

THE KITZINGER YEARS AT DUMBARTON OAKS

In his masterful obituary notice of Ernst Kitzinger written for publication in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 57 (2003), Henry Maguire wrote as follows: "More than any other person, he [Ernst Kitzinger] was responsible for creating at Dumbarton Oaks the world's foremost institution for the study of Byzantium." I want to take the opportunity of this colloquium in his memory to investigate somewhat further exactly what Kitzinger was able to accomplish during his many years at Dumbarton Oaks, especially during the eleven years that he served so ably as Director of Byzantine Studies.

By the time Kitzinger first arrived at Dumbarton Oaks late in 1941, at the age of 28, he was well accustomed to the uncertain life of an émigré from Nazi Germany. Born in Munich in 1912, he was educated at the University of Munich, rapidly completing his doctoral studies in 1934 in one year's time, under pressure from the Nazi threat that Jewish students would no longer be awarded the doctorate. He departed from Germany almost immediately, making his way to London where he found employment of a modest sort in the Department of British and Medieval Antiquities at the British Museum. One result of his labors there was a small book entitled *Early Medieval Art in the British Museum*; first published in 1940 it attained great acclaim and was republished in subsequent editions and eventually a German translation.

When Britain declared war on Germany, Kitzinger was declared an enemy alien, despite his refugee status, interned and evacuated to Australia. He spent nine months in a desert camp, putting his time to good use by studying Russian, until his release in 1941, when he received a

most welcome invitation to come to Dumbarton Oaks. He was appointed a Junior Fellow, even though he already had a doctorate, as did several of his new colleagues, such as Paul Alexander, Milton Anastos and Herbert Bloch. His annual stipend was to be a munificent \$880, to be paid in quarterly installments!¹

In 1941-2 Dumbarton Oaks was just beginning its second year of operations as a research center in Byzantine studies; the difficulties of organizing a scholarly program were of course compounded by the wartime conditions, and little progress could be made until 1946. To give some idea of the disruptions caused by the war, after Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) the decision was made to dismantle the Byzantine Collection, so recently installed in its new gallery, and disperse it to various storage facilities throughout the United States for safekeeping. During the academic year 1941-2 some junior fellows had to resign before the end of term to join the armed forces or perform war work. A Victory Garden was planted among the flower beds of the gardens. The offices of the National Defense Research Committee occupied two wings of Dumbarton Oaks and the basement; this was a newly established national scientific organization formed in 1940 to support the war effort in Europe by developing new instruments of war.

The few fellows in residence persevered, however, and did their best to maintain a program of scholarly activity. In the early days of Dumbarton Oaks junior fellows were expected to divide their time between their personal research and what Wilhelm Koehler termed an “experiment in planned cooperative research.” This took the form of an institutional research project entitled "The Formation and Development of Early Byzantine Art," clearly a topic that would have been dear to Kitzinger's heart. Paul Alexander and Milton Anastos worked on collecting texts about works of art, while Kitzinger and others worked on coordination of information from archaeological material and standing monuments. After his arrival at DO in the

¹ Minutes of Trustees for Harvard University, June 9, 1941, p. 5, DO Archives.

middle of the academic year, delayed by visa problems, Kitzinger was assigned the geographical area of Greece and the Balkans; Ruth Kolarik will speak tomorrow about his research on the Yugoslav and Austrian excavations at Stobi, work which laid the foundations for his subsequent study of late antique floor mosaics. During his initial spring semester Kitzinger was already very active, giving papers and informal talks on the basilicas at Nea Anchialos, the coffin of St. Cuthbert at Durham, England, the problem of the crypt at Stobi, and Byzantine animal capitals.

