

# Nikos Kazantzakis on Palestine, Jerusalem, and the Zionist movement: literary and historical considerations<sup>1</sup>

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*This article examines Kazantzakis' travel writing in his 1926 newspaper series on 'the Land of Palestine', which introduces Zionism, and in his posthumously published chapter 'Jerusalem' in Journeying (1961). Revisiting the relation between the two, I argue that each is to be seen as a distinct work. While free from the antisemitic sentiment of Venizelist circles, the Greek author's reportage has three important silences – and these are matched by a sweeping lack of scholarly interest in this material. This article hopes to generate renewed interest so that Kazantzakis' 1926 reportage may help construe a more complex reception of Zionism in interwar Greece.*

**Keywords:** Kazantzakis; Palestine; Jerusalem; Jews; Zionism

Long before Nikos Kazantzakis (1883–1957) became known for his novels, he was known and admired within Greece for his travel writing.<sup>2</sup> The following discussion

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1 All translations are my own, except where I cite (sometimes with minor changes) the translation of N. Kazantzakis, *Ταξιδεύοντας: Ιταλία, Αίγυπτος, Σινά, Ιερουσαλήμ, Κύπρος, ο Μοριάς* (Athens 1961) as *Journeying: Travels in Italy, Egypt, Sinai, Jerusalem, and Cyprus*, tr. T. Vasils and T. Vasils (Boston 1975). Where I also quote in Greek, I use the original spelling but with the monotonic throughout.

2 P. Bien, *Kazantzakis: politics of the spirit II* (Princeton 2007) 16. On Greek travel writing, see A. Sachinis, *Η σύγχρονη πεζογραφία μας. Το μυθιστόρημα της εφηβικής ηλικίας, οι ταξιδιωτικές εντυπώσεις, το πολεμικό μυθιστόρημα* (Thessaloniki 1976) 51–118 (first published 1951) and A. P. Panaretou (ed.), *Ελληνική ταξιδιωτική λογοτεχνία* (Athens 1995). For a full list of titles, see A. Panaretou and M. Kostaridou, 'Greek

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will focus on Kazantzakis' writings on Palestine and Jerusalem.<sup>3</sup> During the British Mandate (1918–48) and prior to the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, the official name of the area in Hebrew was 'Palestina (E. Y.)', the initials standing for Eretz Yisrael, the Land of Israel.<sup>4</sup> In such a contested area of the world, toponyms are naturally fraught with ideological and political overtones. In this article, I follow Kazantzakis and use the terms 'Palestine' and 'Land of Palestine' for the region under the Mandate, as also for the newspaper articles of 1926, and 'Jerusalem' when referring to the book chapter published posthumously.<sup>5</sup> When I refer to both versions of Kazantzakis' travel writings, I use the term 'Palestine/Jerusalem'.

Kazantzakis' Palestine/Jerusalem writing has received little attention.<sup>6</sup> However, as we shall see, it opens a unique window on Greek-Jewish interactions in the interwar period, offering a fascinating perspective on the Zionist movement in Palestine. Kazantzakis travelled to Palestine only once, in 1926, and his writings from this visit were published in the spring of that year as a series of articles in the Greek newspaper *Eleftheros Typos*. The first edition of Kazantzakis' *Journeying* was published in 1927 in Alexandria (Serapeion) and covered his trips to Spain, Italy, Egypt, and Sinai, in 1926 and 1927, but not the Palestine (or the Cyprus) material. The second posthumous edition of 1961 was somewhat different: it now included chapters on Italy, Egypt, Jerusalem, Cyprus, and Morea, without the section on Spain, which had been published separately.

My focus on Kazantzakis' work on Palestine/Jerusalem aims to highlight two main aspects: one primarily literary in nature, the other historical. The book chapter on Jerusalem, published four years after Kazantzakis died, is no mere recasting or reworking of the earlier newspaper articles but a literary creation conceived and designed anew. This realization highlights the need for a new edition of the 1926 newspaper articles.

The second, and perhaps more important, point concerns the historical value of Kazantzakis' original newspaper articles. As we shall see, the series acquainted its Greek readership with some basic aspects of the Zionist movement in Mandate

travel writing', in W. Bracewell and A. Drace-Francis (eds.), *A Bibliography of East European Travel Writing on Europe* (Budapest 2005) 171–228 [188–9 on Kazantzakis (GR 109–12)]. Bien, *Politics of the spirit* II, 17–18.

3 See N. Mathioudakis, 'Η οδοπορική γραμμή που ενώνει Ιταλία–Αίγυπτο–Σινά–Ιερουσαλήμ–Κύπρο–Μοριά', in N. Kazantzakis, *Ταξιδεύοντας. Ιταλία, Αίγυπτος, Σινά, Ιερουσαλήμ, Κύπρος, Μοριάς* (Athens 2014) 5–22, for some introductory remarks.

4 On Mandate Palestine, see e.g. D. Horowitz and M. Lissak, *Origins of the Israeli Polity: Palestine under the Mandate*, tr. C. Hoffman (Chicago 1979), and M. Gilbert, *Israel: a history* (New York 2008).

5 In Greek, the author uses the indeclinable feminine toponym (η Ιερουσαλήμ) and not the neuter plural (τα Ιεροσόλυμα); both terms are attested from ancient times.

6 See now A. Konstantinou, 'Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and Greekness in Ouranis, Kazantzakis, Sikelianos, and Seferis during the period of the British Mandate for Palestine', *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 41 (2023) 161–87. The discussion in N. Zampaki, 'Όψεις αναπαράστασης της Ανατολής: Η Ιερουσαλήμ στο έργο του Γιώργου Θεοτοκά, Νίκου Καζαντζάκη και Άγγελου Σικελιανού', *Πόρφυρας* 172–3 (2020) 279–94 is lacking in a serious comparative analysis.

Palestine, its history and aims, its ideology and its potential pitfalls, as well with as some of the historic figures which stood behind it, as things took shape in the mid-1920s.<sup>7</sup> All this is presented in detail, detached from local politics and the sometimes negative attitude about Jews in Greek lands (above all in Salonica), not least in Venizelist circles in interwar Greece.<sup>8</sup> It is more in line, one might say, with the Venizelists' sympathy towards the Zionist movement in Palestine during those years – and one should remember that Greece had supported the establishment of a Jewish state several months prior to the Balfour Declaration.<sup>9</sup> This support was presumably based on the assumption that the expatriation of Jews to Palestine would help the state address its concerns regarding its Jewish minority.<sup>10</sup>

This material has been largely ignored in the scholarship.<sup>11</sup> Ampatzopoulou's otherwise comprehensive discussion of the image of the Jew in Greek literature (and beyond) contains but a short discussion of Kazantzakis' representation of Jews and nothing about Jews or Zionism in his travel writing.<sup>12</sup> And Bien's wide-ranging discussion of his political thought and its impact on his life and work has, surprisingly, nothing to say about Kazantzakis' view of the Zionist movement.<sup>13</sup> As for historical analyses of the Zionist movement in Greek contexts during the interwar period, scholarly focus is often on Salonica and its centuries-old Sephardic community.<sup>14</sup> In the years prior to and especially following the annexation

7 There is no study of how Mandate Palestine and Zionism is covered in the Greek press of the period. For some interesting preliminary points, see M. Vassilikou, 'Politics of the Jewish community of Salonika in the inter-war years: party ideologies and party competition', diss. PhD, University College London 1999, 129–45, and P. Papamichos Chronakis, 'A national home in the Diaspora? Salonican Zionism and the Making of a Greco-Jewish City,' *Journal of Levantine Studies* 8 (2018) 59–84.

