

*Between Corfu and Athens: Moisis Caimis' Contribution
to the Making of Greek Jewry (1885-1916)*

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Abstract

Moisis Caimis, a Zionist pioneer and community leader hailing from Corfu, contributed through his journalistic activities to the making of Greek Jewry. Initially working as correspondent of the Trieste-based Italian-Jewish newspaper Il Corriere Israelitico (1885-1898), Caimis published his own Greek language periodicals for the Jews of Greece—Israilitiki Chronografos (Corfu, 1899-1901) and Israilitiki Epitheorisis (Athens, 1912-1916). By focusing on the life and work of Moisis Caimis, who was raised in the bilingual Greco-Italian environment of Corfu before moving to Athens in the early twentieth century, this article provides a novel supra-local perspective to the study of Greek Jewry, which emphasizes the importance of Jewish publishing on the Ionian islands for the formation of Jewish identity in Greece. A historical analysis of Caimis' texts shows how local concepts of patriotism evolved from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century and how the author gradually created a narrative of Greco-Jewish cultural synergy.

Introduction

Moisis Caimis: Between Corfu and Athens

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Introduction

Israilitis Chronographos (1899-1901)

“This journal, published in the first place for the Greek Israelites [Ellines Israelite], will contain discussions about Jewish religion, history and philology.”¹

Written in 1899 by Moisis Caimis—a Zionist pioneer and Jewish community leader hailing from Corfu—this opening statement of the first Jewish journal published in the Greek language raises two main questions: Who were the *Greek Israelites* and what did it mean to be Jewish and Greek at the turn of the nineteenth century? Through a study of his journalistic productions (1885-1916), this article analyzes Caimis’ changing conceptualization of Greek Jewry.

In this period, Greece expanded territorially and state policy towards minorities was not consistent. Following the Greek War of Independence (1821-1830), the new state emerged with a religiously homogeneous society.² Initially home to less than 1000 Jews, Greece later incorporated the Jewish communities of the Ionian Islands (1864) and Thessaly (1881). While the constitutionally anchored principle of religious tolerance guaranteed civil rights for non-Christian minorities in the newly acquired territories, Greek society continued to regard affiliation with the Greek Orthodox faith as an intrinsic element of Greek nationality.³ The minority

¹ Moisis Caimis, “Editorial,” *Israilitis Chronographos* 1, no 1 (1899): 1. The author of this article translated all the newspaper citations and would like to thank Sarah Hassnaoui for her help with the Italian excerpts. In addition, special thanks are owed to Dimitrios Varvaritis and Philip Carabott, who shared archival sources and provided invaluable comments.

² The revolution caused massacres of genocidal magnitude against the Muslims and Jews of the region: Maria Efthymiou, “Official Ideology and Lay Mentality during the Greek Revolution: Attitudes towards the Jews,” in *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond: The Jews in Turkey and the Balkans 1808-1945*, ed. Minna Rozen (Tel Aviv: The Goldstein-Goren Diaspora Research Center, Tel Aviv University, 2002); Katherine Fleming, *Greece—A Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), 15-18; Evdoxios Doxiadis, *State, Nationalism, and the Jewish Communities of Modern Greece* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018) 19-43.

³ On the legal position and societal integration of non-Christians in early Greece see: Philip Carabott, “State, Society and the Religious “Other” in nineteenth-century Greece,” *Kambos: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek* 18 (2011): 1-33; Doxiadis, *State, Nationalism, and the Jewish*

question gained increased political weight with the incorporation of the multi-ethnic and multi-religious regions of Epirus and Macedonia during the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), prompting a state-driven Hellenization program of linguistic and religious minorities.⁴ Through the annexation of Thessaloniki during the war, Greece's Jewish population rose from less than 10.000 to more than 70.000.⁵

Hence, it is not surprising that the scholarly discussion on the formation of a Greco-Jewish identity mainly focused on the integration of Thessaloniki's Sephardic community in the interwar period.⁶ Bringing to the fore the less well-studied case of Grecophone Jewish literature, this article joins the slowly growing historiographical trend that explores the trajectory of smaller Jewish communities in Attica, the Ionian Islands and Thessaly through the study of Greek-language primary sources in addition to Judeo-Spanish and French material.⁷

Communities of Modern Greece, 81-106. For an overview on the history of Jews in nineteenth century Greece see: Fleming, *Greece—A Jewish History*, 15-48.

⁴ Peter Mackridge and Eleni Yannakakis, eds., *Ourselves and Others: The Development of a Greek Macedonian Cultural Identity since 1912* (Oxford: Berg, 1997). Philip Carabott, "Aspects of the Hellenization of Greek Macedonia, ca. 1912-ca. 1959," *Kambos: Cambridge Papers in Modern Greek* 13 (2005): 21-61.

⁵ Greece was home to around 6000 Jews in 1907: Carabott, "State, Society and the Religious 'Other' in nineteenth-century Greece," 11. According to a population census of 1913, Thessaloniki alone, had a Jewish population of ca. 60.000: Mark Mazower, *Salonica, City of Ghosts: Christians, Muslims and Jews 1430-1950* (London: Harper Perennial, 2005), 303.

⁶ For a critical historiographical overview of the scholarly corpus on the integration of Thessaloniki's Jewish community into the Greek state, see: Devin Naar, *Jewish Salonica: Between the Ottoman Empire and Modern Greece* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 9-15. See also: Henriette-Rika Benveniste, "The Coming Out of Jewish History in Greece," (paper presented at the International Conference History Between Reflexivity and Critique, Athens 2008, <http://usagespublicsdupasse.ehess.fr/the-coming-out-of-jewish-history-in-greece/>).

⁷ See the articles in the special edition of *Archeiotaxio*: "Εβραίοι και Έλληνες, Έλληνες Εβραίοι" [Jews and Greeks, Greek Jews], *Archeiotaxio* 19 (2017); See further the edited volume: Anna Machaira and Lida Papastefanaki, eds., *Εβραϊκές κοινότητες ανάμεσα σε Ανατολή και Δύση, 15ος-20ός αιώνας: οικονομία, κοινωνία, πολιτική, πολιτισμός* [Jewish Communities between the East and the West, fifteenth to twentieth Century: Economy, Society, Politics, Culture] (Ioannina: Isnafi, 2016); For an account of Greco-Jewish history from the state's perspective: Doxiadis, *State, Nationalism, and the Jewish Communities of Modern Greece*. On Jews from Thessaly: Devin Naar, "The 'Mother of Israel' or the 'Sephardi Metropolis'? Sephardim, Ashkenazim, and Romaniotes in Salonica," *Jewish Social Studies* 22, no. 1 (2016): 97-103.

Despite his contribution to the consolidation of Greek Jewry and the spread of Zionism in Greece, Moisis Caimis' (1864-1929) work has not so far received the scholarly attention it deserves.⁸ This is all the more surprising as his personal trajectory—between Corfu and Athens—spans important locations and crucial points in early Greco-Jewish history. Through his journalism, we gain an insight into how Jewish community leaders positioned themselves in regard to Greek irredentism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and how they experienced the integration of Thessaloniki's Sephardic community into the Greek realm in the course of the Balkan Wars. This article traces Caimis' conceptualization of Greek Jewry as a political community from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century by exploring the journalist's life and literary passages from three different stages of his journalistic career: initially working as foreign correspondent for the Trieste-based Italian-Jewish journal *Il Corriere Israelitico* (1885-1898), Caimis broke away from the imperial publishing centre to establish his own Greco-Jewish journals *Israilitis Chronografos* (Corfu, 1899-1901) and *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* (Athens, 1912-1916). An analysis of these publications illustrates that the project of Jewish civic integration and Greco-Jewish identity formation has its roots in the late nineteenth century and was influenced by the politicization of Italian-speaking Jewry in the Adriatic region. Furthermore, it suggests that Jewish mobility between the Ionian Islands and Athens played a decisive role in the consolidation and institutionalization of Greek Jewry.