Library resources were quite limited in these early years; in 1942 there were only 15,000 books in the Dumbarton Oaks library, most of them on Byzantine art and architecture; books in other fields had to be purchased, or borrowed through inter-library loan. During the war years there was not yet a Director of Studies; various Harvard professors such as Robert Blake and William Koehler came to DO for a year or so to serve as Senior Fellows in Residence. Amazingly, even at this early stage, three-day symposia were organized on an annual basis, although with many fewer speakers than we host today; typically only five or six scholars participated, but some gave two or even three papers. This was possible because most of the symposium speakers spent the year in residence at DO, devoting much of their time to preparation of their presentations.

Publication of the fledgling *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* was suspended for five years, however, due to the shortage of paper and printing difficulties. When volume 3 finally appeared, in 1946, it contained two major articles by Kitzinger, whose disparate subjects reflect his broad range of interests: one was on "The Horse and Lion Tapestry at Dumbarton Oaks," the other was entitled "A Survey of the Early Christian Town of Stobi." The articles were 72 and 81 pages in length respectively, in full size *DOP* page format.

After the war it became possible to devote greater effort to establishing a major research institute. Objects were returned to the Byzantine gallery, the National Defense Research Committee departed the premises, and there was intense focus on building up the library. By 1946-47 a permanent faculty was in place, most of whom would remain in residence for the next twenty years. The roster was impressive: Carl Kraeling and Alexander Vasiliev were Senior Scholars, and André Grabar was Visiting Scholar. Sirarpie der Nersessian was Professor of Art History, and Milton Anastos, Glanville Downey, Ernst Kitzinger and Paul Underwood were Assistant Professors in their respective fields. They held appointments as members of the Harvard faculty, and from time to time would spend a term in Cambridge teaching courses.

In 1946-7 Kitzinger studied the floor mosaics of the church of Nikopolis in northwestern Greece, and the next year he began his work on the mosaics of Norman Sicily which was to occupy much of his scholarly career. In 1949 he gave his first symposium paper on this topic, entitled "The Mosaics of Norman Sicily and their Relation to Byzantium."

In 1948-49 Prof. Albert Friend of Princeton University became the first Director of Byzantine Studies. The permanent faculty continued to dominate the institution, with only one junior fellow in residence, Bill Loerke; the following year there were four fellows, including Ihor Ševčenko. Kitzinger spent the academic year 1950-51 in Palermo as a Fulbright fellow; the following year he was promoted to Associate Professor of Art and Archaeology, and in the spring term of 1952 taught at Harvard for the first time, a course on Early Christian and Byzantine art. In 1953-4 Kitzinger spent another year abroad in Europe on a Guggenheim fellowship, working on his Pelican book and on the corpus of Sicilian mosaics.

During all this time Friend continued to serve as Director of Studies; but he fell ill at a relatively young age, and had to resign his duties in 1954 at the age of 62. Sirarpie der

Nersessian took over as Acting Director for one year, during which time Irfan Shahid and Speros Vryonis were junior fellows; she was then succeeded by Kitzinger in 1955, when he was 42 years old. He was to hold the position of Director of Studies for eleven years until 1966; although obviously preoccupied with his administrative duties, he continued his scholarly research, presenting four symposium papers, and organizing or co-organizing two symposia, one on "Byzantium in the Seventh Century" in 1957 and together with Kurt Weitzmann a conference in 1965 on "The Byzantine Contribution to Western Art of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries."

Other symposia held during the Kitzinger regime were directed primarily by the resident faculty on such topics as Antioch (Glanville Downey), Cyril and Methodius (Francis Dvornik), Kariye Djami (Paul Underwood), and Byzantine Science (Milton Anastos).

One of Kitzinger's most enduring legacies at Dumbarton Oaks was in the field of publications. Almost immediately *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, which had appeared at irregular intervals, began to be published on an annual basis. During his period as director of studies were published such classic works as Cyril Mango's *Homilies of Photius* and *Materials for the Study of the Mosaics of Hagia Sophia*, Erica Dodd's book on *Byzantine Silver Stamps*, Otto Demus's *Church of San Marco in Venice*, and two books by Francis Dvornik, *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy* and *The Idea of Apostolicity in Byzantium and the Legend of the Apostle Andrew*. Furthermore, Marvin Ross's two-volume *Catalogue of the Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection* was published in 1962 and 1965. It should be noted, however, that Cyril Mango was in charge of editorial supervision of publications at this time, and should also be given much of the credit for the quality of these works.

