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The Greek Gift:

Politics in a Cypriot Village

Bearbeitet von
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Contents

Tables

Figures

Appendices

Foreword

Peter Loizos' study *The Greek Gift: Politics in a Cypriot Village* was one of the first to spell out how modern ideological politics affected a rural community in a post-colonial state. Cyprus, under British rule, had permitted the Greek and Turkish Cypriots only limited experience of democratic participation in national politics. The last five years of colonial rule in Cyprus [1955-1960] witnessed a major struggle by Greek Cypriots for "freedom" – by which they meant, a political Union with Greece, a goal which had obsessed them since the turn of the century, but which had alienated Turkish Cypriot nationalists.

Independence in 1960 was soon disrupted by violent conflict between Greek and Turkish paramilitaries, and the retreat of many Turkish Cypriots into enclaves, both defensive and secessionist.

The village described here, [later identified as Argaki, near Morphou in W. Cyprus,] had produced an active unit of anti-British guerillas, members of the underground organization EOKA, led by Col. George Grivas. It had acted as a hiding place for EOKA fighters dodging the British, men like Nikos Sampson, and Nikos Koshis. It was also a mixed village, with a large Greek majority, the subjects of this study, and a small Turkish minority. Twenty five miles from the capital, prospering from irrigated agriculture, the village found itself intensively caught up in the rivalries between Greek nationalist leaders. President Makarios, Interior Minister Polykarpos Yorgadjis, [later assassinated] Glavkos Clerides, [later President] Dr.Vassos Lyssarides, and Nikos Sampson [a "president" imposed by the Greek dictatorship] are all major actors on the national political stage, but they are also connected by ties of friendship and political patronage to their Argaki clients – the village political activists who have variously identified with these national figures, but find that when the big men start to quarrel, the effects are felt disturbingly at the village level. Men who might otherwise be helping each to prosperity and planning to see their children marry each other, find themselves at each others' throats, and only the skillful diplomacy of the more far-sighted village leaders keeps the village from tragedy.

While giving his lively first-hand account of a single village, Loizos is compelled to place the political processes he documents within the wider context of national and international politics. This book has been required reading for specialists on Cyprus, when they sought to understand how Greek-on-Greek political passions played out at the grass roots level. The Greek military dictatorship [1967-74] casts its shadow over these pages, recruiting young villagers to overthrow their elected President. Cold War

rivalries between NATO and the USSR also play their part. The village cannot be isolated from decisions taken in Athens, Ankara, Moscow, Washington and London, but could village activists really understand how high the stakes were in the games they were playing?

The book ends shortly before the 1974 Greek coup against Makarios and subsequent invasion by Turkey, which turned these prospering villagers into refugees, the subjects of a subsequent study *The Heart Grown Bitter*.

Peter Loizos' book is one of the few classics of the Cyprus Problem studies. Unfortunately it has been out print for many years and the prices for antiquarian copies have moved up considerably showing that there is still a great demand for it. From contacts with colleagues in Great Britain, the US, in Cyprus proper and here in Germany we know that many of us would like to make Loizos' book the basic text book for an academic seminar on the Cyprus Problem. Thus it seems reasonable to reprint it as a volume of our PELEUS series.

Heinz A. Richter

Introduction

GENERAL ISSUES: ANTHROPOLOGY AND POLITICAL SCIENCE

This book is concerned with politics in a mainly Greek village in Cyprus, from the time the island achieved Independence in 1960 to the national elections of 1970. The analysis of parish-pump politics is in itself worthwhile if somewhat limited, but this book has broader aims. It seeks to show by example how an intensive study of a small unit, a traditional task of social anthropology, can help understanding of the larger society and its politics, a traditional task of political science. Of course a village is not the state writ small; among other things it lacks the complexity, the range of institutions and the political authority of the state, and there can be no good argument that to study a small community is like looking at the larger society through the wrong end of a telescope. But the understanding of a small unit may nevertheless be essential for the full comprehension of the larger society.