8 See G. Th. Mavrogordatos, *Stillborn Republic: social coalitions and party strategies in Greece, 1922–1936* (Berkeley 1983) and P. Papamichos Chronakis, 'Between liberalism and slavophobia: anti-Zionism, antisemitism, and the (re)making of the interwar Greek state', *Jewish Social Studies* 25 (2019) 20–44. On interwar policies of the Greek state towards Jews, see E. Doxiadis, *State, Nationalism, and the Jewish Communities of Modern Greece* (London 2018) 107–28.

9 For the declaration of Nikolaos Polites, then Greek foreign minister, see R. Molho, 'The Jewish community of Salonika and its incorporation into the Greek State 1912–19,' *Middle Eastern Studies* 24 (1988) 391–403 (396–7); Vassilikou, 'Politics of the Jewish community of Salonika', 126–7 and D. E. Naar, *Jewish Salonica: between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Palo Alto 2016) 47–8.

10 Doxiadis, *State, Nationalism, and the Jewish Communities*, 124, 150; Papamichos Chronakis, 'Between liberalism and slavophobia', 24–6.

11 Though see now I. Dimitrakakis, 'Καζαντζάκης και σιωνισμός', in *Ιδεολογίες στο έργο και στη ζωή του Καζαντζάκη* (forthcoming).

12 F. Ampatzopoulou, *Ο Άλλος εν διωγμό: η εικόνα του Εβραίου στη λογοτεχνία και στον κινηματογράφο. Ζητήματα ιστορίας και μυθολογίας*, 2nd edn (Athens 2020) 230–1, 263–4, 266–8, discusses briefly the image of Jews in Kazantzakis' work, especially in *Toda Raba* (1934), *Captain Michalis* (1953), and *Report to Greco* (1961). She perhaps excludes travel writing from her discussion as not strictly literary.

13 P. Bien, *Kazantzakis: Politics of the Spirit* I (Princeton 1989) and Bien, *Politics of the Spirit* II.

14 See M. Mazower, *Salonica: City of Ghosts. Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430–1950* (London 2004), esp. 403–20, for the interwar years, and Naar, *Jewish Salonica*.

of Salonica to the Greek state, the Jewish community strengthened its ties with the Zionist movement, which seemed to acquire there certain local characteristics.<sup>15</sup> I come back to this scholarly silence, alongside some other silences, in my concluding remarks.

What triggered my academic curiosity and sparked the research that led to this article is the very last sentence of the book chapter on Jerusalem, whose last section unfolds a discussion between Kazantzakis and a young Jewish kindergarten teacher named Judith:<sup>16</sup>

We had now reached the kindergarten. Jewish children, blond, auburn, black-haired were playing under the trees chirping like birds. I stroked their soft curly hair with unexpected emotion; suddenly, a tragic premonition seized my heart.<sup>17</sup>

In his discussion with Judith, Kazantzakis shows concern, even foreboding, about how Zionism might influence the Jewish people. From the perspective of 1926, however, this phrase didn't make much sense to me. It seemed to be an afterthought that could have been written only after the Holocaust (Shoah) in which around a million and a half Jewish children were murdered. It was with this question in mind that I went back to the original newspaper articles of *Eleftheros Typos*.<sup>18</sup> There, to my surprise, I found that the same sentence (with insignificant changes) also appears in the newspaper article.<sup>19</sup> Kazantzakis' premonition back in 1926, which remains unchanged in the 1961 book, is indeed related to the dangers that he sees in the future of the Zionist movement, and the possible outcome, historically speaking, in the transformation of the Wandering Jew into a people with a stable national home.<sup>20</sup> Though I was wrong

15 Some Salonican Jews thought their city, not Palestine, their true homeland: 'What is this Palestine you're telling us about now? This is Palestine.', quoted in R. Molho, 'The Zionist Movement in Thessaloniki, 1899–1919', in I. K. Hassiotis (ed.), *The Jewish Communities of Southeastern Europe: from the fifteenth century to the end of World War II* (Thessaloniki 1997) 327–50 (349). See also Molho, 'The Jewish community of Salonika'; P. Papamichos Chronakis, 'The many faces of Zionism: Zionist culture, Jewish identity and Hellenization in inter-war Salonica,' Paper presented at the Modern Greek Studies Association Conference, Bloomington, IN, November 2013, [http://www.public-sociality.uoc.gr/KEIMENA\\_ERGASIAS/21\\_Papamichos\\_Chronakis\\_Conference\\_2013.pdf](http://www.public-sociality.uoc.gr/KEIMENA_ERGASIAS/21_Papamichos_Chronakis_Conference_2013.pdf) [accessed 7 December 2023]; M. Rozen, 'The Jewish community of Salonica, 1912–1941: organizational patterns,' *Αρχαίων Ανάλεκτα: Περιοδική έκδοση μελέτης και έρευνας αρχαίων* (δευτέρα περίοδος) 1 (2016) 307–67, Papamichos Chronakis, 'A national home in the Diaspora?'

16 On her name, see below.

17 Kazantzakis, *Ταξιδεύοντας*, 180.

18 <https://library.parliament.gr/%CE%A8%CE%B7%CF%86%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%92%CE%B9%CE%B2%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%B8%CE%AE%CE%BA%CE%B7> [accessed 15 December 2023].

19 N. Kazantzakis, 'Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Έπειτα από τον θάνατο του Γκαίτε μια νέα εποχή ανησυχίας, η εβραϊκή. Το μουσικόν της κυριαρχίας των Εβραίων (IX)', *Eleftheros Typos*, 21 June 1926.

20 N. Kazantzakis, 'Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Η εβραϊκή φυλή χωρισμένη εις δυο μεγάλα στρατόπεδα. Η προσπάθεια των Μπολσεβίκων Εβραίων εις την Ρωσίαν και η αντίθετος προσπάθεια των Εβραίων της Παλαιστίνης (VIII)', *Eleftheros Typos*, 20 June 1926, employs a similar trope.

to identify this premonition as an afterthought or a later addition, the unexpected wealth of material I found in *Eleftheros Typos* far exceeded my expectations and led me to the understanding that Kazantzakis' newspaper series from the Land of Palestine needs its own discussion.

### Recasting travel reportage as travel literature

Of Kazantzakis' travel writing, Bien maintains that the materials from his trips were but lightly revised: 'These trips normally produced a series of newspapers articles that were later somewhat revised and collected into volumes entitled *Traveling*.'<sup>21</sup> Yet closer inspection and comparison leads to a different conclusion. Kazantzakis' material on Spain, which has been thoroughly studied, is a good case in point. Dimadis argues that 'we need a new edition of *Travels I. Spain*, incorporating the articles which Kazantzakis published in 1936–7 in *Kathimerini* in their entirety. My case is that each of the texts under discussion contains original elements.'<sup>22</sup> Dimadis' argument rests on a comparison between the two versions, newspaper and book form: 'Interestingly, we are not confronted, as one might expect, with two versions of one and the same work, with mere stylistic differences, but with separate works on the same topic that show significant differences in ideological narrative perspective.'<sup>23</sup>

Close comparison of the two versions of Palestine/Jerusalem, in the 1926 newspaper and in the posthumous book, leads to a similar conclusion. Even the titles are different: the 'Land of Palestine' in 1926 is transformed by 1961 to a focus on 'Jerusalem' only – and it is unique that a city and not a country (or an area, such as Sinai) is used in the title. I suspect that the choice is not only due to the chapter's different content, but also because of an awareness that these toponyms convey political and ideological undertones, suggesting that the choice was made after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

A parallel to the Palestine/Jerusalem material is that of Cyprus. Kazantzakis visited the island on his way back to Greece from Palestine, and both accounts were published for the first time posthumously in 1961.<sup>24</sup> Athanasopoulou has made a convincing case that, concerning the Cyprus material, future scholarship should take into consideration the role of Eleni Kazantzakis in the editing process. A reconsideration of that material shows that 'the reception of the world of Cyprus by Kazantzakis cannot

21 Bien, *Politics of the spirit* II.16.

22 K. Dimadis, 'Art and Power: Observations on four pieces of travel writing by Nikos Kazantzakis', in *Power and Prose Fiction in Modern Greece* (Athens 2016) 193–236 (200); see also K. Dimadis, 'Las crónicas periodísticas de Nikos Kazantzakis sobre la guerra civil española y su obra *Viajando. España*', in O. Omatos (ed.), *Tras las huellas de Kazantzakis* (Granada 1999) 105–15. E. Teleioni, 'Spain and Kazantzakis' travel writing', Master's diss., University of Birmingham 2009, 14–24 reaches a similar conclusion.