Moisis Caimis: Between Corfu and Athens

Moisis Caimis was born into the Ionian world at a time when nation-states constituted a novelty within a universe of multi-ethnic empires. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the Adriatic Sea—once a “bridge” between the Italian

⁸ Unfortunately Caimis' personal archives have not been found yet. Secondary literature on Caimis: Iosif Siakis, “Μωϋσης Χαΐμης. Μία πνευματική προσωπικότητα του ελληνικού Εβραϊσμού” [Moisis Chaimis: An Intellectual Personality of Greek Judaism] *Chronika* 26 (1980): 21-32; Caimis is further mentioned in Rafail Frezis, *The Jewish Press in Greece* (Volos: Israilitike Koinoteta Volou and Ekdoseis Ores, 1999). Additional primary sources: Iosif Siakis Collection, “The Jews of Corfu,” file 3, Hellenic Literary and Historical Archive, Athens.

lands, the Austro-Hungarian and the Ottoman Empire—had degraded into a “borderland region.”⁹ In this period, the Ionian Islands changed rulers several times. Formerly under Venetian dominion, Napoleon’s army shortly occupied the archipelago in 1797. Thereupon, a Russian-Ottoman alliance enforced the establishment of the semi-independent, constitutional aristocracy of the Septinsular Republic (1799-1807), and finally the islands came under a British protectorate in 1815.¹⁰ Our protagonist’s year of birth—1864—marked the Ionian Islands’ unification (Enosis) with the Greek nation-state.

Moisis Caimis’ personal trajectory functions as paradigm of Jewish mobility in Greece and is emblematic of the shift in political and cultural geographies in the course of the region’s nationalization. Through his biography and journalistic productions, we gain a glimpse into the history of Corfu’s Jewish community at a time of its transition from an Adriatic insular trade hub to a peripheral port in the Greek Kingdom. At the same time, Caimis’ life story attests to the slowly increasing attraction of Athens as novel center for Jews in search of work and education in early twentieth century Greece.¹¹

Following Enosis, the Jews of Corfu maintained their pre-existing cultural and economic ties with the Italian-speaking Adriatic world, while simultaneously engaging in the island’s public life as emancipated Greek citizens. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Corfiote Jews’ frame of reference began to stretch even beyond the Adriatic and Greek worlds, as many Jews left their island and

⁹ Dominique Kirchner Reill, *Nationalists Who Feared the Nation: Adriatic Multi-Nationalism in Habsburg Dalmatia, Trieste, and Venice* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012), 8-11.

¹⁰ Konstantina Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean, 1800-1850: Stammering the Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 13-15.

¹¹ Caimis personal trajectory supports the scholarly assumption that Athens gained more importance as center of Jewish life in Greece at the turn of the century: Eyal Ginio, “Γράφοντας για την Εβραϊκή Ιστορία της Νεότερης Ελλάδας: Η Περίπτωση της Κέρκυρας” [Writing on the History of Jews in Modern Greece: The Case of Corfu], *Archeiotaxio*, 19 (2017): 20-41; Philip Carabott, “The Jewish presence in Athens during the nineteenth Century: From Max Rothschild to the Israelite Fraternity,” in *Jewish Communities between the East and the West*, eds. Machaira and Papastefanaki, 186.

established Corfiote diaspora centers in Trieste, Manchester and Alexandria.¹² In contrast to the many who decided to leave, the Caimis family stayed on the island, where the young Moisis Caimis was raised in an Italian and Greek speaking environment and gained a reading knowledge of Hebrew.¹³ His father, Iesoua Chaim, belonged to the island's Greek-speaking Jewish congregation.¹⁴ The family patriarch, who was prohibited under British rule to exercise his profession of lawyer, Hellenized his surname "Chaim" into "Chaïmis" (Χαΐμης) following Ionian Jews' political emancipation in the course of Enosis (1864) and sent his son—Moisis—to study at the island's Greek public lyceum.¹⁵

Moisis Caimis' intellectual formation was deeply influenced by the emergence of an Ionian Jewish publishing sphere in the second half of the nineteenth century. His family was closely related to Giuseppe Nacamulli (1821-1886), the pioneer of the Jewish press on Corfu, who introduced the young Moisis Caimis to the craft of journalism and publishing.¹⁶ Throughout his life, Nacamulli functioned as an

¹² On the Jewish community of Corfu in the post-Enosis period: Pearl Preschel, "The Jews of Corfu" (PhD diss., New York University, 1984); Gino, "The Case of Corfu"; Constanze Kolbe, "Soap and the Making of a Short Distance Network in the Nineteenth-Century Adriatic," in *Jews and the Mediterranean*, eds. Matthias B. Lehmann and Jessica M. Marglin, 149-69 (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2020).

¹³ Siakis, "Moisis Chaimis," 22.

¹⁴ Three groups of origin made up the Jews of Corfu. Greek-speaking Jews, who were initially called "Toshebim" and later "Greki" or "Romaniotes," formed the oldest community. In the sixteenth and seventeenth century, Jews from the Kingdom of Naples and the regions of Sicilia and Apulia (Puglia) resettled in Corfu. Richard Gottheil, and Moisis Caimis, "Corfu," *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, 1901. See further: Dimitrios Varvaritis, " 'The Jews have got into trouble again...': Responses to the Publication of Cronaca Israelitica and the Question of Jewish Emancipation in the Ionian Islands (1861-1863)," in *Miscellanea, Quest. Issues in Contemporary Jewish History. Journal of the Fondazione CDEC* 7 (2014): 32.

¹⁵ For the purpose of this article, I follow the Latin spelling of the surname as "Caimis." The Greek version "Χαΐμης" changed in the following generation to "Καΐμη" as Moisis Caimis' son Giulio further Hellenized the name. Aikaterini Sotirios Triantafullou, "Giulio Caimi as an Art Theoretician and Painter (1897-1982)," (PhD diss., National Kapodistrian University Athens, 2015), 17-19.

¹⁶ Caimis portrayed Nacamulli as his cousin in an article for the *Israelitikon Bima tis Ellados* in 1925. Cited from the republished version. Moisis Caimis, "Στοιχεία περί των Εβραίων της Κερκύρας" [Details on the Jews of Corfu], *Chronika* 58 (1983): 7-9.

interlocutor between Italian and Greek cultural spheres.¹⁷ In the 1860's, he established a publishing house and a printing press under the name *Korais*, honoring the Greek Enlightenment scholar Adamantios Korais.¹⁸ Nacamulli imported Hebrew letter plates from Livorno and used his press to publish religious and secular literature.¹⁹ Fluent in Hebrew, Greek and Italian, he translated between those languages and published, among other books, a Greek grammar in Italian (1868) and a Greek translation of the daily prayer collection “Siddur” (1885).²⁰ His Greek-Italian newspaper *Cronaca Israelitica/Israilitika Chronika* (1861-1864)—the first Jewish periodical published in the non-Ottoman Greek-speaking world—voiced criticism over the legal discrimination of Jews under British rule and contributed significantly to discussing Jewish issues in a public sphere.²¹ In 1864, Nacamulli celebrated Corfu's integration into the Greek Kingdom as a moment of Jewish political emancipation.²² A few years later, his efforts were honored by the Greek state when his publishing house gained a medal at the national exhibition of Athens in 1867.²³

Notwithstanding his excellent relations with the Greek political establishment, Nacamulli's post-Enosis journals attest to the continuation and strengthening of cultural ties between Corfu and different Italian-speaking Jewish centers in the Adriatic world. He published the journals *Famiglia Israelitica* (1869-1873) and *Mosè Antologia Israelitica* (1878-1885) in the Italian language and established a

¹⁷ Ibid., while Nacamulli closely cooperated with Italian language journals, he also belonged to the Parnassos Literary Society, which had been established in Athens in 1865.

¹⁸ Nacamulli might have chosen this name due to Korais' liberal position towards non-Christians in an envisioned Greek society. Influenced by the French political model, Korais assumed that civil rights should not be dependent on religious affiliations. Adamantios Korais, “Report on the present state of civilization in Greece,” in *Discourses of Collective Identity in Central and Southeast Europe (1770-1945): Texts and Commentaries*, eds. Balázs Trencsényi, and Michal Kopeček (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2006), 142-147.

¹⁹ Preschel, “The Jews of Corfu,” 78.

²⁰ Frezis, *The Jewish Press in Greece*, 440-441.

²¹ For a historiographical article on the legal situation of Jews under British rule: Sakis Gekas, “For Better or for Worse? A Counter-Narrative of Corfu. Jewish History and the Transition from the Ionian State to the Greek Kingdom (1815-1890s),” in *Jewish Communities between the East and the West*, eds. Machaira and Papastefanaki, 168.

²² On Nacamulli: Varvaritis, “The Jews have got into trouble again,” 37-38.

