

International Society of Friends of Nikos Kazantzakis

SYNTHESIS

INFORMATION BULLETIN



Sketch by Takis Kalmouhos, 1929

My anxiety is found in this: to incessantly strive for this position and from antithesis to find Synthesis.

Nikos Kazantzakis, Aegina, 12/2/1944

No 57 - December 2021

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MAIN ARTICLE

The interest in the five continents in Nikos Kazantzakis' work is always great: Europe (France, Switzerland, Greece), America (Brazil, USA, Canada), Africa (Tunisia), Asia (Japan) and Oceania (Australia). The numerous events (lectures, conferences, international reading club, publications, university theses, studies, cinema adaptations) verify this interest. You will find below relevant details. We also draw your attention to the research that the Aikaterini Laskaridis Foundation and the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences carried out recently on the "Books of Greek Literature" that the Chinese read. *Zorba the Greek* and *Captain Mihalís* are in the first place. We thank all those, members of the ISFNK or not, who keep alive the memory and the work of our writer.

THE EPIGRAPH ON KAZANTZAKIS' TOMB

In a letter to his friend and translator Börje Knös (Paris, 12/12/1947), Kazantzakis writes: "*I fear nothing, I don't hope for anything, I'm free, is the phrase that I instructed to be etched on my tomb*". His wish has been realised. Some claim that this phrase is attributed to Demonax, a Cypriot philosopher (2nd century AD) or to the German poet Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock (1724-1803) or to the rhetorician and satirist Lucian of Samosata (115 - 190 AD) or to the mathematician and philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662).

Kazantzakis does not refer to the above mentioned philosophers or writers. On the contrary, he writes in *Askitiki*: "*I now know: I don't hope for anything, I fear nothing, I'm liberated from mind and heart, I have ascended higher, I'm free*". And in his book "*Toda Raba*" he writes: "*An Indian was struggling for a long time against the current that was pushing the boat towards the waterfalls. When the great fighter realised that any effort was useless, he crossed the oars and started singing: I'm not hoping any more, I'm not afraid any more, I'm free*".

Eleni Kazantzakis, who was residing in Geneva, mentioned many times to the president of the ISFNK that the epigraph is attributed to a Buddhist monk.



*LE REGARD CRETOIS, H KPHTIKH MATIA,
THE CRETAN GLANCE, LA MIRADA CRETENSE*

Contents of issue 48 - December 2021

Kazantzakis' texts

- Massacre
- Thoughts, letters

Studies and research

- Haralambos-Dimitris Gounelas (Thessaloniki):
Nikos Kazantzakis and the refugees (in French)
- Dimitris Kokoris (Thessaloniki):
Nikos Kazantzakis as a poet (in Greek)
- Pipina Elles (Sydney):
The woman in Kazantzakis' plays (in English)
- Christina Tsardikou (Buenos Aires): *Borges and Kazantzakis, two writers, one labyrinth* (in Spanish)

Each study is accompanied by a summary in the other languages.

We are asking our friends to make the review available to universities, libraries, associations.

You can obtain a sample.

Books

- Studies
- Translations

KAZANTZAKIS, “ODYSSEY” AND THE CRITICISM

Was Kazantzakis really an opportunist or a genius writer? Is his epic poem *Odyssey* worth reading? These are some of the questions examined in an article by Pantelis Kogiamis (email: pkogiamis@iclou.com), orchestra conductor and musicologist, Vienna, based on bibliography, historical sources and testimonies (see amis-kazantzakis.gr). *Odyssey* is by public admission the work less read from the works that he has written. Many readers indeed, if not most of them, are even ignorant of its existence. The negative criticism, to a great extent, that this work of Kazantzakis has been subjected to, has contributed to this, as well as the lack of publishers interest for a more functional and friendly to the reader publication of *Odyssey*.

The article examines opinions and judgements circulating widely in the internet about the poem, but as well as about Kazantzakis as a writer in general, which are expressed by literary critics, university professors and philologists. Some of these opinions maintain: a) that Kazantzakis became internationally known because he specified during the period he was working at Unesco that his works should be translated into 24 foreign languages (something that is completely inaccurate), b) that he wasn't the writer that could be considered a genius, like, for example, Mozart was, c) that his epic poem *Odyssey* is impossible to be read from start to finish and d) that in no way the epic 33,333 verses are worthy as poetry. Beyond the examination of the negative opinions about *Odyssey*, positive criticism about the epic as well is put forward in the article by prestigious kazantzakian students, (W. B. Stanford, Kostas Georgousopoulos, Miguel Castillo Didier), which is not widely known so that the reader could have a more complete picture as far as the criticism that has at times been leveled on the epic is concerned, and so that he could draw his own conclusions. Finally, Pantelis Kogiamis quotes a small excerpt from the Z rhapsody of *Odyssey* accompanied by a lexicon.