23 Dimadis, 'Art and Power', 200.

24 A. Athanasopoulou, 'Ο Καζαντζάκης στο νησί της Αφροδίτης (1926). Ερωτήματα, υποθέσεις, νέα στοιχεία', in M. Pieris (ed.), *Διά ανθύμωσιν καιρού και τόπου. Λογοτεχνικές Αποσιμώσεις του Κόσμου της Κύπρου. Πρακτικά Διεθνούς Επιστημονικού Συνεδρίου, Λευκωσία, 6–9 Οκτωβρίου 2012* (Limassol 2015) 407–43.

be understood independently, but is complemented – as the texts show – by the parallel, intersecting, sometimes even mediating “intervention” of Eleni.<sup>25</sup>

Dimitrakakis now suggests a similar intervention process in the Palestine/Jerusalem material and discusses briefly the role of Eleni in the cancellation of a volume planned for 1959 by Difros publications (two years after the author’s death) that would have included the Palestine material.<sup>26</sup> However, this intervention cannot by itself explain why Kazantzakis chose not to edit the 1926 articles for that cancelled edition and instead left them without significant changes, as if suspended in time. Perhaps the answer is that after such cataclysmic events for world Jewry such as the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, there was no way to revise this material without writing it anew. Kazantzakis therefore opted to leave it as is, a ‘fossilized’ depiction of the Zionist movement from about thirty years before.<sup>27</sup>

In preparing the first publication of his travel writing in 1927, however, Kazantzakis undoubtedly edited his articles. In a letter to Prevelakis dated 18 August 1927, he writes:

I found here a letter from N[ea] Zoi (New Life) of Alexandria. They agree to print a book of mine *Journeying* where I will bring together, omitting anything ephemeral, the journeys: Spain, Palestine, Egypt, Sinai. Up to 250 p[ages].<sup>28</sup>

About a week later, in another letter to Prevelakis, Kazantzakis mentions that he has signed the contract<sup>29</sup> and in the same month writes that he is working on the manuscript assiduously:

From morning till night, I write *Journeying*, correcting the language and shortening my various articles in the news[papers]. I get very tired now, but there is no cure – the whole manuscript must be ready before Oct[ober] 13 and sent to Alexandria.<sup>30</sup>

By the beginning of October, he is already copying the final manuscript: ‘I’m terribly occupied in copying *Journeying*.’<sup>31</sup> However, when *Journeying* came out in Alexandria by Serapeion Press, and despite the author’s initial intention, the chapter on Palestine never got into print. He writes to Eleni Samiou (later, Kazantzakis) shortly afterwards (3 January 1928): ‘In a few days I’ll send you *Journeying*, a book of mine: the articles on Spain, Italy, Egypt, and Sinai. Unfortunately the ones on Palestine

25 See Athanasopoulou, ‘Ο Καζαντζάκης στο νησί της Αφροδίτης’, 439.

26 Dimitrakakis, ‘Καζαντζάκης και σιωνισμός’.

27 Kazantzakis’ novel *Ο Ανήφορος* (Athens 2022), which he wrote in England in 1946, is perhaps his attempt to address the Holocaust, especially through the Jewish heroine Noemi.

28 N. Kazantzakis, *Τετρακόσια Γράμματα του Καζαντζάκη στον Πρεβελάκη* (Athens 1984), 36, letter no. 20 (18 August 1927).

29 Kazantzakis, *Τετρακόσια Γράμματα*, 37, letter no. 21 (25 August 1927).

30 Kazantzakis, *Τετρακόσια Γράμματα*, 46, letter no. 31 (27 August 1927).

31 Kazantzakis, *Τετρακόσια Γράμματα*, 48, letter no. 32 (early October 1927).

will go in another book.<sup>32</sup> During the last months of his life, Kazantzakis was also working on a French edition of *Journeying*<sup>33</sup>: this too did not include the material on Palestine/Jerusalem, though a French translation of the Palestine material must have been ready since 1929.<sup>34</sup>

### Recasting structure and content

A comparison between the newspaper articles and the reedited book chapter reveals major reorganization in structure and content; the outcome is not two versions, but rather two separate works. The first views Palestine as a locus whereby the Zionist dream is realized for the ‘new’ Jews, while the second narrows the focus geographically to Jerusalem only but develops it to include the three Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This unique city undoubtedly had a place in Kazantzakis’ heart out of all the many places he visited.<sup>35</sup>

The newspaper articles of 1926 were published in two instalments, accompanied by several photographs, postcards, and drawings. Two articles appeared close to Easter (9 and 10 May 1926); the first one on Thomas Sunday – the first Sunday after Easter Sunday in the Greek Orthodox calendar.<sup>36</sup> These two May articles describe the journey towards Palestine and the Easter atmosphere in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. They evoke what a Greek Christian pilgrim would have experienced during an Easter pilgrimage to the Holy Land, from the sea voyage from Greece eastwards to the encounter with a multiplicity of peoples, customs, sounds and smells, but also the range of languages, Christian denominations, and religious devotion at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. These two articles do not differ much in subject or scope from the travel writing of Kostas Ouranis on Palestine from 1933: the perspective is that of a Greek Christian pilgrim with no reference to Zionism.<sup>37</sup> Kazantzakis’ dear friend, the poet Angelos Sikelianos, also visited Jerusalem in 1921 and kept a diary published only in 2001.<sup>38</sup> In it, the poet writes succinct snapshots of

32 P. Bien (ed.), *The Selected Letters of Nikos Kazantzakis* (Princeton 2012), 293.

33 N. Kazantzakis, *Du Mont Sinai à l’île de Venus. Carnet de voyage*, tr. P. Fridas and G. Prassinis (Paris 1958).

34 Kazantzakis, *Selected Letters*, 361 (12 September 1929, to Prevelakis): ‘*Nouvelles Littéraires* is going to publish everything I wrote about Palestine and Spain ... I translated, shortened, and corrected them; they’re fine.’ These were apparently never published in *Nouvelles Littéraires*.

35 Kazantzakis, *Selected Letters*, 237, writing to Eleni Samiou from Toledo on 13 September 1926: ‘Toledo is not what I had expected. The three places that have astonished me are Jerusalem, Myconos, and Moscow’.

36 N. Kazantzakis, ‘Στους τόπους του προσκυνήματος. Προς την ιερά γη της Παλαιστίνης’, *Eleftheros Typos*, 9 May 1926 and N. Kazantzakis, ‘Στους τόπους του προσκυνήματος. Εικόνες από τον τάφον του Χριστού. Β’’, *Eleftheros Typos*, 10 May 1926.

37 K. Ouranis, *Ταξίδια: Γλαυκοί δρόμοι—Βορινές θάλασσες* (Athens 2005), 297–313. See Konstantinou, ‘Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and Greekness’.

