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**GREEK - AMERICAN PROFESSIONALS**

While one finds some general and special studies on a number of American ethnic professionals (i. e., Jewish-Americans, Catholics, Black-Americans), there is little or practically nothing on Greek-American professionals. Furthermore, although one can speak of a visible and energetic entrepreneurial class of Greek-Americans, it is doubtful that many Americans will recognize the existence of an emerging and viable class of Greek-American professionals.

An analysis of Greek-American professionals or of any professionals for that matter would entail a conceptual refinement of what sociologists mean by professions and related concepts. Originally "profession" meant the act of professing that was associated with the vows of a religious order. Gradually it has come to mean the occupation which entails a specialized knowledge and expertise of some branch of learning. Professionals by training and qualifications profess to know better than others and their clients. The professional claim to specialized knowledge gives him an exclusive right to practice his vocation while at the same time it disqualifies the non-professional from exercising that right. More cogently, a profession is typified by a career which involves a life-long commitment, i. e., a diplomat, a medical doctor. A profession then is that occupation which requires extensive training; it is more specialized, demanding, and costly and prepares the individual for a life-long career. A profession is more than a job or an occupation. It is an enduring and continuous career that is sharply differentiated from a non-profession.

For the purpose of this inquiry the terms "profession" and "professional" are used interchangeably. A Greek-American "professional" includes a rather small aggregate of first and second generation Greek-Americans who possess at least two structural and/or organizational characteristics. One, the possession of a graduate or professional degree from an accredited college or university (i. e., M. A. /M. S., Ph. D., M. D., LL.D., D.D., D.D.S., or equivalent) and Two, an organizational /institution affiliation (i.e., hospital, law office, college or university and the like). The emphasis in this paper is on the established "professions" particularly those in higher education, medicine, and law.

The present analysis is a summary and conclusion of a larger study on Greek-American professionals. The entire study was conducted in 1974 and was based on qualitative (historical) and quantitative (survey

type) sources of data such as directories, catalogues, yearbooks, and membership lists. Data on 3,549 Greek-American academics, medical doctors, lawyers, and scientists were collected concerning a number of selected socio-demographic, professional, and educational characteristics. Also an effort was made to compare those professionals born in Greece with those in the U.S.

### *1. Greek-American Professionals in the 19th Century*

There were three dozen or so Greek-American professionals in the 19th century. Most of them were brought to the U.S. by Protestant missionaries as orphans or refugees following the Greek Revolution of 1821 against the Ottoman Empire and the massacre of Chios by the Turks in 1822. Protestant missionaries were interested in converting Greek Orthodox to Protestantism by sending some of these Greek theology graduates back to Greece to do missionary work and convert fellow Greeks. Similar attempts were made by Catholics in Greece during the Otho dynasty (1830's - 1860's). Both efforts, however, were unsuccessful. They failed to convert many Greeks in Greece to either Protestantism or Catholicism.

Theology, law, classics /literature were the most frequent areas of specialization of the proto-Greek-American professionals that reflected the intellectual and educational orientations of 19th century America. The other less frequent areas of specialization were military, medicine, history, journalism, and banking. Some returned to Greece after their studies but those who remained became Americanized and married to non-Greek women (no Greek females were brought to the U.S. with the exception of one or two). This was also true in the later immigration of Greeks in the first quarter of the 20th century. The latter came to the U. S. as "birds of passage" to amass their fortune and return to their homeland as soon as possible.

Most accounts of Greek-American professionals by various Greek and non-Greek authors tended to report the most illustrious Greek-American professionals of the first generation or those who were born overseas or who as a rule were members of organizations and institutions. In other words, most of the 19th century accounts of Greek-American professionals did not include the progenies of the pioneer Greek-American professionals or the second and subsequent generations of Greek-Americans.

In a sense early Greek-American professionals had little or no ethnic identity because they came very young and were adopted by Americans.

They were thus completely detached from things Greek and besides as yet there was no Greek ethnic community in America. Many of them Americanized their names. Greek-American professionals were in fact American educated and knew about Greece mainly through their studies especially classics in American colleges. They had no Greek-American ethnic professional identification and consciousness. It seems safe then to suggest that because of the smallness in numbers and lack of ethnic consciousness and identity (adopted or sponsored by Americans) those 19th century proto-Greek-American professionals who remained in the U. S. became totally Americanized. Thus 19th century Greek-Americans failed to establish a Greek-American tradition of professionalism and scholarship which the subsequent generations of Greek-American professionals of later years could use as a frame of reference.

## *2. Greek-American Professionals (1900 - 1940's)*

In the first forty years of the 20th century Greek-Americans made some inroads in the established professions. However, one should keep in mind that Greek immigration to the U. S. was and still is a matter mainly involving lower socio-economic classes of Greece. This means that Greek established professionals and higher socio-economic classes did not then and do not now migrate from Greece.

Whatever gains Greek-Americans made in the established professions were against insurmountable odds and obstacles that they had to overcome. For one thing the major concern of the early Greek immigrants was economic /material security. They had first to establish an economic base and then embark on more intangible avenues of mobility. Second, the Greeks up until the 1920's were not sure of their permanent settlement in the U. S. This ambivalence alone delayed their long commitment and future goal orientations that established professions and professionalism demand. Thus, Greeks oriented themselves to those occupations where it was easier to make money with minimum skill and education. In a sense they had no other choice. Professions and higher education were beyond the reach of the most early Greek immigrants and their children.