One reason for this is that modern states tend to develop in ways which eventually involve rural people. Whether the political system at the centre represses or permits rural representation in the nation's political life, the power holders in the capital are unlikely nowadays completely to ignore their rural subjects. The extent to which rural people are conscious or unconscious of this interest is itself something which will influence the nature of their relation to the capital. In its cruder form, the key question here is whether the system has granted them any rights, and if so, how far are they able to use them? If it has not granted them any rights, do they propose to seek them?

A reason more specific to Cyprus, but possibly relevant elsewhere too, is that men of humble rural origins enter the urban elite and continue in certain ways to represent the interests of the communities in which they were born. This does not mean that in most things they go on behaving just like their rural fathers. Far from it. Just how far their values will in fact be different will depend on the circumstances of the particular society, but even when they are trying very hard to stress how different they are from the men in the villages they have left

their attempts cannot make much sense without understanding what they are reacting *against*. That is to say, any part of an elite which has recently come in from the countryside will need to be understood in terms of that countryside. If this emergent segment of the elite is also involved in the political representation of that countryside, its analytic yield to an understanding of national politics will be much increased.

This is by no means a common situation. In many societies modern politics or independence from foreign rule have not let many rural people into the political elite, simply because an exclusive traditional elite has deftly filled the power vacuum. This seems particularly likely where *latifundia* exist, or where there has been a firmly entrenched traditional feudal aristocracy. Portuguese rural society as analysed by Cutileiro (1971) showed no tendency to admit low-born villagers to political power; my reading of Indian village studies suggests that this kind of mobility is as rare on that subcontinent as it is in Portugal, and much of Latin America could be added to this list.

In some societies the elite has not been so exclusive. Late nineteenth-century Cyprus had a small mercantile elite, but lacked a landed aristocracy; many villagers owned the land they worked, and mass education, along with economic development allowed village-born people to enter the expanding urban elite. Something similar seems to have happened among the Ibo people of Eastern Nigeria, and among the Tolai of New Britain.[1] In all three cases the traditional authority system allowed a relatively open competition for power and prestige, and such elites as existed were unable to bar the entry of more humble persons into their ranks. In societies like these the understanding of rural political and social organization will play an important part in understanding national leadership.

THE VILLAGE AND MODERN POLITICS: AMBIGUOUS BENEFITS

My argument so far is that an anthropological study of a small community may prove a valuable complement to the nation-centred studies of the political scientist. It need hardly be said that the reverse will also apply when the anthropologist tries to understand how the larger society affects the smaller unit. Much of this book is concerned with the impact of modern politics, as well as more general factors of social change, on a particular

village. What happens to village social relations when modern politics penetrate them? Do modern politics bring new benefits to the villagers? If so, at what price? Do political ideologies (which formally require the opposition of their adherents) set men more fiercely at each other's throats than in the old days? If so, how do villagers deal with the ambiguous gifts of modern politics? What strategies do they adopt to get the greatest benefits at the least social cost? Or are they simply thrown into confusion, apathy, and alienation by the arrival of politics?

By modern politics I mean the activities of politicians, or party agents, and the entry of political ideologies into the village. It is widely reported that when these things begin in rural communities the local elders start to recall an Arcadian state, 'before politics came and spoiled things'.[2] They are of course trying to trick their listeners into the belief that in the good old days they never fought and all got along cosily together. While this was hardly ever the case, the elders are not being entirely deceitful; out of their complaints one can abstract several themes. Before modern politics in such societies, men understood and fought over things which were largely within their own local control—women, land boundaries, prestige, material rights of all kinds. After modern politics, they fight over things beyond their control, sometimes without clearly knowing why.

