

CYRIL MANGO

(1928 – 2021)



The celebrated Byzantinist Cyril Mango died on February 8, 2021. One of the greatest Byzantinists of the modern age, Mango was from a background of specific origin for his later expertise in Byzantine history. Descended on the paternal side from a Genoese family with ties to Chios with a father (Alexander Mango) who became a British citizen, and with Russian ancestry on his mother's side (Ada Damanov), it was perhaps inevitable that he would grow up in the great imperial city of Constantinople/Istanbul. Born in Istanbul in 1928, he was brought up multi-lingual, speaking Greek to his father, Russian to his mother and French as a family. Equally he was comfortable in Turkish, Italian and

Spanish, an array of languages that any Byzantinist can only dream of. A native of Istanbul, Mango developed a great knowledge of the city's churches and other monuments.

Cyril Mango was educated at the University of St. Andrews, M.A. in 1949, and earned his doctorate in History from the University of Paris in 1953. He taught at King's College London where he held the Chair of Koraeas Professor of Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature from 1963 to 1968, and was Bywater and Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature at the University of Oxford from 1973 to 1995. He was affiliated with Dumbarton Oaks, the Harvard Center for Byzantine Studies in Washington, D.C. At Dumbarton Oaks, Cyril Mango was a Junior Fellow (1951–1953), Fellow (1953–1954), and Research Associate (1954–1955) of Byzantine Studies, Instructor in Byzantine Archaeology (1955–1958), Lecturer in Byzantine Archaeology (1958–1962), Associate Professor of Byzantine Archaeology (1962–1963), Executive Editor of Dumbarton Oaks Publications (1958–1963), member of the Board of Scholars for Byzantine Studies (1967–1972), and member of the research staff (1972–1973). His scientific outlook was key for many research projects undertaken during this period. Cyril joined Dumbarton Oaks in 1951 and remained there until 1963. It gave him the time, opportunity and financial means to pursue his studies.

During these years Cyril joined Paul Underwood, the director of fieldwork at Dumbarton Oaks, in a variety of projects in Istanbul, including Hagia Sophia and the Kariye Camii (Chora Monastery), one of the finest surviving Byzantine churches. In particular, he worked with Ernest Hawkins, an outstanding conservator who had gone to Istanbul to work for Whittemore, studying the famous apse mosaic at Hagia Sophia, the Fethiye Camii (St Mary Pammakaristos church) and the Fenari Isa Camii (monastery of Constantine Lips).

Corpus of Dated Byzantine Inscriptions of Constantinople, Bithynia, and Eastern Thrace begun by Cyril Mango with Ihor Ševcenko in 1978 is being completed by Anne McCabe, under the auspices of the Centre for the Study of Ancient Documents at Oxford and the International Association of Byzantine Studies, in the framework of the *Inscriptiones Graecae Aevi Byzantinae* project. Cyril Mango was also co-director of the Christian Monuments in Turkish Mesopotamia Project (1982–1990), and director of the Cathedral of Nisibis Project (1990–1991). He played a vital role as editor of *The Oxford History of Byzantium* (2002).

He was colossal researcher from an early age, showing a intelligent command of the history, monuments and topography of the Queen of Cities to famous visitors. When Sir Steven Runciman asked to be shown around the city by its best guide, he was surprised to be met by a young Cyril Mango who was already in possession of an encyclopaedic knowledge of the former imperial capital.

Mango's talent was noted quite early, leading to study in Paris and at St Andrews's, then earning him a Junior Fellowship at Dumbarton Oaks in his early 20s. He edited Dumbarton Oaks Publications before he became Associate Professor of Byzantine Archaeology. His first major book, *The Brazen House. A*

Study of the Vestibule of the Imperial Palace of Constantinople was published in 1959 and remains a classic, as does his *Materials for the Study of Mosaics of St. Sophia at Istanbul* (1965).

In 1963, he took up the prestigious Koraes Chair in Modern Greek and Byzantine History, Language and Literature at King's College, London, still aged only 35. He spent five years in London before returning to Harvard and Dumbarton Oaks as Professor of Byzantine Archaeology. In 1973, he moved one last time to Oxford as Sotheby Professor of Byzantine and Modern Greek Language and Literature, holding this chair for more than two decades before his retirement in 1995.

He was the one who set a masterful and innovative use of a wealth of sources – textual, archaeological, epigraphic, numismatic, and historical – in order to reconstruct major monuments of Constantinople and explore central questions in the field. His unique approach to the material have defined the study of Byzantine Constantinople and its monuments with books like *Le développement urbain de Constantinople (IVe - VIIe siècles)* (1985), and multiple articles collected in *Studies on Constantinople* (1993). Two more monographies are important to note: *Byzantium: The Empire of New Rome* (1980), and *Byzantium and its Image: history and culture of the Byzantine Empire and its heritage* (1984).

Mango devoted his studies both to the strength of the imperial currency and the exigencies of the Byzantine world of commerce, and esoteric beliefs about the Byzantine conception of holy judgement and what they believed about the nature of animal consciousness. Within the art historical topics, he was devoted to the classical styles deeply rooted in Byzantium and the uniquely Byzantine artistic forms.

His books *The Art of Byzantine Empire* (1972), a handbook of primary sources in translation and his *Byzantine Architecture* (1976) were foundational textbooks for more than one generation of Byzantinists. He also published books for a broader public, such as *Hagia Sophia: A Vision for Empires* (1997); *Chora: The Scroll of Heaven* (2000); *The Treasures of Turkey: The earliest civilizations of Anatolia Byzantium the Islamic Period* (1966). Cyril Mango was greatly admired. In his books he brought to life many forgotten topics: the art, architecture, and culture of a world that witnessed the growth of Christianity and left behind a rich cultural legacy. The world that Professor Mango reconstructed is a world neglected by many recent historians. For this reason, Mango's works stand out, as do his insights into a culture which, for many, remains alien. He formulated the principle of "Byzantinologie totale", i.e. not divided by disciplinary partitions and acted as an art historian, archeologist, epigraphist, archivist. His death is a great loss to the Byzantine Studies and to the world of the humanities.

Dr Jasmina S. Ćirić, Assist. Professor
University of Kragujevac
Faculty of Philology and Arts

