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Theodoros Fouskas, *Nigerian Immigration in Greece: Low-Status Work, Community, and Decollectivization* (New York: Nova Publishers, 2014), 251 pp.

Modern Greece is a country used to economic hardship; the decades following World War II (especially the 1940s, '50s and '60s) and the last seven years of financial catastrophe (2009–16) have brought about major economic and social problems, the likes of which are rare in modern Western countries. As a result, during both periods (but even traditionally before World War II) Greece has been a country of emigrants. One could argue that every Greek family has relatives who emigrated, while a whole subcategory of traditional songs is inspired by the phenomenon. Greek economic hardship and emigration is quite well known; thus, many with casual knowledge of Greece and its modern history will be surprised to find out that the country enjoyed thirty-five years of prosperity between 1975 and 2009 (especially the 1990s and early 2000s), and that, as part of that prosperity, it became a destination for immigrants.

Most immigrants came to Greece as a result of the collapse of communism. Indeed, today over one million people (in a country of eleven million) are recent immigrants, and their descendants, mainly from Albania and the former Soviet Union. Both of those groups claimed Greek descent

(Greek Orthodox Albanians and Pontic Greek Russians) which might have been dubious. At the same time, their common religion with the overwhelmingly Christian Orthodox Greeks created enough of a cultural affinity to make such immigrants acceptable to society at large. Moreover, the fact that most of the recent immigrants were willing to do jobs that Greeks refused to perform made them a welcome addition and contributor to the Greek economy. Other groups, while tolerated, were not as easy to incorporate into Greek society. Some came from non-Orthodox parts of Europe, while others came from as far away as Pakistan and India, thus making them all but impossible to incorporate culturally into Greek society.

The life of immigrants in Greece could not have been easy. Forced to leave their homelands due to economic hardship, war, or the collapse of the regime, they found themselves in a country whose language and culture was to some degree strange. But the shock of immigration was felt by the Greeks as well. Having such a large minority was a new thing for the country. Learning to live with the new arrivals was not always easy or desirable. At the same time, due to the novelty of immigration to Greece, the state was not prepared. Laws of residency and citizenship were inadequate or nonexistent; social programs for newcomers did not exist; educational opportunities for those who did not speak Greek were few and far between. The results were hardship for the newcomers, strain for the state and its resources, and resentment by the locals that deepened as the economy collapsed in 2009. Indeed, the phenomenon of the rise of the extreme right in Greece (the neo-Nazi party "Golden Dawn" is the third largest in the Greek Parliament, with about 7 percent of the vote) can be traced to a large degree to the challenges of immigration and the accompanying problems.

Among the many ethnic groups that make Greece their home today, sub-Saharan Africans, of which the Nigerians constitute a major part, represent an interesting case study. Although, most recently, some of them can claim that they left their homeland due to civil war and persecution, traditionally, and even today, they are primarily economic migrants. Also, while other refugees might claim that Greece was their country of destination, the Nigerians found themselves stranded in the country, initially but a stopping point for them on their way to Western Europe (mainly Britain). Also, while other immigrants can claim a degree of cultural affinity with Greece, Nigerians do not belong in that category. Demographically, the Nigerians appear to be young and overwhelmingly male, with few whole families emigrating.

Even though the Nigerians are much less numerous than other immigrant groups in Greece, they have a high visibility in society; this is due mainly to two reasons. As people of color in a European country, the Nigerians are easily identified (maybe not as Nigerians but clearly as sub-Saharan Africans) in the streets of Athens and the other Greek urban areas which they frequent. Even a short stroll in the streets of urban centers shows how ubiquitous the Nigerians have become to the Greek urban landscape. This is due largely to their professional activities. Nigerians in Greece are overrepresented in the street peddler trade. They are to be found alone or in groups around cafeterias, major bus and train stations, and busy streets, selling a variety of merchandise, from the useless (various toys which will not last for long) to the useful (batteries, selfie sticks, etc.) and the essential (umbrellas as soon as the rain starts). Most, if not all, do not have a peddler's license, and they often try to sell in areas where (for some reason or another) they are not supposed to do so. Finally, many of them sell illegal merchandise and contraband, from pirated CDs and DVDs

to, of course, “Gucci” and “Louis Vuitton” handbags, which are too cheap to believe! Thus, while the Nigerians in Greece represent a tiny minority of the total number of immigrants in Greece (just over two thousand in an immigrant population of about one million in 2001), they have a relatively high profile. Nevertheless, details about their background, life in Greece, and so on were not systematically examined until the appearance of this book.

Fouskas is a sociologist specializing in immigration and, as one would expect, approaches his subject using the methodology of his discipline. He devotes the first chapter (out of a total of six) to explaining to the reader the theoretical basis of his study. Chapter four is devoted to the explanation of the methodology used in compiling the information. Those two chapters are important to understand the author’s work, as well as his conclusions. This part of the book might be difficult reading for non-sociologists; clearly, the target audience is not the general public.

Chapters two and three are devoted to an extensive and impressive review of literature and research on immigrant associations and Nigerian immigrants in particular. Here, both the specialist as well as the more casual reader will be able to understand the work done in the field but also find works of interest to them, regardless of specialty. The book’s literature review alone makes the project worthwhile and useful to a more general reading audience.

Chapter five (by far the lengthier in the book) comprises mainly interviews the author had with over two hundred Nigerian immigrants in Greece. Here, the reader can hear the voices of people whose lives have been invisible (besides their professional activities). From them we learn first-hand about the reasons why they came to Greece, what makes them stay, their lives and backgrounds in Nigeria, and the problems they face in their new home. The accounts themselves, and the much larger

versions that the author must have omitted from the book in the interest of space, deserve a wider readership, as they help us understand the plight of Nigerians, and immigrants in general, in Greece.

Another invaluable tool for any researcher is to be found in Fouskas’s compilation of forty-two tables of statistics. Twenty-three of these tables are scattered throughout the book, with the rest grouped together in the appendix. Here, readers and scholars of various disciplines will find useful statistical data, such as the numbers of Nigerians in Greece, their gender ratio, their occupations, levels of education, and areas of origin in Nigeria. The book culminates in an impressive and comprehensive seventy-page bibliography. In reality, Fouskas’s book is a comprehensive reference work on the subject that is of use to the sociologist, but also to other scholars interested in the subject of Nigerian immigration (to Greece and beyond), immigration to Greece in general, and in the subject of immigration itself.

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The main objective of the *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* is the dissemination of scholarly information in the field of modern Greek studies. The field is broadly defined to include the social sciences and the humanities, indeed any body of knowledge that touches on the modern Greek experience. Topics dealing with earlier periods, the Byzantine and even the Classical, will be considered provided they relate, in some way, to aspects of later Greek history and culture. Geographically, the field extends to any place where modern Hellenism flourished and made significant contributions, whether in the “Helladic space” proper or in the *Diaspora*. More importantly, in comparative and contextual terms, the Mediterranean basin and Europe fall within the province of the *Yearbook*’s objectives. Special attention will be paid to subjects dealing with Greek-Slavic relations and Eastern Orthodox history and culture in general.

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