²³ Upon Nacamulli's death, Caimis wrote a Eulogy for his mentor: Moisis Caimis, “Giuseppe Nacamulli di Corfu,” *Il Corriere Israelitico* 25 (1886): 157-158.

close cooperation with the Trieste-based Jewish Italian journal *Il Corriere Israelitico* (1862-1915).²⁴ After the emigration of Corfiote Jews to Manchester, Trieste and Alexandria, these journals played an important role in circulating news and fostering philanthropic ties between the mother-island Corfu and the diaspora enclaves.²⁵ In response to an increase of Corfiote Jews settling in Trieste in the 1880's, *Il Corriere Israelitico* started a column by the name "Da Corfu" devoted to news from the island.²⁶ And it was none other than our protagonists, the young Moisis Caimis, who was in charge of this news section. As foreign correspondent for this Italian Jewish publication, Caimis gained his first journalistic experience. The cooperation lasted for more than ten years (1885-1897).²⁷

Seeking higher education, Moisis Caimis moved to Athens in 1889 to study law at the National University. In the capital, he encountered a Jewish reality different from the one he knew from Corfu. Although Corfu remained numerically the largest Jewish community in Greece, Athens slowly emerged as alternative center of Jewish life in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²⁸ At the time of his arrival, the city was home to merely 80 Jewish families, which lacked any form of Jewish religious establishment.²⁹ Caimis' sojourn in the capital coincided,

²⁴ In fact, Joseph Emmanuel Levi, Corfu's chief rabbi from 1875 to 1887, functioned as co-editor of *Mosè Antologia*, while simultaneously belonging to the publishing board of *Il Corriere Israelitico*. Both journals contributed to the spread of the ideas of the *Collegio Rabbिनico* in Padua, an institution that propagated an alternative to the traditional yeshiva education of rabbis, and operated under the influence of the movement *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Constanze Kolbe, "Crossing Regions, Nations, Empires: The Jews of Corfu and the Making of a Jewish Adriatic, 1850-1914" (PhD diss., Indiana University, 2017), 30-67.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 62-67.

²⁶ The column first appears in the edition 1885-1886. *Ibid.*, 63.

²⁷ Moise Schwab lists articles by Moisis Caimis in *Il Corriere Israelitico* for the years 1885-1898. See: Moise Schwab, *Index of Articles relative to Jewish History and Literature*, ed. Zosa Szajkowski (New York: Ktav, 1971), 65-66. See further: Kolbe, "Crossing Regions, Nations, Empires," 64, 177.

²⁸ At the turn of the century the Jewish community of Corfu numbered around 4000 members. This number declined to around 2000 Jews living on the island at the eve of WWII. Preschel, "The Jews of Corfu," 91, 128.

²⁹ In contrast to Corfu, the Jewish community of Athens came into being only during the nineteenth century. Hence, it lacked Corfu's longstanding history and old religious establishment. The first Jewish settlers arrived with King Otto's entourage from Bavaria to Athens after the state's

however, with the attempt by liberal Jewish laymen to institutionalize the city's nascent Jewish life.³⁰ To this end, in 1890 they established the Jewish Fraternity of Athens (Ισραηλιτική Αδελφότης Αθηνών, I.A.A.) and started collecting money for the construction of a Synagogue and the appointment of a rabbi.³¹ A year later, the same community leaders established the General Secretariat of the Israelite Communities of Greece (Γενική Γραμματεία των εν Ελλάδι Ισραηλιτικών Κοινοτήτων), whose president was ex officio the same as the head of the I.A.A. and thus presided over the whole of Greek Jewry.³² Inter-communal mobility was central to this institutionalization process, as Jews who relocated from the provinces (Ionian Islands and Thessaly) to the capital played a leading role in the novel institutions.³³ In Athens, Greek culture constituted a unifying element for the diverse congregation and community leaders displayed their loyalty towards the Greek state, for example, through festive activities on national Independence Day.³⁴ Moisis Caimis reported enthusiastically about these developments in his column “Da Corfu” for *Il Corriere Israelitico*.³⁵

Caimis' sojourn in the capital was of short duration. After only two years, he dropped out of his studies—probably due to health issues—and returned to his

foundation. Throughout the nineteenth century, Jews moved to the capital from various places like Smyrna, the Ionian Islands, Thessaly, Thessaloniki and Constantinople. From 10 Jewish families in 1856, the community had grown to 80 families in 1890: Michael Molho “La Nouvelle Communaute Juive D’Athenes,” in *The Joshua Starr Memorial Volume: Studies in History and Philology* (New York: n. p., 1953), 231-240; Bernard Pierron, *Juifs et Chrétiens de la Grèce moderne* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1996).

³⁰ Carabott, “The Jewish presence in Athens during the nineteenth Century,” 186.

³¹ Ibid., 188-189, the Athenian-born Carl Rothschild (1843-1918) became the fraternity's president.

³² It is not clear whether the other Jewish communities of Greece recognized the self-elected national leadership of the General Secretariat and it seems that the Athenian initiative was only short-lived.

³³ For example, the banker Moisis Levis from Trikala in Thessaly was chosen as treasurer of the first Jewish fraternity of Athens and Avraham Konstantinis from the Ionian Island of Zakynthos became its secretary. Later the same Avraham Konstantinis served as president of the Athens Jewish community from 1900 to 1915. Carabott, “The Jewish presence in Athens during the nineteenth Century,” 188-189.

³⁴ Philip Carabott, “Έλληνες Εβραίοι πολίτες στα τέλη του 19ου- αρχές 20ου αιώνα” [Greek Jewish citizens at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century], *Archeiotaxio* 19 (2017): 43-62.

³⁵ Moisis Caimis, “Da Corfu,” *Il Corriere Israelitico* 29 (1890-1891): 44.

home-town in Corfu, where he retrained to be a public school teacher.³⁶ While Caimis re-established himself in Corfu, an ever-larger number of his coreligionists left the island in search for alternative safe havens. At Easter 1891, a blood-libel accusation incited a wave of antisemitic attacks on the Ionian Islands.³⁷ Despite the violence, Caimis—at that time president of Corfu’s Jewish community—portrayed the Greek government as protector of the Jews and urged his coreligionists to stay. He wrote: “the Greek people, we have said so also on other occasions, are basically liberal and don’t let themselves be misled by foolish superstitions about us; they rather lack knowledge about our religious principles.”³⁸ In a letter to the Alliance Israélite Universelle in 1900, he reiterated his conviction that Antisemitism in Greece resulted from “misunderstandings” and could be alleviated through education.³⁹ At the height of the Dreyfus affair and in wake of the pogrom on Corfu, Caimis suggested two interrelated answers to the rise of Antisemitism in Europe: educating Christians about Jewish principles and raising Jewish self-awareness through the spread of Zionism. While *Il Corriere Israelitico* was the first Italian-language journal to openly endorse a pro-Zionist position, Caimis launched the first Zionist association in Greece. In 1897—the same year in which the first Zionist Congress was held in Basel—he founded Mevasser Zion on Corfu.⁴⁰

Shortly thereafter, he parted ways with *Il Corriere Israelitico* and embarked upon his own journalistic journey. Through the pages of *Israilitis Chronografos* (1899–1901)—the first Jewish periodical published entirely in the Greek language—the journalist endeavored to familiarize Greek-speaking Jews with Zionism and to

³⁶ Stakis, “Moisis Chaimis,” 5.

³⁷ For a detailed factual account of the events see: Eftychia Liata, “The Anti-Semitic Disturbances on Corfu and Zakynthos in 1891 and their Socio-Political Consequences,” *The Historical Review/La Revue Historique* 4 (2008): 157-169.

³⁸ Moisis Caimis, “Da Corfu,” *Il Corriere Israelitico* 30 (April 1892): 282-283.

³⁹ Moisis Caimis to the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris, November 25, 1900, Selected records from the archives of the Alliance Israélite Universelle, Record Group 43.117M, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC. I would like to thank Philip Carabott for providing me with this letter.

⁴⁰ On the Zionist position of *Il Corriere Israelitico* see: Carlotta Ferrara degli Uberti, *Making Italian Jews: Family, Gender, Religion and the Nation, 1861-1918* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 7.

educate his Christian compatriots about Judaism. It is unclear, however, how widely his journal was read. Caimis himself stated that he had subscribers all over Greece.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the journal was only short-lived, probably due to financial difficulties and a lack of paying subscribers.⁴²

Although Caimis occupied an important role in Corfu's Jewish community, he finally relocated with his family to Athens in 1906.⁴³ This choice of residency supports the aforementioned scholarly assumption of a gradual power shift from Corfu to Athens. The island's gradual economic and intellectual provincialization occurred simultaneously to the capital's consolidation as a new magnet for Jewish intellectuals in early twentieth century Greece. Caimis' Athenian years (1906-1929) show how deeply he was anchored within Greek political and intellectual circles, while continuing to function as mediator between Greek and Italian cultural spheres. In Corfu, he had taught Greek to Italian-speaking Jewish children; in Athens, he worked as Italian instructor at the commercial college.⁴⁴ Simultaneously, he was active in multiple national publishing spheres. While many Athenian papers such as *Patrida*, *Akropolis*, *Neon Asti*, *Estia*, and *Neoelliniki Epitheorisis* featured his texts, Caimis also worked as Athenian correspondent for the Rome-based newspaper *La Tribuna*.⁴⁵ At the same time, he sympathized with Demoticism—a neo-romantic and anti-elitist movement supported by a rising, educated middle class that sought the establishment of Demotic (the Greek vernacular), instead of Katharevousa (an artificial language resembling Ancient Greek), as the national language of Greece.⁴⁶ Caimis maintained close relations with many educators and literati of his time, who

⁴¹ A note of thanks to Jewish community leaders in Larissa, Volos and Trikala for their support of the journal is published in: Moisis Caimis, "From the Jewish World. Internal News," *Israilitis Chronographos* 1, no. 3 (August 1899): 7.