To enlarge on the elder's complaint, it can be said that when modern politics involve developed ideologies with opposed ways of seeing the world, they do alter the nature of political competition. In the case of the right- and left-wing ideologies described in this book, the actual labels are defined by their apparently non-negotiable hostility *to each other*. At the same time the very novelty of the labels and what goes with them in a rapidly changing world means that traditional rules for controlling political conflict may not be adequate to deal with the new contests. Perhaps new rules will emerge, but as yet only some people in the society understand that this is happening. In such situations, half the participants are used to a world in which the rules were understood and everyone played the same game; the other half may be involved in more dangerous activities, with no consensus about rules, and little experience in handling a situation which lacks consensus. Such is the situation described for one Cypriot village.

But the benefits of modern politics are ambiguous not only because of these new confusions, and the altered nature of

political competition. They are ambiguous because the actual benefits offered are both essential and uncertain. In Cyprus since 1960 the political alignment of a villager may determine whether he or his dependants get certain benefits—jobs, scholarships, import licences, interventions in administrative or judicial procedures, cheap medical care, cheap travel, and so forth. Support for a political position may bring these benefits, but support for the wrong position may bring—as a punishment—the denial of the benefits. Villagers believe that their alignments are recorded on lists, and put in files, by the various political leaders; perhaps, they think, if the power structure changes, those who are rewarded today may be punished tomorrow. Although I have not seen the lists and files, I share the villagers' beliefs in their existence, although with more reservations about the efficiency of those who maintain them.

The benefits and penalties just mentioned are not in the control of villagers. They are all in the hands of powerful outsiders, usually men in the capital. A villager who aligns himself with such powerful outsiders is employing a new and dangerous resource in his personal competition for prestige, and such use of new resources is a highly charged issue in village life.[3] Villagers would like to secure the desired benefits but they usually do not wish to incur great hostility from other villagers who may be aligned with other opposed political groups. Yet why should they not simply throw in their lot with those powerful outsiders?

At this point the argument focuses still closer upon the highly particular nature of Kalo village itself. It is in several ways successful and prosperous. For the last seventy years it has grown steadily and yet managed to support most of its children within its confines: there has been no large-scale emigration. It is economically successful in the sense that things have been getting markedly better for most of the villagers as long as they can remember. Land is profitable and most families have some. Those who do not have enough can take advantage of the small scale of the island, the nearness of the village to the capital, and the new roads and new jobs, to supplement their land holdings by work in or outside the village. These factors allow the villagers to see most of their children marry other village children; land, wealth, and marriage partners are all things which villagers like to see kept within the control of the village.

The success of the village underpins a key value which the villagers invoke when political competition threatens the course of

village social relations. The value is that of village solidarity, which has a number of aspects, discernible in different contexts. First, it involves stressing the superiority and basic homogeneity of the village in contrast to other villages, and its unity in the face of outside threats. It also involves attempting to settle disputes between villagers peacefully where possible. It involves limiting the scope of conflict between politically corporate groups, and limiting the definition of politics, so that as much of village life as possible is defined as 'out of politics'; that is, by such definitions, villagers insist that outside political alignments should not be allowed to influence day-to-day village life. The social and economic success of the village underpins the values and actions which express the analytic notion 'village solidarity', and the villagers have good material and conceptual reasons for conducting their lives in their chosen way. But this is a continuously changing situation, not one in which all the villagers, all of the time agree about what is happening or what should happen. To value solidarity is not to live without dispute, and to exclude a great deal from the definition is not to live without politics.

Here some thoughts of Frederick Barth are helpful.[4] He has described situations in which people see themselves as prospering *together* by the term 'relations of incorporation'. He has in mind a range from the lineage (or other forms of extended kin group) in simple societies, to the joint stock company and other organizations in complex societies. He contrasts such relations of incorporation, with another kind which he calls 'transactional relations' in which people try to increase their benefits by themselves, acting alone, in competition with others rather than in co-operation. Barth suggests that the balance between these two kinds of social action will be of crucial interest in analysing social relations within collectivities.