38 A. Sikelianos, *Ιερουσαλήμ: Ανέκδοτο ημερολόγιο* (Απρίλιος–Μάιος 1921), edited with commentary by R. Frangou-Kikilia (Athens 2001); discussion in Konstantinou, ‘Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and Greekness’, 171.

places and people, including brief comments about the enmity between Jews and Arabs and the Jerusalem (or Nebi Musa) riots of spring 1920.<sup>39</sup>

Kazantzakis' remaining eleven articles were published on consecutive days from 12 to 22 June. There is a discrepancy between the table of contents provided on the introductory article of 12 June and the titles under which the articles were eventually published, without, however, any major change of content or sequence.<sup>40</sup> These articles offer an introduction to Zionism and its history:

In the series of articles that will follow, I will try to formulate as clearly as I can the complex problem of Zionism and to set out impartially what the Jews have accomplished so far in Palestine; the political, economic, and social goals of Zionism and the new directions they seek to offer in theory and in practice. And finally, what are the dangers that threaten this new adventure of this long-suffering, indestructible race.<sup>41</sup>

After an overview of Jerusalem and the lament of the Jews at the Wailing Wall, Kazantzakis turns to Zionism proper, Theodor Herzl, and the need of the Jews to acquire a national home, as set out in the Balfour Declaration (which he quotes in full in Greek). The repatriation, he continues, sparks hatred between the different religious and ethnic groups. Kazantzakis explains the economic aspects of Zionism and the role of the Jewish National Fund and highlights some differences in class and labour (e.g. the new city of Tel Aviv versus agricultural settlements and other forms of communist and socialist cohabitation). He then describes the revival of the Hebrew language along with the moving story of Eliezer Ben Yehuda. In the subsequent articles he enumerates intellectual Zionist initiatives (schools, universities, museums, the press) and innovations in painting, poetry, and theatre. His two last articles contain two interviews that will be discussed below.

The kernel of his exposition is on Jews and Judaism, on the 'old' Wandering Jew, who is more traditional and religious, versus the 'new' Zionist Jew – rough, tanned from working the land, and idealistic:

A new type of Jew is being created. He no longer comes back to Palestine like a passive pilgrim, and he no longer hides in terror in his gloomy ghetto; he comes back to Palestine full of energy, determined, with rights. He no longer goes to mourn at Solomon's wall; but dashes out into the fields, climbs the mountains, ploughs the land, and makes it his own.<sup>42</sup>

39 Sikelianos, *Ιερουσαλήμ*, 58–9, 65–6 (on enmity and the riots), and 70 (on the arrival of poor Jews to Palestine).

40 See titles in Table 1 (Supplementary material).

41 N. Kazantzakis, "Ένα μήνα στην γη της Παλαιστίνης. Η φυλή που θρηνεί επί δέκα εννέα αιώνες [Αντί προλόγου]", *Eleftheros Typos*, 12 June 1926.

42 N. Kazantzakis, "Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Άφησαν την Ευρώπη και μ' ενθουσιασμόν επέγαν να κτίσουν την Νέαν Σιών (III)", *Eleftheros Typos*, 15 June 1926.



Kazantzakis describes the changes that Zionism is initiating in Palestine. What he sees and learns astonishes him, as he writes from Jerusalem to Edwige Levi (9 May 1926):<sup>43</sup>

Often I suddenly feel you wandering with me beneath this hot sun around the splendid walls of Jerusalem. Everything here is tragic, gloomy, filled with an inconsolable magnificence. With *Ehrfurcht* [awe, respect] I am studying the Jews' effort to rebuild the Holy Land. I am very moved and very 'happy' – in other words, I am seeing new things and my eyes are never satiated.

Auf wiedersehen!

N

Greek readers are given a *tour de force* analysis of the main characteristics of this new Zionist movement, its history, foundations, and its aims. Many prominent personalities are mentioned, among them Herzl and Ben-Yehuda (with a short biography of each), Ahad Ha'am, Moses Hess, Lord Rothschild, the poets Hayim Nachman Bialik and Shaul Tchernichovsky, and the rabbis Nachman of Breslov and Zvi Hirsch Kalischer.<sup>44</sup> Kazantzakis claims that he describes with a clear and relatively unbiased eye the world he encounters. He has enough background knowledge about eastern European Judaism and can investigate the Zionist movement in a socialist and communist perspective. He also compares the ideology of some Jewish Bolsheviks with that of the Zionists:

Walking now on the soil of Palestine, I often recall this violent scene. Last year, in Russia, I had heard the Jewish Bolsheviks speak contemptuously of the Zionists:

–The whole world is asking to be freed, they said, from Homeland and these people are now being enslaved. The Zionist movement has all the characteristics of provincialism: petty, conservative, it narrows the heart and mind of man.

The Jewish race is divided into two major camps:

The Jews in Russia work and fight to offer a new form, in general, to universal life. The Jews in Palestine work and fight to provide a new, different form to their national cohabitation.

Both efforts should be viewed with deep respect. Both, to some degree or other, sooner or later will transform reality.<sup>45</sup>

His prior background, as well as his philosophical and historical depth, allow the author to make keen observations about innovations and their perils, as for example the revival

43 Kazantzakis, *Selected Letters*, 231.

44 See Table 2 (Supplementary material) for a list of the personalities Kazantzakis mentions by name.

45 N. Kazantzakis, 'Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Η εβραϊκή φυλή χωρισμένη εις δυο μεγάλα στρατόπεδα. Η προσπάθεια των Μπολσεβίκων Εβραίων εις την Ρωσίαν και η αντίθετος προσπάθεια των Εβραίων της Παλαιστίνης (VIII)', *Eleftheros Typos*, 20 June 1926.

of the Hebrew language, which Kazantzakis must see through the light of his demoticism. Besides the Arab threat, which surfaces only in the last article, Kazantzakis traces an ‘inside’ danger: he worries what such a radical permutation in history may eventually entail and is concerned about the outcomes of this fracture, as he sees it, with a two-thousand-year-old Jewish tradition. Stereotypical descriptions of Jews as the ‘Other’ are not completely absent (the eyes of Jews shine sarcastically and greedily; Jews want to rule the earth and all nations; Jews live in filthy neighbourhoods in the diaspora), but it is also evident that Kazantzakis takes a very positive stance towards Jews, Judaism, and Zionism, despite his fears for the future. His admiration is most evident in a comparison between Zionism and communism, and it is the call to action – and not only theory – that seems to attract him, an idea that recurs in his thought and writings. In the words of one of his interlocutors, the leader of the Zionist-socialist group ‘Gdud Ha’avodah’:

In Russia, he responds vigorously, they do politics. Their communism is theory only; at heart they are tyrants, like the Tsar. We here do not do politics, we live our idea, we all fight, we share what we have; all work for one, one for all, but not with philosophies and theories, but with deeds.<sup>46</sup>

This positive view would remain almost unchanged even a quarter of a century later. He writes to Leah Dunkelblum on 23 March 1951:

My dear Leah! [...] I [...] think of you very often, and always keep hoping to see you again some day, not in Paris, that accursed and seductive Babylon, but in Jerusalem, in Tel Aviv, in the Promised Land that I love so much. There’s a large drop of Hebrew blood in my blood,<sup>47</sup> and that drop makes all my Greek and Cretan blood boil with agitation. I am obsessed and haunted by the destiny of the Jews. When I was ten years old, I begged my father to let me go to the home of Iraklio’s rabbi to learn Hebrew. I was there three times and took three lessons, but my uncles and especially my aunts were afraid and shocked, fearing that the Jews would drink my blood. Thus, my father withdrew me from the rabbinical school. I work very much and very well here in solitude. Right now I’m writing a book on a Jewish subject; it takes place in Palestine and you’ll understand how interested I am in seeing the holy places again. But that appears to be impossible. *Nichevo* [it doesn’t matter, never mind]!<sup>48</sup>

46 N. Kazantzakis, ‘Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Τελ. Αβίβ, το θαύμα μιας πόλεως που βγαίνει μέσα από την άμμο (V)’, *Eleftheros Typos*, 17 June 1926. It is possible that this unnamed interlocutor is Yitzhak Sadeh (1890–1952), on whom see Y. Allon, ‘Sadeh’, in M. Berenbaum and F. Skolnik (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd edn, vol. 17 (Detroit 2017), 656–7 [accessed 5 May 2024] with further bibliography.