KAZANTZAKIS AND THE NON-GREEK INTELLECTUALS

Among the priorities that the last International General Assembly of the ISFNK decided for the next three years are included “the meetings or writings of Nikos Kazantzakis with non-Greek writers, artists, musicians and intellectuals in general”. These are, among others, Henri Bergson, Abbé Mugnier, Paul Valéry, Paul Claudel, François Mauriac, André Gide, Panaït Istrati, Maxime Gorki, AKITA Ujuka, HU Shi, Jean Herbert, Banine, Juan Ramon Jiménez, Miguel de Unamuno, Albert Schweitzer, Alfredo Varela, Jorge Salamea, Grigol Robakidze, Bohuslav Martinu, Ernst Jünger, Jules Dassin, Marie Bonaparte, Max Tau, Albert Camus, the English poets... Those who wish to take part in this working group can contact the coordinator, Elena Avramidou, professor at the University of Beijing, email: eleavramidou@gmail.com

ACTIVITIES OF KAZANTZAKIS PUBLICATIONS

As we are experiencing one more period of international upheaval, Kazantzakis publications (expertly directed by Niki Stavrou) once more confirm that the uncompromising, insightful and sensitive pen of Nikos Kazantzakis awakens us

consoles us and vindicates us through the entire range of emotions that we are experiencing during these difficult times. Kazantzakis publications are continuing their excellent work with translations of his works in new countries and in cinematic and theatrical adaptations.

Zorba the Greek is for the first time translated into Czech, Georgian, Polish and Albanian (Kosovo) and *Saint Francis* into Georgian. They also participate in an international promotional campaign of his work through audio-books. In this way the public can listen to their favourite writer. This system is already functioning in Greek, Bulgarian, Romanian and English.

Another activity was the promotion by the newspaper “Politis” in Cyprus, where the entire line of Nikos Kazantzakis’ literary work reached thousands of readers through an insert in the Sunday edition. In the area of cinema, Theodoris Papadoulakis after a long series of incomparable successes, is ready to start production of the adaptation of *Christ Recrucified* and the company Odeon with *Captain Mihalidis*, which will start filming within the next year.

Concluding, an extensive theatrical production in Greece of a new adaptation of *Zorba the Greek* is expected.

PUBLICATIONS

Translations into Bulgarian

- *Bouddha*, translation by Dragomira Vlacheva, Iztok-Zapad publications, Sofia 2021.

Studies in Greek

- *Greek-Swiss relations, Dialogue with history, Greek-Swiss issues, B'*, by archpriest Ignatios H. Papadellis, Eptalofos publications, Athens 2021. The book contains a chapter about Kazantzakis’ stay in Switzerland and the activities of the ISFNK.
- *Free*, by Dimitris Bogiatsis, Harmony and creativity publications, Athens 2021. The novel refers among others to Nikos and Eleni Kazantzakis.
- *Love in the years of literature*, by Niki Tangelou, Pigi publications, Athens 2021. The writer refers among others to Nikos and Eleni Kazantzakis.

Study in English

- *20 years with Nikos, 2000-2020*, ISFNK, Sidney chapter 2020 (lectures, conferences and other events).

Publications in 2022

- *Askitiki*, translation from Greek to French by René Bouchet, Campourakis publications, Paris.
- *Kazantzakis-Zorbas, a true friendship*, by George Stasinakis, translation and adaptation from Greek to French by René Bouchet, introduction by Yvette Renoux-Herbert, L’Harmattan publications, Paris.
- *Conversations Kazantzakis-Sipriot*, translation from French to Greek by Maria Fletoridou, Kastaniotis Publications, Athens.

UNIVERSITY THESES

- Apostolos Poullos defended successfully at the Athens University his doctoral thesis entitled: “*The neological compound words in Nikos Kazantzakis’ novels*”.
- Evdokia Delipetrou is working on a thesis at the Athens University with the theme: “Stage mechanisms of the Greek identity on stage: the example of the National Theatre”. She is studying works and performances of historical content amongst which works by Nikos Kazantzakis and George Theotokas are found.
- Emmanouela Yannoulidou is working on a masters degree at La Trobe University in Melbourne with subject: “The Third side of the Civil war: a comparative analysis of the works *The Fratricides* by Nikos Kazantzakis and *A sangre y fuego. Héroes, Bestias y Mártires de España* by Manuel Chaves Nogales”.