Despite the efforts to establish a viable Greek-American professional class in the first forty years of Greek ethnic community life in the U. S., one can argue that the number and caliber of Greek-American professionals by the 1940's was still insignificant. Indeed, only a few hundred Greek-American professionals were found while during the same period Greek-Americans had reached close to one million Greek descended Ame-

ricans. In short, one may say that by the 1940's there was still a small number of Greek-American professionals which was disproportionate to the number of Greek-Americans in the U.S.

### *3. Contemporary Greek-American Professionals (1940 - 1970's)*

It has been shown that a genuine Greek-American professional class began to emerge following World War II. For example, for the first time it was found that about 2,000 Greek-Americans became professors in institutions of higher learning in the U. S. With the exception of a few dozen this was not true before the 1940's. Of course this was not unique to the Greek-Americans. Greater inroads in academia have been made by Jewish-Americans who surpass all ethnic groups including the Anglo-Saxon Americans. Similarly about the same period Italian Americans, Japanese-Americans, and other groups began entering the professions in increasing numbers. In other words late ethnic groups and their progenies entered an era of respectability which in America and in other parts of the world has been associated with the professions although more recently there has been a challenge of professional authority and prestige.

In conclusion, the present analysis was a survey of past and present Greek-American professionals with emphasis on established professions and academics. It has been argued that the advent of a sizeable Greek-American professional class was a post World War II phenomenon. Of course this did not mean that Greek-American professionals were not present in the U. S. prior to the 1940's, indeed some of the most illustrious proto-Greek-American professionals were found earlier in the 19th and 20th centuries. What about the contemporary Greek-American professions? What conclusions can be drawn from the present survey?

Even though by the 1970's there was a sizeable group of Greek-American professionals including academics, it was this author's contention and it was supported by the data that as an ethnic group Greek-Americans have not kept up with their share in the more established and prestigious professions and institutions in the U. S. vis-a-vis their numbers and compared to other ethnic groups, i. e., Jewish-Americans. Put another way, there was no doubt that there were many Greek-American professional practitioners, i. e., doctors, lawyers, engineers, and academics but there were few outstanding medical scientists, physical and social scientists, legal authorities, and scholars in general. Why was it for instance that only a handful of Greek-Americans were found in the elite

universities. Why were there only a few Greek-American world renowned scholars and scientists? As an ethnic group Greek-Americans have not succeeded in establishing a tradition of scholarship and professionalism. It was only recently that an effort has been made in that direction. The question arises why Greek-Americans were late in establishing a more viable and dynamic professional class.

The aforementioned are difficult questions. Yet as an ethnic group and culture one should seriously study the professional and intellectual orientations of Greek-Americans. It seems to me that our emphasis as a family, church, mass media and other ethnic institutions has been on the Dionysian and material aspects of life, i. e., food, dance, homes, buildings and much less on the Apollonian world view, i. e., intellectual and professional pursuits and scholarship, the arts and sciences and the like. We must as an ethnic group reorient ourselves from a Dionysian view of life to a more Apollonian view or at least a balance between the two. (In a sense the entire American society is materially and hedonistically oriented).

Of course there have been many reasons for the late entrance of Greek-Americans into the professions including academia. The purpose of the present analysis was not to examine the reasons in detail. However, to mention some of the most pertinent, one has to include the following: (1) There was no genuine tradition of Greek-American scholarship in the U. S. prior to the 1940's. (2) Other more tangible avenues of mobility than to pursue an academic career were followed by Greeks in America. In most instances it was beyond the immigrant's reach. (3) Medicine and law were the professions that the Greek immigrant knew most in the old country. Teaching and engineering became career choices later. (4) Discrimination and prejudice against ethnic minorities including the Greeks were high in the first quarter of the 20th century. (5) Prior to the 1920's Greeks in America were ambivalent as to the length and permanence of their stay in the U. S. Professions required long career commitment that the Greek immigrant was not equipped to give. He was a "bird of passage" with little intention to stay in the U. S. (6) Unless Greek professionals from Greece who came to the U. S. continued their education in the new country and became proficient in the English language, it was difficult for them to earn a living as academics, lawyers, doctors, or other professionals in general. In fact, Greek peasants were better adjusted in the new country than Greek professionals. The latter became declassé and worked below their ability in the U. S. (7) Late immigration to the U. S. was also a cause of late professional entry. (8) Al-

though Greek-Americans did follow the professions, they followed only a few professions. (9) The lowly social origins and social class of the Greek immigrant was a handicap for his children.

Coupled with the foregoing reasons were the political factionalism and social cleavages among Greek-American communities along the lines of old vs. new immigrants, entrepreneurial class vs. professional class, young vs. old, and Greek cultural norms vs. American ways. Class distinctions were minimized to keep the group together, but as the Greek-Americans (and other hyphenated Americans for that matter) improved their socio-economic standing, class and status distinctions became more apparent. Thus those Greeks who came first to the U. S. and their progenies called the post World War II Greeks D. P.'s meaning displace persons while the latter called the earlier immigrants and their children mis-hellene and anti-Greek. Both groups avoided each other and both believed themselves to be superior to each other in their own way by using different cultural frames of reference, those of Greece and the U. S. respectively.

In short the present analysis has demonstrated the need for this kind of inquiry. More than than Greek-American professionals should be studied and compared with other ethnic /racial group professionals in a more systematic way both in terms of diachronic and synchronic levels of analysis. For unless Greek-Americans establish a genuine base of professional, scientific, and scholarly tradition in the U. S., their political influence in American society will be inconsequential.