⁴² Caimis, "To the Subscribers," *Israilitis Chronographos* 2, no. 8 (April 1901): 57.

⁴³ Already in 1900 he anticipated "a bright future" for the young Jewish community in the capital, see: Moisis Caimis, letter to the Alliance Israélite Universelle, 25th November 1900.

⁴⁴ Siakis, "Moisis Chaimis," 5 and 9.

⁴⁵ Alfredo Baccarini and Giuseppe Zanardelli, political leaders of the Italian historical left, established *La Tribuna* in 1883. See further: Siakis, "Moisis Chaimis," 10.

⁴⁶ For further information on the language debate in Greece see: Peter Mackridge, *Language and National Identity in Greece 1766-1976* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

advocated the usage of *Demotic* Greek.⁴⁷ He even published an article in the Democists' mouthpiece, the journal *Noumas* (1903-1917).⁴⁸ Caimis' article for *Noumas* emphasized parallels between Hebrew revivalism and Demoticism.⁴⁹

The proximity to the Greek political establishment in the capital allowed Caimis to create ties with Greek politicians. After relocating to Athens, he worked as chief editor of the Athenian newspaper *Imerisia*, which was ideologically affiliated with Georgios Theotokis (1844-1916), who served as Greek Prime Minister several times between 1899 and 1909.⁵⁰ Following the Goudi Coup of 1909, Caimis started to support the political newcomer Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) and used his cooperation with *La Tribuna* to make the modernist politician known in Italy.⁵¹ At a time of increased national tensions in the Balkans, Caimis established his second Greco-Jewish journal *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* (1912-1916). Besides following an educational agenda and adopting a Zionist outlook, the journal called for the institutional unification of Greek Jewry under the auspices of the Jewish leadership in Athens.⁵²

⁴⁷ The Corfiote novelist Konstantinos Theotokis (1872-1923) and Irini Dendrinou (1897-1974), a poet and feminist from the island, were among his contacts. Furthermore, he was associated with Alexandros Pallis (1851-1935), education and language reformer, and Lorentzo Mavili (1860-1912), poet and parliamentarian. Siakis, "Mosis Chaimis," 6

⁴⁸ Caimis, *Noumas*, May 15, 1905, 6-7; For further information on *Noumas* see: Georgios Kalogiannis, "Ο Νουμάς και η Εποχή του (1903-1931). Γλωσσικοί και Ιδεολογικοί Αγώνες" [Noumas and its Time (1903-1931): Linguistic and Ideological Struggle] (PhD diss., Kapodistrias University Athens, 1886).

⁴⁹ For further details on Caimis' connection to Demoticism: Joana Bürger, "Early Zionist Contribution to the Making of Greek Jewry: Case study of Mosis Caimis' *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* (1912-1916)," (MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2020), 32-40.

⁵⁰ Frezis, *The Jewish Press in Greece*, 451.

⁵¹ During the National Schism of Greece, Caimis wrote in favor of the Venizelos government for *La Tribuna*. See: France. Ministère de la guerre, *Bulletin quotidien de presse étrangère* 142 (July 21, 1916): 3. See further: Frezis, *The Jewish Press in Greece*, 452.

⁵² In June 1912, he published a letter by the president of the Jewish community in Athens, Avraham Konstantinis, inviting community leaders to a joint conference. Mosis Caimis, "Concerning the Conference of the Jewish Greek communities. Circular by the president of the Jewish community in Athens," *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 1, no. 4 (June 1912): 64. However, the Balkan Wars (1912-1913) and World War I (1914-1918) thwarted these plans and the conference was repeatedly postponed. Cancellation announcement: Caimis, "The Conference of the Communities," *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 1, no. 7-9 (1912): 128. On a detailed analysis of this journal: Bürger, "Early Zionist Contribution to the Making of Greek Jewry."

Following the Greek occupation of Thessaloniki (1912) during the Balkan Wars, our protagonist started to play a political role in the unfolding events. In early 1913, a Jew from Thessaloniki reported to the Alliance Israélite Universelle that “Venizelos, the prime minister, has entrusted the most prominent Jews of Greece with the mission to consolidate the trust among the leadership of our community and to convince us of the advantages of Greek sovereignty.”⁵³ One of those prominent Jews of Old Greece was Moïsis Caimis. Charged by Venizelos with the mission to preside over the city’s press bureau, he tried to convince the city’s Jewish elite to support Greek rule. During his stay in Thessaloniki, he co-published the Salonican French-language newspaper *La Liberté*.⁵⁴

Upon his return to Athens a few months later, Caimis continued to devote his energy to the publication of *Israilitiki Epitheorisis*, his self-proclaimed organ of Greek Jewry.⁵⁵ The geopolitical developments forced him to re-articulate the meaning of Greek Jewry and to defend the civil rights of Jews in the newly acquired territories. While it is not clear how influential Caimis was within intellectual Jewish circles in Thessaloniki, he continued to be a seminal figure in the Jewish life of Old Greece (pre-1912 borders). He functioned as secretary of Athens’ Jewish community (1915), spurred the spread of Zionism and co-founded a local branch of the B’nai B’rith lodge in 1920.⁵⁶ Moïsis Caimis passed away in 1929, aged 65. His legacy remained alive among the Jews of Athens for several more decades. He

⁵³ Letter by L. Carmona to J. Bigart, secretary of the AIU, May 1913, cited in Rena Molho “Venizelos and the Jewish Community of Salonika, 1912-1919,” *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 13, no. 34 (1986): 117.

⁵⁴ Caimis stated in the editorial of *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* that he was ordered to Thessaloniki by the government and stayed there for three months. Caimis, “To our Readership,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 10-12 (1912-1913): 130; See further: Frezis, *The Jewish Press in Greece*, 452.

⁵⁵ It seems likely that the Venizelos government subsidized Caimis’ *Israilitiki Epitheorisis*. However, no sources have been found yet to support this claim. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that Caimis was genuinely convinced of his positions, which were shared by many Jewish intellectuals in Old Greece. Hence, we should refrain from analyzing the journal solely as medium of state propaganda.

⁵⁶ Siakis, “Moïsis Chaimis,” 8.

was remembered in Athenian Jewish newspapers as a sociologist, journalist and important intellectual figure of Old Greece's Jewry.⁵⁷

Between Ethnos and Patria

After presenting Caimis' life as journalist and cultural mediator, the following section dives deeper into his intellectual work. When and how did he first frame Greek Jewry as a political community and how did he harmonize his political vision of Jewish integration into the Greek state system with his endorsement of Zionism? Furthermore, I will show how the process of *Making Greek Jewry*—in Caimis' writing—was associated with a radical re-imagining of *space* and *time*. I argue that Caimis' journalism aimed to reshape Jews' sense of geographical belonging to Greece and to re-anchor them in a national perception of time through the construction of a narrative of Greco-Jewish historical legacy.