Another noteworthy development during the Kitzinger regime was the reclassification of the rapidly growing Byzantine library to a new specialized system devised by Bartol Brinkler of the Harvard College Library, thereafter called the "Brinkler system." Our librarians who are currently struggling with a new reclassification project to the Library of Congress system should note that it took more than ten years of slow but steady work to complete the reclassification of what was a much smaller collection.

Yet another hallmark of the period during which Kitzinger served as Director of Studies was Dumbarton Oaks' intense involvement in fieldwork, primarily in Istanbul. This was a transitional period when members of the DO staff directed fieldwork projects initiated by the Byzantine Institute which had been left without a director upon the death of Thomas Whittemore in 1950. The precise nature of the relationship between the Byzantine Institute and Dumbarton Oaks, especially on financial matters, remains obscure, but Paul Underwood, a member of the permanent DO faculty, served as Field Director of Byzantine Institute projects in Istanbul throughout the 1950s. This was the era of intensive investigation and/or excavation of such important monuments as Kariye Cami, Fethiye Cami (Pammakaristos), Fenari Isa Cami (Lips) and Zeyrek Cami (Pantokrator). Most of these projects resulted in significant publications either in *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* or in free-standing monographs. In 1963 the Byzantine Institute ceased to exist, and all its fieldwork was officially taken over by Dumbarton Oaks. Paul Underwood chaired the newly formed Committee on Fieldwork until his premature death in 1968. Toward the end of Kitzinger's tenure as Director of Studies two new projects began under the aegis of Dumbarton Oaks, Martin Harrison's excavation at the church of St. Polyeuktos (Saraçhane) and Lee Striker's work at Kalenderhane Cami. Operations also began in Cyprus in 1963 at the monasteries of St. Neophytos and St. Chrysostomos (Koutsoveni). It should be

further noted that during these years Robert Van Nice was working on the publication of the first volume of his monumental architectural survey of *Saint Sophia in Istanbul*, published as an elephant folio in 1965 shortly before Kitzinger departed from Dumbarton Oaks. Van Nice's survey work had been supported by a private patron, William Emerson, until Emerson's death in 1957, but thereafter Van Nice's salary was paid by Dumbarton Oaks.

One of Kitzinger's primary responsibilities, of course, was the supervision of fellows; three former junior fellows, John Barker, Walter Kaegi and Nancy Ševčenko, have been kind enough to pass on their reminiscences from the period of their fellowships in the early 60s, and I hope that some members of the audience will also share their memories with us at the end of this afternoon's session. Kitzinger is described by John Barker as "dignified, straight-forward, a man of solid integrity and responsibility, ... <with> a certain sobriety about him that never broke down or wavered. ...at the same time he was genial, had a good sense of humor, and was a fine conversationalist." Nancy Ševčenko warmly recalls how he gently but firmly persuaded her to reduce the scope of her wildly ambitious dissertation topic, while Walter Kaegi emphasizes the way in which "he ... listened carefully to various opinions or criticism before making up his mind or making a decision". Walter also reminds us of the diplomatic challenges that Kitzinger faced on a daily basis, with a prima donna permanent faculty, occasionally difficult relations with Harvard faculty in Cambridge, and the Blisses as a continuing presence.

John Barker has kindly provided slides that illuminate other aspects of academic life at Dumbarton Oaks in the early 60s, namely a memorable costume party in 1962 at which various distinguished scholars dressed up as famous figures from Byzantine history. (slides – Peter and Electra Megaw as Justinian and Theodora; John Zizioulas as Andronikos II and Paul Underwood

as Theodore Metochites; Gordana Babic as a Serbian princess; Jacqueline Lafontaine as Anicia Juliana; and Kitzinger et al. as figures from Ravenna mosaics).