FUNCTIONS OF THE ISFNK

Steering Committee

Will meet in the first half of 2022.

New officials

- Australia, Melbourne: Yannis Milidis, philologist.
- Germany, Mannheim: Georgia Kostakopoulou, engineer, urban planner.
- Switzerland, Ticino: Thomas Theologou, medical doctor.
- Paraguay, Asunción: Pablo Vourliotis, orchestra conductor.

We extend to them our congratulations
and our support.

EVENTS ACROSS THE FIVE CONTINENTS

Australia

Melbourne. Thanks to Leonidas Naoumis and Yannis Milidis, the local chapter of the ISFNK is operating again. A first event will take place in the coming months with a lecture by the philologist Thomas Iliopoulos, with subject: “The richness of the Greek language of Nikos Kazantzakis”.

Brazil

São Paulo. Maria Peretto, president of the local chapter of the ISFNK, informs us that the 2022 activities of the chapter will be dedicated to “The six aspects of Nikos Kazantzakis: novelist, playwright, poet, journalist, translator, metaphysicist”.

France

Strasbourg. February 3rd and 4th: Writing workshop by Allain Glykos entitled: “Kazantzakis and the migrations”.

February 5, 2022: In the context of the international day of the Greek language, a lecture by René Bouchet with subject: “*Odyssey*, an unknown masterpiece of Kazantzakis”.

February 23, 2022: Lecture by Jean-Claude Schwendemann, president of the French chapter of the ISFNK with the subject: “The life and work of Kazantzakis”.

March 26, 2022: Conference on: “Saint Francis of Assisi, Nikos Kazantzakis, Albert Schweitzer and their relationship with nature”.

Switzerland

Lugano, December 4, 2021: Literary soirée dedicated to Nikos Kazantzakis. Organised by the Greek community of Ticino (Italian speaking canton of Switzerland) with president Thomas Theoglou and the Swiss Chapter of the ISFNK with president Rozmi Pahlisch-Tzanos. The speakers were Rozmi Pahlisch-Tzanos, on the relationship of Kazantzakis with Elli Lampridi (Mountita), Gilda Tentorio, professor at the University of Pavia and president of the Italian Chapter of the ISFNK, on George Stasinakis’ book “Life’s paths, in the footsteps of Kazantzakis, 1989-2019” and Nicola Crocetti on his translation from Greek to Italian of Kazantzakis’ *Odyssey*.

Greece

Iraklion, Crete, November 28, 2021: The International Reading Club of Nikos Kazantzakis’ works. An on-line literary presentation of the novel *Captain Mihalidis* successfully took place, organised by the Greek Chapter of the ISFNK to mark the anniversary of the 200 years of the National Rebirth. The speaker at the event was Roula Vouraki, philologist, in charge of the Chania Local Committee of the ISFNK. Sifis Miheloyannis, lawyer, president of the Greek Chapter of the ISFNK, and Katerina Zografistou, professor of the French language and philology, member of the Steering Committee of the ISFNK and responsible for the International Reading Club, opened with welcoming addresses. The event coordinators were Sofia Ntalambeki, mathematician, general secretary of the Greek Chapter of the ISFNK and Maria Zahariaki, agriculturalist, responsible for the Iraklion Local Committee of the ISFNK. Members and friends from Greece, Chile, France, Switzerland and Belgium participated at the event. *Trikala:* On Apostolos Zoi’s initiative, official of the ISFNK in Trikala, the pupils of the 2nd Elementary School will in the coming year study Kazantzakis’ work.

United States of America

Atlanta: The Very Reverend Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Alexios suggested an event on Kazantzakis. Manolis Velivasakis, member of the Steering Committee, a Florida resident, will undertake the coordination for the event.

Japan

Kyoto, December 18, 2021: The annual meeting of the Japanese Chapter of the ISFNK successfully took place on-line. There was a notable attendance, even by persons for the first time. Four original speeches are worth mentioning: DOIMOTO Minoru, researcher, with subject: “The film *Zorba the Greek*, based on Kazantzakis’ novel, with music by the great Greek composer Mikis Theodorakis”. SONOHARA Tetsuya, translator (he translated to Japanese the novel *Serpent and lily*) with subject: “The translation of the first chapter of *Captain Mihalidis*”. YOSHIKAWA Hiroaki, doctoral candidate in the field of Japanology at The Graduate University for Advanced Studies, with subject: “Historical material in Japan with regards to Kazantzakis including also his two unpublished autographical texts”. FUKUDA KOSUKE, doctoral candidate in the field of modern civilization at the Kyoto University, with subject: “Kazantzakis and KAWASHIMA Yoshiko (1907-1948) - a Manchu princess who became Japanese in the last Chinese empire (Tsing dynasty)”.