The roots of Caimis' conceptualization of Greek Jewry as political community lie in his earliest texts for *Il Corriere Israelitico*. In his first column "Da Corfu" Caimis states: "25 years ago every distinguished profession was closed to the Israelites [a reference to the British protectorate]. Now, there is no longer a need for [our] leaders sitting, detached, in the temple [synagogue], to represent their coreligionists to the government on every little occasion." These words describe the post-emancipation transformation and democratization of Jewish politics and express the author's conviction that Jewish issues should be discussed openly in a public sphere. He further declares in the same article:

The Israelites, Greek citizens like the others, are sufficiently represented in the government by the municipal authorities and deputies, who are

⁵⁷ In the 1950's members of the Jewish community of Athens tried to collect money for the purpose of writing an entry, in Caimis' honor, in the Golden Book of the Jewish National Fund. See: *Ebraiki Estia* 115, "Keren Kayemet." May 30, 1952. The divide between the Jews of Old and New Greece, seems to have persisted to a certain extent after WWII, as Caimis is specifically remembered as an important Jew of Old Greece. See: "Γένθη Φινέτα Μωϋσή Χαΐμη" [Obituary Fineta Moisi Chaimi] *Ebraiki Estia* 98, March 16, 1951; "Κοινωνικά" [Social Affairs] *Ebraiki Estia* 3, March 28, 1952.

elected through universal suffrage [...]. We need people with a modern spirit, who understand the age in which we live, to point the way to the coreligionists who need them.⁵⁸

Hence, the young Moisis Caimis, who wrote these lines during his studies in Athens while witnessing the institutionalization of Jewish life in the capital, based his advocacy of Jews' integration into the Greek state system on his firm belief in the principles of universal suffrage and modern state-citizen relations. In other words, Caimis linked his fellow Jews' Greekness to their status as citizens of Greece. At the same time, he expressed his conviction that the Greek language should play a unifying role for the polyglot Jewish citizens of Greece. For example, when Athenian Jews succeeded in hiring their first rabbi, Caimis voiced his discontent with the new spiritual leader's inability to speak Greek: "We would like at least for the rabbi of the capital to know our beautiful national language."⁵⁹ With this comment, the journalist omitted Greek Jews' linguistic diversity and elevated the Greek language as the national idiom above Italian or even Judeo-Spanish, traditionally used by the majority of Jews in the region.⁶⁰

The identification with the Greek state project gained special momentum at times of heated conflict. During the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897, Caimis reported to *Il Corriere Israelitico* that around 250 Greek Israelites—"obeying the high ideals of freedom and progress" and "willing to die for their homeland"—fought besides their Christian compatriots in the Greek army.⁶¹ Hence, Jews' military conscription functioned as a paradigm of Greco-Jewish citizenship. The war played a special role in the formation of Greek Jewry in a twofold manner. On the one hand, it brought Jews from various remote Greek localities together to fight under a common banner, and, on the other hand, it forced the government to

⁵⁸ Caimis, "Da Corfu," *Il Corriere Israelitico* 27 (1888-1889): 254-255.

⁵⁹ Caimis, "Da Corfu," *Il Corriere Israelitico* 29 (1890-1891): 44.

⁶⁰ While Corfiote Jews traditionally spoke either Italian or Greek, the Jews of Athens included Judeo-Spanish, Greek and Yiddish speakers, whereas the Jews of Thessaly were mostly of Sephardic origin. For a linguistic mapping of Greek Jewry see: Fleming, *Greece—A Jewish History*, 41-48.

⁶¹ Caimis, "Corfu, 20 July 1897," *Il Corriere Israelitico* 36 (1897): 58.

institutionalize state-minority relations by providing special arrangements for Jewish soldiers to observe their religious duties.⁶²

Through the pages of *Il Corriere Israelitico*, Caimis also reported on the contributions of foreign nationals to the Greco-Ottoman war of 1897. He celebrated the efforts of the Garibaldini, volunteers from Italy fighting under the command of Ricciotti Garibaldi along the Greek army against the Ottomans, as an expression of Italian Philhellenism.⁶³ Thrilled by this sense of brotherhood between Italians and Greeks, he hurried to emphasize the existence of Jews in Garibaldi's ranks. He announced proudly that his colleague Attilio Luzzatto, an Italian-Jewish journalist, parliamentarian and "great and honest Philhellene," who supported the Greek cause as director of the Italian journal *La Tribuna*, fought along Garibaldi in Thessaly.⁶⁴ In light of the Ottoman invasion, Caimis depicted Jewish support for the Greek cause not only as an expression of Philhellenism, but as part of a greater struggle for the right to self-determination and national liberty. In the same vein, he reported on Joseph Marco Baruch (1872-1899), a cosmopolitan revolutionary and Zionist from Constantinople, who "came to Greece with the name of Palestine on his lips."⁶⁵ Baruch hoped that the fight against the Ottomans would eventually result in the collapse of the Empire and the

⁶² On the institutionalization of state-minority relations in the course of Greek expansion and the integration of Jewish communities in the nineteenth century see: Carabott, "Greek Jewish citizens," 50-52.

⁶³ On the Garibaldini volunteers see: Gilles Pécourt, "Philhellenism in Italy: Political Friendship and the Italian Volunteers in the Mediterranean in the nineteenth century," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 9, no. 4 (2010): 405-427; Stathis Birtachas, "'In defence of the liberty and the rights of Great Mother Greece.' The Italian Garibaldini Volunteers in Epirus: the decline of a long tradition in Greece. Evaluation of an old story and new research perspectives," *Mediterranean Chronicle* 6 (2016): 161-182.

⁶⁴ Caimis, "Corfu, 20 July 1897," 58; Moisis Caimis, "Attilios Louzzatos," *Israilitis Chronografos* 11 (1900): 7. On Luzzatto see further: Eva Cecchinato, "Luzzatto, Attilio Italico," *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, vol. 66 (2006), [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/attilio-italico-luzzatto_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/attilio-italico-luzzatto_(Dizionario-Biografico)/).

⁶⁵ Caimis, "Corfu, 20 July 1897," 58. Baruch, born in Constantinople and raised in France, established short-lived Zionist newspapers and tried to spread Zionism in Algeria, Bulgaria, Egypt and finally Italy: *Die Welt. Zentralorgan der Zionistischen Bewegung*, September 15, 1899, 9-10. This fascinating character has attracted only little scholarly attention so far: Paula Daccarett, "1890s Zionism reconsidered: Joseph Marco Baruch," *Jewish History* 19 (2005): 315-345.

establishment of a national home for Jews in Palestine. When Baruch committed suicide a few years later, Caimis' necrology stated:

Baruch was imbued with the love for freedom. Feeling for all the enslaved nations and an ardent Philhellene, he announced that the Jews and the Greeks, two glorious nations with a bright past and an equally bright future, should unite in a brotherly struggle for the rebirth of the East.⁶⁶

Caimis did not delve deeper into this vision of Greco-Jewish cooperation in dismantling the Ottoman Middle East in any of his further texts. Nonetheless, this episode reveals that the author did not perceive any contradiction between advocating several national movements simultaneously. On the contrary, Caimis' pluralist conception of nationhood in the late nineteenth century enabled a transnational celebration of "revolutionary cosmopolitanism," which included Italian and Zionist proclamations of philhellenism.⁶⁷

Although Baruch's militant activism for the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine evidently impressed Caimis, he himself endorsed a more subtle approach to Jewish nationalism. At a time when territorial Zionism was still a novel movement, he used his journal *Israilitis Chronographos* (1899-1901) to make the ideas of Zionism known in Greece. He reported on the Zionist Congress, provided news from Zionist associations around the world and published Greek translations of speeches by Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau.⁶⁸ Besides spreading knowledge about this new movement, he was concerned to harmonize the idea of Jewish nationalism with the framework of Greek citizenship.⁶⁹ In a three-part

⁶⁶ Caimis, "Necrology," *Israilitis Chronografos* 3 (1899): 7.

⁶⁷ Birtachas applied the term revolutionary cosmopolitanism in his analysis of the Garibaldi mission to Greece in 1897. Birtachas, *The Italian Garibaldi Volunteers*, 166.

⁶⁸ For example: Caimis, "Third Zionist Congress," *Israilitis Chronographos* 1, no. 3 (August 1899): 2; Id., "Translation of a speech by Max Nordau," *Israilitis Chronographos* 2, no. 1 (September 1900), 4; Id., "Zionist News," *Israilitis Chronographos* 2, no. 8 (April 1901), 59; Id., "Dr. Herzl to the Maccabean Club in London," *Israilitis Chronographos* 2, no. 10 (June 1901): 77-80.

⁶⁹ On Caimis' usage of the concept citizenship and the relation between Zionism and Greek citizenship see further: Bürger, "Early Zionist Contribution to the Making of Greek Jewry," 15-16, 62-84. On Zionism in the Balkans and in the Ottoman Empire: Esther Benbassa and Aron

series of texts entitled “Zionism,” he discussed the relation of Zionism and Greek patriotism. Caimis declared that his sympathy with the movement was of a philanthropic nature. He supported territorial Zionism insofar as he acknowledged the need for a safe haven for the persecuted Jews of Russia and Romania. The Jews of Greece, however, who “enjoy full political rights and the freedom to contribute to the common good of their patria,” should nurture “a platonic [love] for Zion,” which—under the contemporary circumstances of rising Antisemitism—“does not rule out their material support for the movement.”⁷⁰ In his second Greco-Jewish journal, the call for material support of the Zionist project gained concrete form. *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* (1912-1916) encouraged its readers to donate to the Jewish National Fund and published the donors’ names. Yet, the promotion of a Jewish national consciousness within the borders of the Greek state remained his main concern.⁷¹ He differentiated between *ethnismos* (national consciousness) and *patria* (home country) and explained that despite the congruence of national consciousness and patriotism for most peoples, in the case of the Jews it diverged. Throughout his life, Caimis asserted that Jews in Greece ought to perceive themselves as a nation with Zion as their *pneumatiki patrida* (spiritual patria), while being primarily committed to the Greek state as their corporeal homeland.⁷²

Rodrigue, *Sephardi Jewry: A History of the Judeo-Spanish Community, 14th-20th Centuries* (Berkeley: California Press, 2000), 65-159; Rozen, *The Last Ottoman Century and Beyond*, 206-221.