47 To be understood as a rhetorical flourish about the author’s intellectual formation, rather than a fact.

48 Kazantzakis, *Selected Letters*, 714. The book he refers to is *The Last Temptation* (1955).

The Arabs are accorded a far more negative and stereotypical description as the cultural ‘Other’: they are described as those who brought desert and drought back into the land of milk and honey.<sup>49</sup> In fact, the 1926 newspaper articles feature virtually nothing on Islam, except for the interview with Hussein bin Ali, King of the Hejaz, which presents the Arab reaction to the Zionist movement and in which we may already detect the first seeds of hatred and enmity what would grow to become the complex Arab-Israeli conflict. Eleni Kazantzakis comments on how this interview left a strong impression.<sup>50</sup>

From the journalistic and historical perspective in 1926, the recast Jerusalem chapter in *Journeying* (1961) exhibits a more timeless and spiritual outlook.<sup>51</sup> The chapter’s inner structure attempts to grant a balanced voice to each of the three religions which consider Jerusalem sacred, aiming to create an abstract symmetry via each religion’s most sacred site. Christianity through the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (sections 2 and 3); Islam through the Mosque of Omar, by which he means the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, which, unlike Al-Aqsa (Fig. 1), is not a mosque but a shrine (section 4); and Judaism through the Wailing Wall (section 5) – the Wailing Wall would also feature in a photograph in the 1926 articles (Fig. 2).<sup>52</sup> The first section describes the trip towards the Holy Land through the eyes of a Greek pilgrim, while the last contains the discussion with Judith about the Zionist movement, culminating with the author’s fears about its future. While these two sections are almost copied *verbatim* from the 1926 articles with minor changes, other sections, such as the one about the Mosque of Omar, feature here for the first time. A detailed exposition of Zionism, its history and aims, is no longer the topic. This is not surprising, but it strengthens my argument that a reprint of Kazantzakis’ 1926 articles is needed.

49 Kazantzakis often names Arab Christians as *αραβόφωνοι* or Arabic-speaking Christians. See Konstantinou, ‘Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and Greekness’, 177–8, and, more broadly, M. Mack, ‘United by faith, divided by language: the Orthodox in Jerusalem’, in H. Murre-van den Berg, K. Sanchez Summerer, and T. C. Baarda (eds.), *Arabic and Its Alternatives: religious minorities and their languages in the emerging nation states of the Middle East (1920–1950)* (Leiden 2020) 247–60.

50 H. Kazantzakis, *Nikos Kazantzakis. A Biography based on his letters*, tr. A. Mims (New York 1968), 137: ‘Only the words of hate spoken by the old Sultan of Hejaz in exile there are still, alas, up to date: “From the Judaic sea to the Atlantic, from the Judaic sea to the Pacific, all the Moslems will rise up to cast the Jews into the ocean. If not this year, then it will be next year. If it is not next year, then it will be in a century...”’.

51 A. Mirambel, ‘La littérature néohellénique et l’Orient’, *Bulletin de l’Association Guillaume Budé: Lettres d’humanité* 16 (1957) 108–30 was published before the new edition of *Journeying* and therefore does not take into account this material. On imagination, subjectivity, and universalism as the main characteristics of this literary genre, see V. Calotychos, ‘Kazantzakis the Greek? Travel and leisure, hunger and pathos, localism and cosmopolitanism in Nikos Kazantzakis’ *Journeying*’, *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 28 (2010) 189–217 (esp. 195–6).

52 See discussion in Konstantinou, ‘Jerusalem, the Holy Land, and Greekness’. For chapter’s structure, see Table 3 (Supplementary material).



Figure 1. Nikos Kazantzakis in Jerusalem, 1926. At the Temple Mount, in front of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, next to the Sabil al-Kas fountain. © Nikos Kazantzakis Museum, Crete (ELIA 03.4.1.55)

### Recasting dialogues: reported or invented people and situations?

Here I draw attention to the many dialogues (all but one in direct speech<sup>53</sup>) in the Palestine articles and compare them to the Jerusalem chapter. The articles contain interviews with two notables which have received little attention compared to his interviews with Mussolini, Franco or others: Menachem Ussishkin (1863–1941), then president of the Jewish National Fund,<sup>54</sup> and Hussein, King of the Hejaz (1854–1931), during his exile in Cyprus.<sup>55</sup> But what of conversations with ordinary people?

Sachinis identified early on the tendency of Kazantzakis to focus on people and his interactions with them, as opposed to Ouranis, who observes things from afar.<sup>56</sup>

53 N. Kazantzakis, 'Στους τόπους του προσκυνήματος. Προς την ιερά γη της Παλαιστίνης', *Eleftheros Typos*, 9 May 1926.

54 N. Kazantzakis, 'Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Ουσίσκιν ο αρχηγός των εραστών της Σιών. Πώς γίνεται η εξαγορά και κατανομή της γης (IV)', *Eleftheros Typos*, 16 June 1926.

55 N. Kazantzakis, 'Ένας σταθμός εις την Κύπρον. Θα ρίγωμεν τους Εβραίους στην θάλασσα!'» Συνέντευξις με τον βασιλέα Χουσεΐν της Χεζάζης επί του ζητήματος της Παλαιστίνης (X)', *Eleftheros Typos*, 22 June 1926.

56 Sachinis, *Η σύγχρονη πεζογραφία μας*, 51–118, esp. 66–8.



Figure 2. The Wailing Wall, Jerusalem, published on 13 June 1926

Source: Wikipedia Commons, National Photo Collection of Israel, Digital ID D826-075 (public domain). [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WORSHIPPERS\\_AT\\_THE\\_WESTERN\\_WALL\\_\(WAILING\\_WALL\)\\_IN\\_THE\\_OLD\\_CITY\\_OF\\_JERUSALEM.\\_\(COURTESY\\_OF\\_AMERICAN\\_COLONY\)\\_%D7%9E%D7%AA%D7%A4%D7%9C%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9D\\_%D7%91%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%AA%D7%9C\\_%D7%94%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%99\\_%D7%91%D7%A2%D7%99%D7%A8\\_%D7%94%D7%A2%D7%AA%D7%99%D7%A7%D7%94\\_%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9D.D826-075.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:WORSHIPPERS_AT_THE_WESTERN_WALL_(WAILING_WALL)_IN_THE_OLD_CITY_OF_JERUSALEM._(COURTESY_OF_AMERICAN_COLONY)_%D7%9E%D7%AA%D7%A4%D7%9C%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9D_%D7%91%D7%9B%D7%95%D7%AA%D7%9C_%D7%94%D7%9E%D7%A2%D7%A8%D7%91%D7%99_%D7%91%D7%A2%D7%99%D7%A8_%D7%94%D7%A2%D7%AA%D7%99%D7%A7%D7%94_%D7%91%D7%99%D7%A8%D7%95%D7%A9%D7%9C%D7%99%D7%9D.D826-075.jpg)

Bien seems to be of a somewhat different opinion and considers that the introduction of an interlocutor is one of Kazantzakis' 'tricks' to deliver his own ideas.<sup>57</sup> He notes: 'In this way, the ideas, or facts, are once again bathed in something sensual – the personality or mannerisms of the supposed speaker – instead of being simply elaborated as data.'<sup>58</sup> Aramatzidou also endorses this line of reasoning, arguing that the author 'engages in

<sup>57</sup> Bien, *Politics of the Spirit* II, 17.

