

Alexander Cambitoglou, 1922–2019

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Alexander Eleutherios Cambitoglou died on Friday, 29 November 2019, in Sydney, Australia, from natural causes. He was born 15 February 1922 in Thessaloniki to Antonios and Eleni Cambitoglou, almost a century earlier and in another world, some seven months before the Asia Minor crisis that irrevocably changed the demography and landscape of the Aegean. With his passing, classical archaeology has lost one of its finest exponents—an active excavator, a sensitive connoisseur and curator of ancient art, a fine teacher and mentor, an academician in two countries, and a visionary administrator.

The family was from Veroia in Macedonia, his father ran a thriving fur and leather business, with property in Thessaloniki that included a hotel and a commercial stoa that bore the family name, and they would spend summers in Pelion. More importantly, the family held in high esteem the study of the classics, languages, and music. The family also had its fair share of tragedies: Alexander's oldest brother, Minos, was killed in the early years of World War II on the Albanian frontier, which spared Alexander from active military service during the war (he completed his military service in 1950). He was the youngest of four children (his elder siblings being Minos, Jason, and Hero).

Alexander was tutored in French (his first and favorite European language), German, English, and Italian, and in theology, while learning ancient Greek and Latin at the classical gymnasium, before attending the University of Thessaloniki. His knowledge of European languages and literatures, as well as the classical languages, was well known (his English was impeccable, and he deplored split infinitives and the use of the possessive for inanimate objects), and he was exceedingly well read. It was he who introduced me to, among others, Marcel Proust and Gustave Flaubert. One of the very few times I was able to take Alexander out for dinner—he was very generous in feeding his students and would never let us pay—was at an Italian (Sicilian) eatery I frequented in Sydney, where I practiced my own poor Italian. While serving us, the waiter was glad to see Italian customers, to which Alexander responded, with that characteristic glint in his eye: “I am the only Italian here!”

Alexander Cambitoglou obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Thessaloniki in 1946, before moving to Great Britain for graduate work with a British Council scholarship. He studied with some of the luminaries of 20th-century classical archaeology, obtaining a master of arts degree from the University of Manchester (1948), where he studied with the great Tom Webster (while there he also had a private tutorial on Protogeometric pottery with Vincent Desborough); he followed Webster to University College, London, where he completed his first doctorate in 1950 under Webster and Martin Robertson. He earned his second doctorate at Oxford in 1958, where he was among the last students of John Davidson Beazley (with two Ph.D.

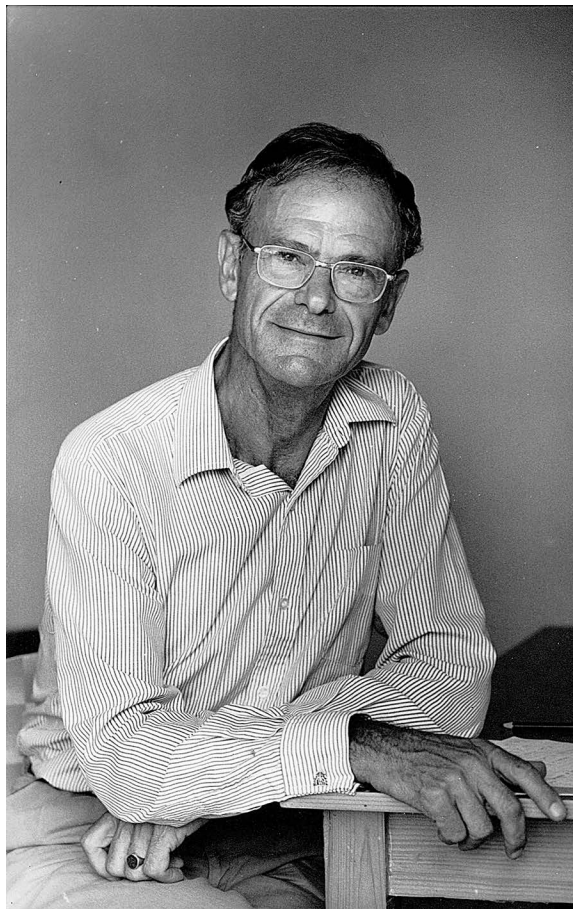
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degrees, he was at least once referred to in German as Herr Doctor Doctor). His primary passion was Greek painted pottery, especially South Italian red-figure pottery, and it was this that led to his long collaboration with Arthur Dale Trendall, whom he first met in London in 1951. Raised in a cosmopolitan Thessaloniki, surrounded by Greek and Jewish elders and peers, with his learning and etiquette honed in England, Alexander was the quintessential European gentleman, urbane and always well dressed.