⁷⁰ Caimis, “Zionism. Part I,” *Israilitis Chronographos* 1, no. 1 (1899): 4; Id., “Zionism. Part II,” *Israilitis Chronographos* 1, no. 2 (1899): 6-8.

⁷¹ This finding corresponds with Rena Molho’s interpretation of the first two decades of the Zionist movement in Thessaloniki (1899-1919). She concludes that local Zionists, despite supporting the idea of Jewish territorial sovereignty, emphasized their eagerness to integrate into the Greek nation under the precondition that the state would protect their separate ethnic identity after the city’s annexation to Greece. Rena Molho, “The Zionist movement up to the first Panhellenic Zionist Congress,” in *Salonica and Istanbul: Social, Political and Cultural Aspects of Jewish Life*, ed. Rena Molho (Istanbul: The ISIS Press, 2005), 185. On Zionists’ contributions to Hellenizing the Jews of Thessaloniki in the interwar period, see: Paris Papamichos Chronakis: “A National Home in the Diaspora? Salonican Zionism and the Making of a Greco-Jewish City” *Levantine Studies* 8, no. 2 (Winter 2018).

⁷² Caimis, “Zionism. Part I,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 2, no. 4 (1913): 57-59; Id., “Zionism. Part II,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 2, no. 5 (1913): 79-81; Id., “Zionism. Part Three,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 2, no. 7-8 (1913): 116-117; Id., “Zionism. Part Four,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 2, no. 10 (1913): 161-163.

Caimis' conceptualization of Greece as a corporeal homeland and *patria* for his fellow Jews changed during the period from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century. Scholarship on the transition of the Ionian Islands from the time of Venetian domination to their integration into the Greek Kingdom emphasizes the “radical transformation of the concept of ‘patria’, from a cultural and local community into a political and national entity.”⁷³ Although Caimis' work belongs to the post-Enosis period, it still exhibits traces of this transformation process. A comparison of his early texts for *Il Corriere Israelitico* with the approach of his Greco-Jewish journals reveals a shift in the usage of *patria* from a concept of multi-layered affiliations to one confined by nation-state borders.

In the late nineteenth century, Caimis' reports for *Il Corriere Israelitico* reflected the multiplicity of Corfiote Jews' cultural and political affiliations by featuring traces of locally, nationally and globally defined Jewish self-conceptions. The column “Da Corfu” provided local news, like marriage announcements and obituaries from Corfu, it forged ties with Corfiote diaspora communities by calling for charity for the mother community, and it informed its readership about developments within the Jewish communities on the Greek mainland.⁷⁴ Hence, Corfu functioned for Italian-reading Jews as a window to get a glimpse of Jewish life in Athens, Chalcis and Thessaly. By reporting on these diverse Post-Venetian and Post-Ottoman Jewish communities, Caimis' column started to give meaning to the legal category of Greek Jewry, defined Greek citizenship, and enriched it with everyday stories from Jewish life in the Greek state.⁷⁵

⁷³ Zanou, *Transnational Patriotism in the Mediterranean*, 2.

⁷⁴ On *Il Corriere Israelitico*'s contribution to raising funds for the Jewish community of Corfu see: Kolbe, ““Crossing Regions, Nations, Empires,” 176-179.

⁷⁵ One of the first columns entitled “Da Corfu” proudly announces that Jews contributed to the government's efforts to secure loans and describes Prime Minister Trikoupis' satisfaction when visiting Jewish factories on Corfu. “Da Corfu,” *Il Corriere Israelitico* 24 (1885-1886): 241-242. For a study of the Jewish communities of Athens and Chalkis, see: “The Israelites of Greece,” *Il Corriere Israelitico* 26 (1887-1888): 74-76; News from Volos: Caimis, “Da Corfu,” *Il Corriere Israelitico* 32 (1893-1894): 185. News from Arta: Ibid., 232-233; On Jews and the Greek Revolution: Caimis, “Da Corfu,” *Il Corriere Israelitico* 33 (1894-1895): 164-165; Id., “Greece. The consequences of the last Earthquake,” *Corriere Israelitico* 33 (1894-1895): 42; On Community elections in Athens: “Da

Breaking away from the imperial publishing center of Trieste at the end of the nineteenth century, Caimis embarked on his own journalistic endeavor with the publication of *Israilitis Chronographos*. This journal provided Greek Jews with their “own voice,” a voice that no longer spoke Italian but embraced Greek as the unifying language for the linguistically diverse Jewish congregations. *Israilitis Chronographos* issued a news section, which was divided into *Esoteriko* (internal) and *Eksoteriko* (external news). The fact that Caimis considered events in the different Jewish communities of Greece as *Greek* “interior affairs,” while he presented global Jewish news through the column of “exterior affairs,” shows how much he had by then internalized nation-state borders as a frame of reference. Hence, the journal contributed significantly to the process of remodeling Jewish patriotism from an attachment to a certain locality to an affiliation with a citizenry.

This process, however, was not always linear and smooth. Moments of fluidity often interspersed Caimis’ cartographical categorization along state borders and his column of “interior news” included several stories of mobility, attesting to the inter-connectedness of Jewish communities along the Mediterranean shores. Moreover, the geographical boundaries of Greece were in flux throughout the long nineteenth century. Following the integration of the Ionian Islands in 1864 and Thessaly in 1881, Greek irredentism led to the incorporation of the regions of Epirus, Macedonia and Crete in 1912-1913. How then did our protagonist adapt his vision of Greek Jewry to the dramatic geopolitical changes on the ground?

An episode from Crete beautifully exemplifies how Caimis’ words strove to garb a formerly Ottoman Jewish community in a novel guise of *Greekness*. In 1899, he reported in the journal’s *Greek interior affairs* section that Matathias Coen—a Jewish resident of Crete—traveled to Rome, in order to receive his credentials for his new position of official interpreter for the Italian Consulate in Smyrna. At the time of writing, however, none of these localities—Crete, Rome or Smyrna—belonged to the Greek state in a geopolitical sense. Caimis reported enthusiastically that Mr. Coen was known for his Philhellenic feelings and that he gave his

Corfu,” *Corriere Israelitico* 33 (1894-1895): 276-277; During the Greco-Ottoman War (1897) the Jewish community of Corfu hosted the entire Jewish community of Arta for two months on their island “Da Corfu,” *Il Corriere Israelitico* 36 (1897-1898): 15.

offspring a Greek education, in order to send them to Athens for their higher studies.⁷⁶ Thus, Mr. Coen’s “Philhellene sentiments” justified in Caimis’ eyes the crossing of boundaries between “internal” and “external news.” Thirteen years later the island of Crete was officially integrated into the Greek state, and the territorial expansion made Caimis rephrase his categorization of Cretan Jews. Described as Philhellenes in 1899, Cretan Jews were now presented as belonging “since innumerable years to the Greek family due to language and education.”⁷⁷ Hence, we witness a shift in Caimis’ language from stressing Cretan Jews’ support for the Greek cause—an external position—to reaffirming their intrinsic affiliation with Greece, on the basis of preexisting cultural and linguistic attributes.

Caimis’ style of reporting on the integration of Thessaloniki’s Jewish community further exemplifies how the author broadened his categorization of Greek Jewry in line with Greek territorial expansion. In his early writings for *Il Corriere Israelitico* and *Israilitis Chronografos*, Caimis remained strikingly silent in regard to the Ottoman Jewish community close to Greece’s Eastern borders. He looked westwards in search for role models for Greek Jewry and his newspapers are filled with accounts from German, French, British and Italian Jewry. In his mental map, Sephardic Salonika was located far off to the East. He wrote about the community only once during the Greco-Ottoman War of 1897, in an opinion piece in *Il Corriere Israelitico*, which aimed to distance Greek Jews from their Ottoman brethren. He stated that “Greek Israelites” were distraught to learn that Salonikan Jews were associated with “a mob,” which insulted Greek prisoners of war. A decade later, as the Greek army approached the Ottoman city during the Balkan Wars, Caimis strove to shed a more positive light on the city’s Jewish community. In the fall of 1912, he wrote a semi-historical article tracing the city’s Jewish presence back to the pre-Christian period, emphasizing that Salonikan Jews had been sympathetic towards the Hellenic world during antiquity. He linked the community’s economic and spiritual advancement to the arrival of the expelled Jews from Spain, but was quick to add that the “oppressing Turkish system of

⁷⁶ Caimis, “Community news,” *Israilitis Chronografos* 2 (1899): 11.