<sup>58</sup> Bien, *Politics of the Spirit* II, 18–19.

fictional dialogues that never took place in real life, dialogues with fictional people’, thus ‘blending the real with the fictional, breeding fiction within the travel genre’.<sup>59</sup>

A comparative analysis of the Palestine/Jerusalem dialogues leads me to suggest that Kazantzakis may not be inventing his interlocutors *ex nihilo*; it is possible, instead, that the fictional element lies mostly in his own replies. Judging from the dialogues in the Palestine articles, Kazantzakis must be drawing on individuals he actually met, noting bits and pieces from conversations he actually engaged in. These real encounters are then intensified through the writing process, and some of the interlocutors come to stand for something larger than their own person. Persons are turned into personas, typical characters; they are artistically refined so that the dialogue may foreground the author’s own ideas. Via this dialogic format, the author finds a way to integrate in a lively manner his own interpretation and voice his own thoughts, opinions, and feelings in response to what he presumably hears (he even adds a drawing of himself by Antonis Protopatsis in one of the articles, Fig. 3). What may be fictional or quasi-fictional is not the people or the situations, but the condensed information in the author’s lengthy replies.

Several named and other anonymous interlocutors emerge in the Palestine articles.<sup>60</sup> The first include figures such as Archbishop Polykarpos of Gortynia and Megalopolis in the Peloponnese (9 May 1926),<sup>61</sup> a Dr. Löwenstein (15 June 1926),<sup>62</sup> and the actress Leah Levin (20 June 1926).<sup>63</sup> These are all historical characters, though it is not easy to establish to what degree the discussions took place as reported. One more person is named – a kindergarten teacher named Judith (21 June 1926) – in a dialogue which, as discussed above, also found its way into the book (section 6). The very name Judith, mentioned without a surname, is perhaps brought up as an allusion to her biblical namesake who bravely saved her people from enemy threat.<sup>64</sup> Another female Zionist interlocutor, originally from Holland, is depicted as more sober, realistic, and logical than her idealistic male counterparts – displaying an interesting gender

59 L. Arambatzidou, ‘Nikos Kazantzakis and travel writing: Innovating in poetics and politics’, *Historical Review* 8 (2011) 179–208 (186–7). For a similar view, see A. Athanasopoulou, ‘England in the writings of Nikos Kazantzakis (1939, 1946)’, in L. Giannakopoulou and E. K. Skordyles (eds.), *Culture and Society in Crete: from Kornaros to Kazantzakis* (Newcastle 2017) 77–102 (89–90).

60 For a full list, see Table 4 (Supplementary material).

61 Polykarpos [Synodinos] (1870–1947) was Archbishop of Gortynia and Megalopolis from 1923 to 1933 and later Archbishop of Messenia. See [https://users.sch.gr/markmarkou/1931\\_1959/1947/koim/polykarpos\\_synodinos.htm](https://users.sch.gr/markmarkou/1931_1959/1947/koim/polykarpos_synodinos.htm) [accessed 1 December 2023].

62 This might have been Fritz Löwenstein (later Moshe Perez), who, according to L. Stone, ‘German Zionists in Palestine before 1933’, *Journal of Contemporary History* 32 (1997) 171–86 (179), ‘worked for the Zionist information office’.

63 Leah Levin Dunkelblum (1903–1998) was an actress in the theatre scene of Mandatory Palestine and member of the *Eretz-Israeli Theatre* (Land of Israel Theatre); see S. Zer-Zion, ‘The Eretz-Israeli Theatre: Between cultural peripheries’, *Zmanim: A Historical Quarterly* 99 (2007) 16–25 (in Hebrew).

64 The Book of Judith is canonical for Christians (Orthodox and Catholic) but not part of the Hebrew Bible.



Figure 3. A drawing of Nikos Kazantzakis by Antonis Protopatsis (who often, like here, signed as Pazzi), published on 13 June 1926

Source: *Eleftheros Typos*, Hellenic Parliament Digital Library of Newspapers and Magazines <https://library.parliament.gr/%CE%A8%CE%B7%CF%86%CE%B9%CE%B1%CE%BA%CE%AE-%CE%92%CE%B9%CE%B2%CE%BB%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%B8%CE%AE%CE%BA%CE%B7%CE%95%CF%86%CE%B7%CE%BC%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%AF%CE%B4%CE%B5%CF%82-%CE%BA%CE%B1%CE%B9-%CE%A0%CE%B5%CF%81%CE%B9%CE%BF%CE%B4%CE%B9%CE%BA%CE%AC> (open access)

difference among Zionists.<sup>65</sup> The remaining anonymous interlocutors add a fresh air to the articles. They are stereotypical characters yet seemingly true to life. Except for three Orthodox Christians – the archbishop, and two anonymous clerics – all are Jews. They are young or middle-aged, Zionists or Orthodox Jews, atheists and religious, men and women, people originating from Russia, Poland, or Holland.

Once we move to the Jerusalem chapter, the variety of interlocutors (named and unnamed) visibly diminishes. Except for Judith who now holds a place of honour

65 N. Kazantzakis, 'Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Τελ Αβιβ, το θαύμα μιας πόλεως που βγαίνει μέσα από την άμμον (V)', *Eleftheros Typos*, 17 June 1926.

(section 6), the only ones to find a place in the recast chapter are an Orthodox priest, a ‘new’ Jew, and a rabbi.<sup>66</sup> It is interesting to note that these are all characters that featured, with some changes, in the 1926 travel reportage. In the recast chapter, they are stripped of geographical and other specificity, so they come up in the text almost as stock characters brought up to make a point. Yet the fact that the same characters appear in the travel reportage suggests that these interlocutors and situations do not necessarily belong to the world of fiction or imagination. Like a twentieth-century Thucydides, Kazantzakis puts into the mouths of his speakers what he thought they *ought* to have said in this situation; but because his preferred choice is the dialogue rather than Thucydides’ long formal speeches, he adds his own lengthy reply as an interlocutor, revealing what he would or should have said in such a situation. It is this part of the dialogue that we should best consider quasi-fictional.

### The Zionist movement in Palestine via Kazantzakis’ eyes: an unknown historical source from 1926

The spring of 1926 finds Kazantzakis travelling eastwards, across the Mediterranean, towards the Holy Land. He did so not as a pilgrim but in the role of newspaper correspondent: travel reportage during these years sustained him financially.<sup>67</sup> On the way back to Greece, he visited Cyprus, and later that year he would also travel to Spain and Italy. Back home, the coup by General Pangalos had led to the establishment of a dictatorship in the summer of 1925. In the first months of 1926, the divorce of Kazantzakis and his first wife Galateia was finalized.<sup>68</sup> The trip to Palestine with Eleni Samiou was the first the new couple would make together abroad.<sup>69</sup> In April 1926, presidential elections took place in Greece, with Pangalos receiving about 93% of the vote, in what must have been rigged elections. Yet such personal and historical details are not to be found in the newspaper articles Kazantzakis writes for *Eleftheros Typos*. The eleven articles published in June 1926 transpose the Greek reader to a totally different landscape.

The author realizes how much this place is different only once he leaves Palestine behind and reaches Cyprus, though even from the first instalment in the Land of Palestine series we find an orientalizing photograph of camels on the shore of the Dead Sea (Fig. 4).

Just the other day I was still walking in the mountains of Judaea and heard an opposing relentless cry emanating from all over the land: ‘Let the hand be cut off to praise the Lord, let the foot be cut off to dance forever!’ In the heat of the sun the sand trembled and the mountain tops smoked. A cruel god, without water,

66 See Table 5 (Supplementary material.)

67 Bien, *Politics of the Spirit* II, 16; Calotychos, ‘Kazantzakis the Greek?’, 191.

68 Kazantzakis, *Selected Letters*, xx.

69 Athanasopoulou, ‘Ο Καζαντζάκης στο νησί της Αφροδίτης’, 411.





Figure 4. The Dead Sea, published on 9 May 1926

Source: Israel Pikiwiki project (public domain) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PikiWiki\\_Israel\\_4801\\_Dead\\_sea\\_shipments.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:PikiWiki_Israel_4801_Dead_sea_shipments.jpg)

without a tree, without a woman, was afoot and you felt the bones of your head sinking. All life trembled in your inflamed mind like a war cry.<sup>70</sup>

The land of Judaea is rendered in retrospect as a harsh landscape, hot and sunny, harbouring hard-working people, and with an uncertain future, whereas Cyprus is sweet, sleepy, familiar, exuding a pungent scent of jasmine. It is not only the Judaeian landscape that is special; so is Kazantzakis' attitude towards Jews, Judaism, and Zionism.