After Kitzinger's departure from Dumbarton Oaks in 1966 and move to Harvard, he returned occasionally to attend or participate in symposia, such as the conference on "Venetian Mosaics and their Byzantine Sources" organized by Otto Demus in 1978 and the symposium which he himself led on "Art in Norman Sicily" in 1981. In 1987 he returned for the festive occasion of the presentation of his Festschrift, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 41 (1987), co-edited by Irving Lavin and William Tronzo.

I will conclude with discussion of Kitzinger's Herculean efforts in the critical year 1970 to chair the committee on the Future of Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks and to prepare the report requested by President Nathan Pusey of Harvard. What a thankless task this must have been, to preside over endless discussion and bickerings of ten scholars, many of them bitterly divided in their views of what DO should be and even where it should be. 1969 had been a terrible year for Dumbarton Oaks, already saddened by the premature death of Paul Underwood in 1968: in January 1969 Mrs. Bliss had died; later the same year Jack Thacher retired as director after a tenure of almost thirty years, and was replaced by an old Bliss family friend, William Royall Tyler; in September, just as Tyler took office, Romilly Jenkins, the director of Byzantine studies, died suddenly. Thus during the academic year 1969-70 DO had no director of Byzantine studies; Jenkins' duties were divided up between the two remaining faculty members, Ihor Ševčenko and Cyril Mango.

The only good news at this time of crisis was that by the terms of Mrs. Bliss's will a substantial additional sum was added to the Dumbarton Oaks endowment, thus opening up the possibility of expanded activities. Otherwise it seems to have been a gloomy time, with

complaints about isolation and “intellectual stagnation” (report, p. 4), decreased library purchases, and even a short-lived decision to make the annual symposia biennial events. Some on the committee strongly advocated moving the center for Byzantine studies to Cambridge, arguing that it was impossible for it to flourish in a city like Washington, D.C., but this proved impossible on account of the terms of the Blisses’ will.

Because the 100-page report was the work of a committee, it is not always possible to determine Kitzinger’s individual views, but he was the primary author of the document, and indicated points on which he dissented from other committee members. Among the primary recommendations of the committee were the following: that the permanent faculty should be restored to its previous strength, with around five professors; that the new Director of Byzantine Studies should be chosen from the permanent faculty; that the Center for Byzantine Studies should have substantial autonomy, especially in budgetary matters; that ties with Cambridge should be enhanced, especially through the appointment of three Bliss professors in the fields of Byzantine literature, art and history. Surely it must have been a great disappointment to Kitzinger that so many of the committee’s recommendations went unheeded; in 1971 Bill Loerke was appointed Professor of Byzantine Art and Director of Byzantine Studies, but by 1974 he was the only remaining member of the permanent Byzantine faculty in residence at Dumbarton Oaks, and by 1978 the position of Director of Byzantine Studies had been abolished. One proposal, however, was realized in 1972, when Ihor Ševčenko was appointed Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Byzantine History and Literature in the Harvard Classics Department. Similar appointments in the History and Fine Arts Departments followed many years later.

Despite the disappointing outcome of the Report on the Future of Byzantine Studies at Dumbarton Oaks, Kitzinger performed a great service to this institution by presiding over wide-

ranging discussion of the future identity and mission of the program in Byzantine studies at Dumbarton Oaks; the document he authored provides important insights into the workings of this institution at a troubled and transitional period in its history. It is indeed a great pity that he never managed to take advantage of his unparalleled relationship with Dumbarton Oaks over a 25-year period to write the history of Byzantine studies here, as he had planned. I am sure, however, that if he had composed such a history his modest nature would have precluded an honest description of all the contributions he made to the Center; it is therefore perhaps best that this task has been left to some future historian.

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