⁷⁷ Caimis, “To our Readership,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 10-12 (1912-1913), 130.

governance did not allow for a lasting prosperity.” In an orientalist manner, the article continued by proclaiming that the establishment of an Alliance School in 1873 initiated a “new time of progress” for the city’s Jews. Describing the Ottoman period as time of decline, he claimed that Greek annexation would continue the process of renewal.⁷⁸ Through his articles, Caimis endeavoured to entrench Salonikan Jewry in a Greek and thus Western political and cultural sphere of influence.⁷⁹

Eventually, Greek rule over the annexed territories was finalized and while Caimis described Greek-speaking Jewish communities in Epirus and Crete as originally Greek, on the basis of their linguistic particularities, he welcomed the non-Grecophone Sephardic Jews of Thessaloniki and Macedonia with the words: “Henceforth, they are bound to us not just by racial and religious ties, but by a shared patria.”⁸⁰ He expressed his optimism that “the newcomers will support our work cheerfully so that Greek Jewry (*O en Elladi Evraïsmos*) can prove itself useful to them and to the patria, our beloved Greece.”⁸¹ From March 1913 onwards, *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* featured a French column to make its vision of Greek Jewry accessible to non-Greek speakers. While Caimis conceptualized Greeks and Jews as two distinct nations, he envisioned a process through which the Jews in the new territories—regardless of their linguistic profiles—would *become Greek* through their expression of patriotism. The journal portrays Greek

⁷⁸ Caimis, “The Jewish Community of Thessaloniki,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 7-9 (1912), 114.

⁷⁹ At the same time, Salonikan Jewish intellectuals themselves debated on their cultural positioning between Europe and the Ottoman East. On the role of the Alliance Schools in the Europeanization of Jewish education in Thessaloniki see: Rena Molho, “Education in the Jewish Community of Thessaloniki in the Beginning of the 20th Century,” *Balkan Studies* 34 (1993), 259-269. On the changing self-perception of the city’s Jews as reflected in the transformation of Jewish education from Ottoman to Greek rule see: Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 139-189.

⁸⁰ I translated the Greek term “φυλετική δεσμοί” as “racial ties.” Caimis used different Greek terms like “φυλή” and “έθνος” interchangeably. On the transformation of the concept of race in nineteenth and early twentieth century Greece see: Evi Afdela, *Φυλετικές Θεωρίες στην Ελλάδα* [Racial Theories in Greece] (Heraklion: Crete University Press, 2017).

⁸¹ Caimis, “To our Readership,” 130.

Jews primarily as a political community defined by their affiliation with Greece through their status as Greek citizens.⁸²

This reshaping of a religiously and locally defined community into a collective confined by nation-state borders was further associated with a radical re-imagining of *time*. In search of means to legitimize Greek expansion in the Eastern Mediterranean and, especially, to justify Jews' support of the state's irredentist agenda, Caimis followed the spirit of his time and turned towards the past. The development of novel historical narratives, with nations playing the central role as agents of change, constitutes the core of nineteenth century national writing.⁸³ Like his contemporaries, Caimis selectively used the past to craft historical narratives that would function as the cultural underpinning of his political agenda. The difference was, however, that in Caimis' historical imagination two agents appeared on the scene as leading acts: the Greeks and the Jews. Contrary to Jewish assimilationists in Central Europe, Caimis did not intend to portray his coreligionists as an integral part of the Greek nation; he rather viewed both peoples as distinct, yet historically connected, and presented Greco-Jewish cultural synergy as a cradle of European civilization. "Two places, two ethnicities, two nations produced this noble civilization, which liberated humanity from the darkness of barbarity and ignorance. These nations—everyone knows them—are the Greek and the Jewish."⁸⁴

With these words, Caimis opposed a widespread intellectual trope of Greco-Jewish cultural antithesis. In the nineteenth century, European civilizational discourse conceptualized Judaism and Hellenism as two contrasting, irreconcilable modes of thought—an idea that was also taken up and politically charged by anti-Semitic

⁸² The fact that Caimis portrayed Jews and Greeks as two distinct nations corresponds with Doxiadis' assumption that the Greek state differentiated between patriotic and non-patriotic Jewish citizens of the Greek state, while not perceiving them as members of the Greek nation. Doxiadis, *State, Nationalism, and the Jewish Communities of Modern Greece*, 153-154.

⁸³ Antonios Liakos, "The Construction of National Time: The Making of the Modern Greek Historical Imagination," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16, no. 1 (2001): 28.

⁸⁴ Caimis, "Israelites and Greeks," *Israilitis Chronografos* 1 (1899): 1.

parts of the Greek press.⁸⁵ Having its origins in Christian scholarship, the cliché of an inherent contradiction between Judaism and Hellenism translated also to Jewish scholarly circles.⁸⁶ Finally, Zionists stylized the Hellenization of Jews in Antiquity as the negative epitome of “racial assimilation.”⁸⁷ Already in the first editorial of *Israilitis Chronografos*, Caimis writes that “a superstition, nourished by ignorance, assumes that the Judaic and Hellenist pneuma are contradicting each other.”⁸⁸ To purge the theme of Greco-Jewish coexistence of its manifold negative legacy, Caimis presented Philo of Alexandria, Maimonides and Moses Mendelsohn as paragons of harmonization between the Judaic and Hellenistic philosophy.⁸⁹ Furthermore, he drew a link between those three figures by weaving a narrative of Greco-Jewish cultural affinity and cooperation that span from the Hellenistic period to modern times. He claimed that Alexandrian Jews introduced Arabs in Baghdad to the ideas of Hellenism, which in turn reached Europe with the Arab conquest of the Iberian Peninsula. From there, Latin-speaking Jews transmitted Hellenism to a broader European circle, sparking the cultural awakening of Europe.⁹⁰

Was Caimis the first to fabricate these narratives of a Greco-Jewish historical legacy, and where did he draw his inspirations from? This article can only provide a humble starting point to answering these questions and calls upon further research in this direction. To fully trace Caimis’ ideas to their origin, one would need to possess the journalist’s library, diaries and personal correspondence. Although we are missing these sources, a thorough reading of his journalistic

⁸⁵ Simon Goldhill argues that this antithesis was a central theme in nineteenth century European intellectual discourse and can be found in texts of Moses Mendelssohn, Hegel, Nietzsche, Matthew Arnold, Marx, and Freud: Simon Goldhill, “What has Alexandria to do with Jerusalem? Writing the History of Jews in the Nineteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal* 59, no. 1 (2016): 127.

⁸⁶ Maren Niehoff, “Alexandrian Judaism in 19th Century Wissenschaft des Judentums: Between Christianity and Modernization,” in *Jüdische Geschichte in hellenistisch-römischer Zeit*, ed. Aharon Oppenheimer (München: Oldenbourg, 1999), 9-28.

⁸⁷ Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of Modern Jewish Historical Consciousness* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002), 326; For an elaboration on the Greek-Jewish antithesis in Jewish thinking see: Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 26-27.