What is Zionism? The meaning of this well-known term is very elastic. Fanatical Orthodox Jews consider Zionism to be the coming of the Messiah, the return of the Jewish People of the dispersion to their original homeland and their rule over the whole world.

Nationalist Jews give the word Zionism a national meaning, not a religious: the Jews are not only a religious association of people, but primarily a People. And like any people, the Jews too need a land, a country to consider their own country and home. The only country where the Jewish race can grow roots and bear fruit is Palestine. All the traditions of thousands of years, all the joys and sorrows of the race are gathered in this land that God gave them.

70 N. Kazantzakis, 'Ταξείδια και εντυπώσεις: Στο νησί της Αφροδίτης', *Eleftheros Typos*, 18 July 1926.

Finally, the word Zionism for some forward-thinking ideologues does not mean either religious or national restoration of the Jews. Zionism is the lofty, difficult attempt of the Jews in Palestine to find and to spread a superior form of collective living together.<sup>71</sup>

The Zionist movement in Mandate Palestine is presented to the Greek readers of *Eleftheros Typos* with depth and nuance. Eleni Kazantzakis reports that the series ‘enjoyed great success’.<sup>72</sup> Perhaps it was Kazantzakis’ appreciation of communist ideology, perhaps his deep spirituality beyond established religion or his knowledge of Jewish history and culture; at any rate, the outcome was an exposition free of the usual antisemitic clichés of interwar Greece.<sup>73</sup> Yet this material was forgotten with time.

In 1926, Athens harboured only about 150 Jewish families,<sup>74</sup> and most Jews in Greek territory resided in the newly annexed lands in the north, and especially in Salonica, whose Jewish community seemed to be the apple of discord.<sup>75</sup> The interwar years saw the Jewish question of Salonica emerging in political discourse on various occasions.<sup>76</sup> In the 1920s and 1930s, ‘Salonica became the cradle of Greek Judaism and the heart of Greek Zionism’.<sup>77</sup> Accordingly, antisemitic opinions in Greek politics would mainly be vented vis-à-vis Salonica and its Jews.<sup>78</sup>

Greek antisemitic sentiment often came from Venizelist circles – and *Eleftheros Typos* was a Venizelist newspaper.<sup>79</sup> A year before, the same newspaper hosted a long series of articles (7 February to 11 March 1925) under the title ‘What is Bolshevism?’. They were by Aristeidis Andronikos, who signed them in his capacity as former Consul General of Greece in St Petersburg. Andronikos strives to show the secret links between the Bolsheviks and the Jews, drawing on conspiracy theories and displaying an abhorrent antisemitism. Three years later, in 1928, he would publish a translation of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* at the newspaper *Makedonia*, exacerbating the

71 N. Kazantzakis, ‘Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Αν σε λησιμονήσω Ιερουσαλήμ... Ο περιπλανώμενος Ιουδαίος (II)’, *Eleftheros Typos*, 14 June 1926.

72 Kazantzakis, *Kazantzakis. A Biography*, 139.

73 Papamichos Chronakis, ‘Between liberalism and slavophobia’.

74 Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 25–6.

75 On the Jewish community of Crete, which might also be at the back of Kazantzakis’ mind, see the special issue of *Χρονικά* 117 (1991) 3–14.

76 See K. E. Fleming, *Greece: a Jewish history* (Princeton 2008) 91–109.

77 Papamichos Chronakis, ‘Between liberalism and slavophobia’, 23. On interwar Zionism in Salonica, see Molho, ‘The Zionist movement in Thessaloniki’ and at 347 on the first Panhellenic Zionist Congress in March 1919; Vassilikou, ‘Politics of the Jewish community of Salonika’, 129–45; Rozen, ‘The Jewish community of Salonica’.

78 Fleming, *A Jewish History*, 84–8. This antisemitism embraced anti-Zionism, on which see Papamichos Chronakis, ‘Between liberalism and slavophobia’.

79 See Fleming, *A Jewish History*, 91–102 and E. Kariatoglou, ‘Ελεύθερος Τύπος’, in L. Droulia and G. Koutsoranagou (eds.), *Εγκυκλοπαίδεια του Ελληνικού Τύπου 1784–1974. Εφημερίδες, περιοδικά, δημοσιογράφοι, εκδότες* (Athens 2008) 108–9.

already flourishing antisemitic feeling in Salonica, which would soon turn into action with the pogrom of 1931 known as the Campbell Riot.<sup>80</sup> Yet, for a fleeting moment in the spring and early summer of 1926, the ‘Land of Palestine’ articles voice a positive opinion pertaining to Jews and Judaism for a Greek readership, even if, in the end, their author is not wholly optimistic about the future of Zionism in Palestine. It is, accordingly, a pity that historiography of Greek Jewry, including studies focusing on the interwar period, has failed to take into consideration Kazantzakis’ 1926 articles.

### Instead of a conclusion: Kazantzakis’ silences

I conclude by drawing attention to some absences from Kazantzakis’ description, some gaps and silences, things or people that he no doubt encounters during his trip, that are part of the local landscape, but chooses not to put into writing. The first is that he has virtually nothing to say regarding the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, its history and its recent internal crisis and, no less importantly, the special role it played and continues to play in the real estate of Jerusalem.<sup>81</sup> In his Jerusalem diary, Sikelianos was clearly impressed by the Greek Orthodox Patriarch Damianos I (1848–1931). Yet Kazantzakis does not even mention the internal struggles that had led to the Patriarch’s temporary deposition, except a very short but gentle description of the Patriarch at one of the holiest moments for Christianity – The Holy Fire ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre on Great Saturday.<sup>82</sup>

The local Greek community of Jerusalem also goes unmentioned but for a short negative comment. Kazantzakis notes that the Greeks only went out of patriotism to a piano recital by the Papaioannou sisters, who accompanied Kazantzakis and Eleni Samiou on the Palestine trip (Fig. 5). In the early twentieth century, there were about seven hundred Greeks in Jerusalem.<sup>83</sup> They built the ‘Greek Colony’ neighbourhood outside city walls and its communal cultural centre, the Greek Club – famous in

80 Mazower, *Salonica*, 410–16 and M. Kavala, ‘The antisemitic discourse of the newspaper Makedonia in Salonika and its columnists (1911–1944)’, Paper presented at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Serb-Croat Political relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Centre for History, Democracy and Reconciliation, Golubic Obrovacki, Croatia, August 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/14985010/\\_The\\_evolution\\_of\\_the\\_Anti\\_Semitic\\_discourse\\_of\\_the\\_newspaper\\_Makedonia\\_in\\_Salonika\\_and\\_its\\_columnists\\_1911\\_1944\\_In\\_proceedings\\_of\\_7th\\_InternationalConference\\_Serb\\_Croat\\_Political\\_Relations\\_in\\_the\\_20th\\_Century\\_Golubic\\_Obrovacki\\_Croatia\\_August\\_22\\_27\\_2014](https://www.academia.edu/14985010/_The_evolution_of_the_Anti_Semitic_discourse_of_the_newspaper_Makedonia_in_Salonika_and_its_columnists_1911_1944_In_proceedings_of_7th_InternationalConference_Serb_Croat_Political_Relations_in_the_20th_Century_Golubic_Obrovacki_Croatia_August_22_27_2014) [accessed 3 December 2023].