In my analysis the norm of village solidarity is invoked when people seek for whatever reason to extend the scope in village life of relations of incorporation. To invoke the norm of village solidarity is to try to make others restrain the lonely and naked pursuit of self-interest; it is to try to persuade them that they have more to gain by co-operation with co-villagers than by going it alone. Yet men in making such appeals may be seeking to further their own short-term self-interest, while appearing to speak for the long-term good of the village. I take the view that norms are weapons in political debates (rather than simple determinants of actions). The key debates of politics in the village are

debates about how far self-interest should be or can be subordinated to public interest. In these debates the actors struggle to define their terms in ways advantageous to themselves. Such debates are not always conducted clear-headedly or conclusively—one must not over-emphasize the calculation or rationality of the matter. But because they resemble those of more complex social units, I find myself in dispute with Crick[5] when he tries to deny some small-scale communities—he does not name names—the dignity of Politics with a capital P. That is why I try to avoid the term 'village politics' which in Crick's mouth would imply small-minded back-scratching, and instead use 'politics in the village' which implies something more akin to national politics. I hope by the end of the book the reader will not think this distinction picayune.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BOOK

The first chapter begins with a sketch of the island's history from the arrival of the British in 1878, to the elections of 1970. This account is not comprehensive, but selects those events and issues which will be reflected and refracted in the villagers' lives. The rise of left- and right-wing groupings is stressed, and the struggle of the right-nationalist organization EOKA to oust the British and achieve *Enosis*—union with mainland Greece—take the reader to Independence in 1960. This is followed by the intercommunal violence of 1963 between the island's Turkish minority and Greek majority and the *de facto* secession of the Turks, in armed enclaves, which continues to the time of writing. During the period 1878–1970 it is clear that the rural population has enjoyed continually increasing prosperity, but that its experience of participation in national or representative politics has been extremely uneven: in fact, villagers are inexperienced in national politics, and what experience they have, in face of major upheavals, and sporadic violence, has taught them extreme caution.

The second chapter introduces the village of Kalo, and provides essential facts about its recent past, and present setting. Since the turn of the century the village has been marked by continuous population growth, as well as a shift from traditional dry-farming based on oxen, livestock husbandry and cereal cultivation to an irrigated, capital intensive cash-cropping of vegetables and citrus fruits. Better communications, literacy and the growth of political agencies in village life have marked the other

profound change: once, the village was a moral community, in which competition was chiefly for honour, land and other factors within villagers' control. Now, these forms of competition continue, but are subordinated to struggles over resources which are controlled outside the village, by men who seek political loyalty under a variety of ideological labels.

The third chapter starts by comparing four categories of villagers in terms of their class, status and power positions, to anticipate the discussion of degrees of freedom in political action, and the social bases for leadership roles. In descending order of political power the four categories are (i) the 10 per cent who are educated men; (ii) the 40 per cent who are full-time farmers; (iii) the 30 per cent who are skilled workers with some land, and (iv) the 20 per cent who are unskilled labourers, with little or no land. From here the analysis continues with the fundamental importance of the size of land holdings, of supplementary occupations, and of status factors in work, including education. There is a brief discussion of the recent shift to citrus cultivation which permits educated men to pursue profitable 'white-collar' farming, in addition to holding salaried and prestigious jobs. The chief economic constraints on political activity are thus made clear.

The fourth chapter is concerned with kinship and marriage. The central fact here is that a man is judged both by himself and by others in terms of his ability to provide for his dependants. This family-centred value is the first guide to a man's actions. In addition, the particular nature of the developmental cycle of the domestic group requires that each child receive a portion of its parents' property at its own marriage. Marriage, then, places a continual burden of provision and responsibility on household heads, while providing for the marrying child in particular a new set of important relatives and allies. The arrangement of marriage is a critical test of prestige in the village, for a man's standing is partly measured by the desirability of his sons and daughters as marriage partners within the village. This chapter also explores the relation between kinship solidarity, and individual freedom of choice in political alignment. Kinship is usually defined by villagers as something too important to permit of political dispute, but a man in his role as independent household head may seek any political alliances he chooses; only he must not allow such alliances to weaken the proper solidarity between kinsmen, and between affines.

Chapter five examines other bases for association in social