⁸⁸ Caimis, “Israelites and Greeks,” *Israilitis Chronografos* 1 (1899): 1.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

⁹⁰ Caimis, “Jewish Hellenists,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 4, no. 2-4 (1915): 22-23.

publications reveals that he was well-versed in the historical studies of Heinrich Graetz, Marc Bloch and Theodore Reinach.⁹¹ Theodore Reinach, in particular,—historian of Greek antiquity and contributor to the journal *Revue des études Juives*—occupied a significant place in Caimis’ publications and in the writings of Greek Jews in general. Lazaros Belesi (1859-1930), a Jewish intellectual from Corfu and a contemporary of Caimis, first translated Reinach’s *Histoire des Israélites* (1884) into Greek. The Corfiote Nacamulli publishing house printed the translation in the 1890’s.⁹² Caimis’ idea of a Greco-Jewish cultural amalgamation as the cradle of European civilization, for example, builds directly upon Reinach’s thesis that Jews functioned as a spiritual bridge between Hellenes, Arabs and Christians, keeping Greek philosophy alive in the “dark middle ages.”⁹³

Due to the increasingly chauvinistic nationalism at the time of the Balkan Wars, this rhetoric of Greco-Jewish cultural synergy, mentioned only sporadically in *Israilitis Chronografos*, attained new polemical heights in *Israilitiki Epitheorisis*. At a time when the political belonging of the region of Macedonia was highly disputed, Caimis followed Greek national historiography in stylizing the Macedonian King as a Greek national hero and the personification of the Greek spirit. In his articles, Alexander the Great functioned as a saviour of the Jews, who spared Jerusalem from destruction and bowed before a Jewish priest, preparing the ground for the *Evraïoellinistiko fainomeno* (Hebraic-Hellenist phenomenon).⁹⁴

⁹¹ The pages of Caimis’ journals contain multiple references to Graetz’ *Geschichte des Judenthums*. Furthermore, he translated into Greek and published excerpts of the following text: Marc Bloch, “Les Juifs et la prospérité publique à travers l’histoire,” *Revue des études Juives* 38, no. 45 (1899): 14-51.

⁹² Théodore Reinach, *Histoire des Israélites depuis la ruine de leur indépendance nationale jusque’à nos jours*, 2nd ed. (Paris: Hachett, 1901). Caimis advertised Belesi’ translation in *Israilitis Chronographos* 1, no. 2 (1899): 12, “Ρεΐναχ, Ιστορία των Ισραηλιτών από της διασποράς αυτών μέχρι των καθημάς χρόνων, Μετάφρασις Λ. Βελλέλης, Τυπογραφείον του εκδοτού Ναχαμούλη, Τιμή Δραχ. 4.”

⁹³ On Reinach’s view of Greco-Jewish relations see: Jean Réville, “Reviewed Work: Histoire des Israélites depuis la ruine de leur indépendance nationale jusqu’à nos jours,” *Revue De L’histoire Des Religions* 44 (1901): 132-34.

⁹⁴ Caimis, “The Hellenist Jews,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 2-4 (1915), 22; Id., “Fraternization of Greeks and Jews,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 7-9 (1912), 122; Id., “The Roman and the Greek World. On Anti-Semitism,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 10-12 (1912-1913), 131.

Furthermore, Caimis—fully aware that Christianity constituted an important pillar of Greek national identity—emphasized the harmonious nature of Judaism and Greek Orthodoxy. To this end, he republished an article by the Greek theologian, prelate and university professor Chrisostomos Papadopoulos (1868—1938), who elaborated upon the importance for the spread of Christianity of the *Septuagint* (Greek translation of the Old testament by Hellenized Jews of Alexandria) and the philosophy of Philo of Alexandria.⁹⁵ In addition, Caimis reinterpreted the Maccabean struggle against Antiochus—a symbol of Greco-Jewish animosity—as the ultimate victory of Monotheism over Paganism, which did not oppose the “Greek spirit—a monotheistic notion of truth just covered by a cloak of polytheism,” but rather enabled the Hellenes to transform into the modern Greek nation by vanquishing paganism.⁹⁶

Caimis articulated this narrative of Greco-Jewish cultural synergy against the dark background of an increasingly anti-Jewish press discourse in Thessaloniki. At a moment of radical political change, the city’s incorporation into the Greek state unearthed anti-Jewish sentiments and added the political stereotype of the “anti-national Jew” to the nineteenth century Greek discourse of religious anti-Judaism.⁹⁷ It is this stereotype of the “anti-national Jew” that Caimis aimed to refute with his apologetic account of a Greco-Jewish historical legacy.

In the interwar period, Jewish historians in Thessaloniki developed very similar narratives of Greco-Jewish synergy with the aim of Hellenizing their community.⁹⁸ Caimis’ work certainly preceded them, but we are unable to

⁹⁵ This text was published in the scientific theological journal *Ekklesiastikos Faros* based in Alexandria Chrisostomos Papadopoulos, “The Hellenist Jews of Alexandria,” *Ekklesiastikos Faros* (1914): 565-593. And reproduced by Caimis in *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 2-4 (1915): 23-26; Id. 6-8 (1915): 75-77.

⁹⁶ Caimis, “Hanukkah. The Celebration of the Maccabean,” *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* 4, no. 6-8 (1914): 106.

⁹⁷ On the development of anti-Jewish discourse in the Greek context see: Carabott, “State, Society and the Religious “Other” in nineteenth-century Greece,” 1-33.

⁹⁸ Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 189-239. Eyal Ginio, “Ενσωμάτωση μέσω του Παρελθόντος: Εβραίοι Μελετητές γράφουν Ιστορία στη μεσοπολεμική Θεσσαλονίκη” [Incorporation through the Past: Jewish Scholars writing History in Interwar Thessaloniki] in *Thessaloniki: A City in Transition, 1912-2012*, ed. Dimitris Keridis (Thessaloniki: Epiketro, 2015), 266-280.

establish to what extent his writings influenced Jewish intellectuals in Thessaloniki. Not necessarily familiar with the intellectual productions of Jews from Old Greece (pre 1912 borders), Jewish intellectuals in Thessaloniki probably constructed analogous narratives by using the same sources as a gateway to their studies: the works of nineteenth century French and German Jewish historians, like Graetz and Reinach, and the European renaissance discourse around the Greco-Jewish trope.⁹⁹

Conclusions

From 1864 onwards, Jews from the Ionian Islands played an important role in the institutionalization of Greek Jewry. Jewish intellectuals like Giuseppe Nacamulli, Moisis Caimis, Lazaros Belelis, Avraham Konstantinis and others, functioned as cultural and political mediators on multiple levels. They formed bridges between Italian and Greek speaking Jews and mediated between their fellow Jews and the Greek political establishment, thus actively creating Greek Jewry. Moisis Caimis' unique intellectual creations demonstrate the conception of Greek Jewry as a political community in its early stages. Born into the post-Venetian Adriatic world at the end of the British protectorate, he regarded Greek sovereignty as a guarantee of Jewish civil rights and urged his fellow Jews to exercise their rights by getting involved in all spheres of public life. Caimis was the first to publish magazines in the Greek language discussing Greek-Jewish matters on a supra-local and national level. He used his position as editor of *Israilitis Chronografos* and *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* to popularize Zionism as a movement that enhanced the Jews' historical consciousness and communal spirit within the borders of Greece. Writing at a time of war and intensified national competition, Caimis—a supporter of Greek irredentism—advocated for the idea of Greco-Jewish cultural synergy. He changed his views on Ottoman Jews in line with the geopolitical developments on the ground and utilized nationalist imagery in order to make the Jewish communities of the newly acquired territories fit into a Greek patriotic discourse.

⁹⁹ Naar, *Jewish Salonica*, 192-196.

Overshadowing the smaller Jewish communities in the Greek realm with its longstanding and large Jewish presence, Thessaloniki became the new center of Jewish life in interwar Greece. *Israilitiki Epitheorisis* ceased publications in 1916, probably due to financial straits and distribution difficulties caused by the war and the National Schism. Although Caimis' magazines were relatively short-lived and might not have found much of an echo among the Ladino-speaking Jews of Thessaloniki, they continued to inspire a generation of Greek-speaking Jewish journalists with roots in Old Greece. Struggling to add a pan-Greek perspective to the Thessaloniki-centered Jewish press discourse, several Greek-speaking Jewish intellectuals established Greek-language journals as mouthpieces for Jews in Athens and in the provinces.¹⁰⁰ All of these interwar Greco-Jewish publications, which have not received any considerable scholarly attention so far, mention Moisis Caimis as a source of inspiration and as the pioneer of Jewish journalism and Zionism in Greece.

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¹⁰⁰ For instance, the Zionist organizations in Thessaly published the journal *Israil* (1917-1919). Thereafter, Yomtov Yacoel from Trikala and Isaak Kampelis from Ioaninna edited the monthly magazine *Nea Sion* (1923-1924). Subsequently, *La Tribune Juive de Grece* (To Evraïkon Vima tis Ellados, 1925-?) was published bilingually in French and Greek with Isaak Kampelis being responsible for the Greek part. Further Greco-Jewish publications in the interwar period were: The Zionist magazine *Israil* (Thessaloniki, 1928-1929), and the journal of the Zionist organization in Athens *I foni tou Israil* (1934-1938). For excerpts from these journals see Frezis, *The Jewish Press in Greece*, 190-206. The National Library of Israel holds several editions of these publications.

Keywords: Greco-Jewish Identity Formation, Jewish History of Corfu, Jewish History of Athens, Greco-Jewish Press, Zionism in Greece

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