81 I. Katz and R. Kark, ‘The Church and landed property: the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem’, *Middle Eastern Studies* 43 (2007) 383–408; K. Papastathis, ‘Cultural diplomacy, Church politics and nationalism in early Mandatory Palestine: the case of the Jerusalem Orthodox Church’, *Contemporary Levant* 6 (2021) 65–77.

82 N. Kazantzakis, ‘Στους τόπους του προσκυνήματος. Εικόνες από τον τάφον του Χριστού. Β’’, *Eleftheros Typos*, 10 May 1926.

83 See K. Papastathis, ‘Diaspora-building and cultural diplomacy: the Greek community of Jerusalem in late Ottoman times and the Mandate’, in K. Sanchez Summerer and S. Zananiri (eds.), *European Cultural Diplomacy and Arab Christians in Palestine 1918–1948* (Cham 2020) 255–72.



Figure 5. Nikos Kazantzakis and the Papaioannou sisters (?) in Jerusalem, 1926. © Nikos Kazantzakis Museum, Crete (ELIA 03.4.1.62)

Greece till today through its literary representation in the *Λέσχη* by Stratis Tsirkas.<sup>84</sup> However, Kazantzakis shows no interest in giving his Greek readers any detail about this Greek community of the diaspora.

The most telling silence has to do with the sort of Jews and Zionists Kazantzakis mentions. While he provides hints about the Jewish diaspora returning to the lands of their fathers in Palestine from various countries, he is mostly invested in presenting

84 S. Tsirkas, *Η λέσχη* (Athens 2011).

Ashkenazi Jewry. Kazantzakis had already forged in his previous travels and before the trip to Palestine several strong, influential, and lasting friendships with Ashkenazi Jews, prominent among them a group of Jewish communist female students.<sup>85</sup> Ashkenazi Jews were the dominant cultural group for decades to come in the Yishuv and later in the newly established State of Israel. It is somewhat surprising that Kazantzakis does not mention Jews from Greece who had settled in Palestine, and especially Salonican Jews.<sup>86</sup> We are, of course, before the big immigration wave of the 1930s, when Salonican Jews played a crucial role in the construction of the Haifa port, and later in that of Tel Aviv.<sup>87</sup> But we know that Salonican fishermen settled in Acre as early as 1925, and the Azuelos family from Greece owned fishing boats in Tiberias around that time.<sup>88</sup> There was also the Sephardic community of Jerusalem,<sup>89</sup> whose Ladino language would have reminded Kazantzakis of the language of Salonican Jews, and some prominent Salonicans (such as Baruch Uziel and David Benvenisti) were already active in Jerusalem's Hebrew College for Teachers. This educational institution is not mentioned, though the author does mention the founding of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in 1925 (and provides a photograph from the Mount Scopus campus on the June 19 article). Perhaps he never met any Salonican Jews in his trip, perhaps some of them mainly spoke Ladino or did not see themselves as 'Greek Jews' at that point in time. The fact remains that Greek Jewry is virtually absent from his reportage from Palestine. Perhaps this silence was his way to avoid the thorny issue of Salonican Jews back home and eschew any comparison between the Zionist movement in Palestine to that established in Greece. However, Salonican Jews were not completely invisible for him in his personal communication. He writes to his dear friend Rachel Minc (née Lipstein), as per her own report, after he finds out that she had joined the resistance movement during World War II:

The suffering of your people in Athens and Salonica was atrocious. Your people, Rachel, will be reborn. It has always survived.<sup>90</sup>

Still, of course, it is *her* people and not his own fellow Greeks.

85 Among them are Rachel Lipstein, Itka Horowitz, Leah Dunkelblum, Rosa Shmulewitz, Dina Matus, as discussed in H.-U. Seifert, 'Νέες γνώσεις για τον «πύρινο κύκλο»', Paper presented at the Conference Η γυναικεία μορφή στη ζωή και στο έργο του Νίκου Καζαντζάκη, Nikos Kazantzakis Museum (Crete), 20–22 October 2023, available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y5ggl2W3P8> [accessed 2 May 2024].

86 With one insignificant exception, in N. Kazantzakis, 'Ένα μήνα στη γη της Παλαιστίνης. Η φυλή που θρηνηί επί 19 αιώνας (I)', *Eleftheros Typos*, 13 June 1926: 'From the corners of the earth, the Jews have gathered here and unite in lament: from Galicia with their long frock-coats and curly locks of hair hanging from their temple; from Arabia with their jellabiyas, from Babylon tall and majestic like biblical Patriarchs, from Poland short redheads, from Russia, from Spain, from Greece, from Algiers.'

87 K. Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution: the Yishuv's hold on the land of Israel's sea and shores, 1917–1948* (Berlin 2019) 110–17.

88 Cohen-Hattab, *Zionism's Maritime Revolution*, 82–5.

89 A. Meyuhas Ginio, *Between Sepharad and Jerusalem: history, identity and memory of the Sephardim* (Leiden 2015).

90 R. Minc, 'Le judaïsme dans l'œuvre de Kazantzakis', *Amitiés France Israël* 256 (1978) 35–9 (39).

The last silence I wish to draw attention to takes us to the here and now, and it concerns the lack of modern scholarship on Kazantzakis' Palestine/Jerusalem material, within and outside Greece, in literary and historical studies. It is true that Kazantzakis' travel writings only form one part of his vast oeuvre. Perhaps it is Kazantzakis' admiration of Jews, Jewish culture, and the Zionist movement, or, for that matter, communism, that deterred previous scholars from looking into this material, or at least noting its different content or scope compared to the later Jerusalem chapter.

This silence, I suggest, should probably be regarded as one further expression of the long silencing and marginalization of almost everything Jewish in Greece, in public discourse and scholarly literature, in the years following the Holocaust.<sup>91</sup> In our case, the silencing concerns a detailed analysis and positive evaluation of the Zionist movement and its ideals – despite Kazantzakis' still somewhat enigmatic pessimism about the movement's future. It is also possible that this silence might be related to the complex bilateral relations between Greece and Israel since 1948, though the last decade or so has seen this relationship become closer and stronger.<sup>92</sup> The invisibility of Greek Jewry as a result of such silencing is being gradually removed in recent years; Jewish presence, history, and contribution in Greek lands is now regaining its place in current historiography, as well as in mainstream discourse and popular culture. I hope that this article, which throws light on Kazantzakis' account of the Zionist movement in his 1926 articles on the 'Land of Palestine', and on the fact that this is a different work from the 'Jerusalem' chapter in *Journeying*, will also generate further scholarly attention to this material, so that it will find its rightful place in historiographical analyses of the period, construing a more complex reception of Zionism in Greek contexts.

## Supplementary material

The supplementary material for this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1017/byz.2024.28>.

91 R. H. Benveniste, 'The coming out of Jewish history in Greece', *Usages publics du passé* website, 2001, <http://usagespublicsdupasse.ehess.fr/the-coming-out-of-jewish-history-in-greece/> [accessed 5 December 2023]; O. Varon-Vassard, 'The emergence and construction of the memory of the Shoah in Greece (1945–2015): from oblivion to memory', *Historiein* 18 (2019) <https://doi.org/10.12681/historiein.14399>; K. Kornetis, 'Public history and the revival of the repressed Sephardic heritage in Thessaloniki', in T. S. Willert and G. Katsan (eds.), *Retelling the Past in Contemporary Greek Literature, Film, and Popular Culture* (Lanham MD 2019) 29–45.

92 See A. Nachmani, *Israel, Turkey, and Greece: Uneasy Relations in the East Mediterranean* (London 1987) 89–120 for the years up to 1985, A. Tziampiris, *The Emergence of Israeli-Greek Cooperation* (New York 2015) 39–51 for more recent times, and G. Lindenstrauss and P. Gavrielides, 'A decade of close Greece-Israel relations: An assessment', *Strategic Assessment* 22 (2019) 51–62 for the last few years.

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