARY

Peter Loizos - born May 17 1937, died March 2 2012

I am sad to announce the passing of Peter Loizos, a politically engaged anthropologist and teacher. Behind his measured appearance he was a very kind man and an exceptional Ph.D. supervisor: tough, with a very sharp mind, helping his students to wade through the experience of writing a Ph.D.. I have been struck with the news of his passing; it seems impossible, since Peter appeared indestructible.

Peter Loizos taught at LSE from 1969 to 2002, when he retired. His regional specialisms were Cyprus and Greece, which did not make him shy away from supporting my research in the Republic of Macedonia. He was one of the first to look at the issues of masculinity and friendship between men in the Hellenic world, co-editing *Contested Identities: Gender and Kinship in Modern Greece* with Evthymios Papataxiarchis. Peter was a great teacher in Visual Anthropology, publishing, what in my opinion is one of the best books on visual anthropology, *Innovation in Ethnographic Film: From Innocence to Self-Consciousness, 1955-1985*.

In preparing his three books, *The Greek Gift: Politics in a Cypriot Village* (1975), *The Heart Grown Bitter: A Chronicle of Cypriot War Refugees* (Cambridge 1981) and *Iron in the Soul: Displacement, Livelihood and Health in Cyprus* (Oxford, 2008), he went back to the village of his father, discovering the exceptional kindness of relatives he had never met before. In his first book he writes wittingly about how, not speaking Greek at the time, he nevertheless found himself in a family network that treated him as one of their own. This experience especially was key in him helping his students through the muddy waters of obligations as academics and to become part of a new, family-like, network.

For me, as a research student going to Yugoslavia and then living through its demise, his personal knowledge of war, ethnic conflict and the subsequent diaspora was most useful; especially on a human level. In every communication, until very recently, Peter always inquired about the lives of my informants.

When I decided I wanted to do research on how people in the city of Skopje create and live identities and realities outside the political power-base, with a focus on young women

engineers, their friends and families, he fervently supported my project to do urban anthropology in a department that, at that time, viewed anthropology exclusively as classic ethnography in small-scale communities. In doing some research for Peter's book on *Conceiving persons: ethnographies of procreation, fertility, and growth*, I learnt that the subtle is more informative than the glaring. I had come back and told him that the women whom I had interviewed talked about their husbands beating them. Peter, with his typical smile, asked me where the men were when I talked to the women. Thinking about it, I had to admit that the men were making coffee and serving us cookies. Peter never missed even the most minute detail. He pointed out that, fitting with the rest of my ethnography, those women, far from talking about domestic violence, were actually speaking about the strength of their husbands, which was needed to guarantee the survival of children in precarious times.

Peter taught me to explore the consequences of differentiations that were more undercurrent than visible. He was a master of such insights, as his books have proven; as indeed did my personal encounter with him. Anthropology lost a mercilessly intelligent academic, a great teacher and a true believer in the political purpose of the discipline. There are so many things that I still would need to ask him, that I would like to read of his. He has gone far too early. Please do join me in saying good-bye to Peter.

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