Canada

Ottawa, February 22, 2022. Cathy Dimitriou is informing us that for Kazantzakis' birthday, G. Pitsicoulis, a member of the local chapter, will present a video "Kazantzakis, the man and his work" to the students of the "credit course" (12-18 years of age). In April, the chapter will present the third conference on the great Cretan.

Toronto. The local chapter is organising three on-line events: January 25, 2022, "The meaning of freedom in Kazantzakis' work" by Voula Vetsi, chapter president. February 22, 2022, "Alexander the Great" by Chrysa Milopoulou and Fotini Hadjinicolaou, chapter members. March 22, 2022, "Melissa and Kouros, two tragedies of Nikos Kazantzakis" by Dimitris Karas, journalist, theatre commentator (opera).

Tunisia

Djerba, November 20 and 21, 2021, the XVIII Francophonie Summit, at which Chedia Haddad, president of the ISFNK Tunisian chapter, would have participated, was postponed for the fall of 2022. Chedia will organise in the coming months events on Kazantzakis.

KAZANTZAKIS TEXTS

Letters from the USSR to Eleni Samiou, his partner

Perm, February 4, 1929

Dear Lénotschka,

I'm in front of the Urals, the entrance to Siberia. I'm all alone in a coupe...The holy silence, that so filters and nourishes the human soul, floods me with serenity, fertility, like Nile does to Egypt. Out of all the wagons of Siberia one alone is imperfectly heated: the one that I got. They told me to change...I preferred to suffer than to be with people. Nights are extremely cold, as far as my fur coat can protect me. But it doesn't matter, since this is how I redeem my solitude.

I read, I write verses, I reflect. Ah! how good is the treatment of silence! The landscape is consistent: snow, fir trees, hamlets, sleighs, felt boots, fur coats...Monotony is a kind of very discrete silence, and it relaxes me. Tomorrow we are entering Siberia and then I will continue with this letter that consoles me, because it gives me the illusion that you are with me, Lénotschka, and your beloved, pale, proud face is shining in the corner.

Krasnoyarsk, February 7, 1929

Great joy, the frozen immense river Jénisséi. Other attractions: Siberia's sunsets and sunrises, sweetest, tender. Today I spoke for the first time. I had sat in the restaurant wagon with a French missionary who had lived for 15 years in Manchuria. He recounted to me the life, the soul, the hardships of the people over there and my heart was pounding. I don't know, why far away people seem nearer to me, more brotherly.

Chita, Manchuria, February 12, 1929

Last night I had an unexpected joy. There are 150 Greeks here in Chita. They found out I was coming and they gathered at a house, they fetched me and for many hours I was conversing with them with the warmest love and interest. Simple people, bakers, cobblers, shoe shiners. They had numerous questions here in the middle of nowhere and, as they told me, they would gather each night, but never could they figure out: - What is communism?

- Why was Greece defeated? -Why was man born? -What does honour mean? -Will there be a war? -Where are we heading to? If I were Jesus, surely these would have been my apostles. Love, warmth, trust. The intellectuals are sterile, ignoble, damned. I was tired, sad and among these simple people I regained my trust in man. Chita! A small Manchurian city! A thing that did not exist up to the day before yesterday. "Ah!, Reisen, Reisen, Reisen!" as Rilke says. [Ah, journey, journey, journey! a variation from Reiten, Reiten, Reiten, of Rilke. It is the infinitive of the verb to ride].

DISTINCTION

Stelios Matzapetakis, past member of parliament, past president of the Board of Directors of the Nikos Kazantzakis Museum, was named an honorary member of this board. Our warm congratulations to our friend Stelios for this well deserved distinction.

IN MEMORIAM

Iraklion, October 23rd and 24th, 2021: Like every year, the ISFNK performed a memorial service for George Anemogiannis, theatre designer, founder of Nikos Kazantzakis Museum, for Titika Saklambani, past director of the Museum and for Nikos and Eleni Kazantzakis. Our thoughts also go to Cleopatra Prifti, a Cretan writer, past president of the Greek Chapter of the ISFNK.

They will never be forgotten.

ISFNK: CONTACT INFO

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www.amigos-kazantzaki.org

Facebook

In Greek

<https://www.facebook.com/amis.kazantzaki.gr>

In French

<https://www.facebook.com/Société-Internationale-des-amis-de-Nikos-Kazantzaki-379350352815580>

In English

<https://www.facebook.com/The-Ingnternational-Society-of-Friends-of-Nikos-Kazantzakis-2358603970881508>

In Spanish

<https://www.facebook.com/siank.mx>

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