With doctorate in hand, he came to the United States and held his first two teaching positions here. From 1954 to 1956 he served as Assistant Professor at the University of Mississippi, where he taught with David Moore Robinson, before the death of the latter in 1958. He then moved to Bryn Mawr College, where he taught with, among others, Brunilde Sismondo Ridgway and Machteld Mellink, between 1956 and 1961 (he received his Oxford D.Phil. degree in 1958 while on the faculty of Bryn Mawr). Wishing to thank his hosts and colleagues at Ole Miss before his move to Pennsylvania, Alexander hosted a dinner party, for which he drove over various county lines in search of wine and Campari. Having acquired a bottle of the aperitif with great difficulty, together with several bottles of wine, he welcomed his guests, only to learn that their drink of choice at dinner was coffee. His time in the United States was both rewarding and difficult, especially in the south during the Jim Crow era. He often described the United States of the period as a “cultural desert, but with some magnificent oases.”

In 1961, at Trendall’s urging, Alexander joined the faculty of the University of Sydney as a Senior Lecturer in Archaeology, and in 1963 he was appointed Professor of Classical Archaeology, becoming the first person of Greek origin to be appointed professor in Australia. That same year, he was also appointed Curator of the Nicholson Museum. He fell in love with Australia and in time acquired Australian citizenship. It was also in Sydney in 1962 that he met the person who became his life-long companion, Dr. John Atherton Young (1936–2004). John went on to become Professor of Physiology at the University of Sydney, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and Pro-Vice Chancellor of the University. Alexander and John lived together until John’s untimely death in 2004. Their relationship was always discreet, and Alexander deeply mourned John’s passing. Generous patrons of the arts, they were regular subscribers to the Australian Opera



Alexander Cambitoglou at his desk at Torone in 1985 (R. Scannell; courtesy Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens).

at the Sydney Opera House (the first opera performance I ever attended was as a guest of Alexander and John).

Drawing on his experience at Bryn Mawr, Alexander helped shape the Department of Archaeology in Sydney into one of Classical and Near Eastern Archaeology, and from 1970, he alternated as head of the department with John Basil Hennessy, the Edwin Cuthbert Hall Professor of Near Eastern Archaeology. In 1978, Alexander was appointed as the inaugural Arthur and Renee George Professor of Classical Archaeology, an endowed chair he helped establish. In an era of mandatory retirement, he was forced to retire in 1989, but he continued as Curator of the Nicholson Museum until 2000. For many of us born in Australia, our first introduction to Egyptian, Near Eastern, Greek, Etruscan, and Roman material culture and art was at the Nicholson Museum, and Alexander

was instrumental in making the museum what it is today. During his time at the University of Sydney, Alexander was a veritable dynamo, mobilizing the Greek-Australian community and many Antipodean philhellenes. He had an uncanny ability to charm the bird from the tree, working quietly and effectively, often behind the scenes, and always with those people who mattered the most in achieving the task at hand. He befriended senior university officials, ambassadors and consuls-general of Greece and Australia, as well as governors-general of his adopted homeland. He was a consummate and dedicated administrator.

Archaeological exploration was also at the heart of Alexander's endeavors (while in the United States, he met George E. Mylonas, from whom he learned a great deal; he excavated with Mylonas at Eleusis, where he met other budding directors of future archaeological projects, not least T. Leslie Shear, Jr.). In 1967, Alexander initiated the excavations at the Geometric settlement of Zagora on the island of Andros as a collaboration of the Athens Archaeological Society, of which he was a long-time fellow, and the University of Sydney. In 1975, he moved to the north Aegean, initiating the excavations at Torone in Chalkidike, a project that continued into the mid 1990s. More importantly, in 1980, he established the Australian Archaeological Institute at Athens (AAIA), which quickly became Australia's major research facility in Greece, a center promoting Greek and Mediterranean studies, with a focus on archaeological fieldwork and research. It cannot be emphasized enough that without Alexander there would have been no AAIA, and from 1980 onward he worked tirelessly to promote the institute. He was not only the founding director of the AAIA, he stayed on as director well into his 90s, until 2016. Both Alexander and John Young gave and bequeathed substantial portions of their own personal fortunes to the institute.

In addition to publishing two volumes on the excavations at Zagora, and coediting the three-volume *Torone I*, which appeared in 2001, Alexander was primarily known for his work on Greek painted pottery, especially the red-figure pottery of the Greek colonies of South Italy. To this end, he collaborated for more than 40 years with Dale Trendall, with whom he published numerous volumes (their first co-authored volume, *Apulian Red-Figured Vase-Painters of the Plain Style*, was published in 1961 by the Archaeological Institute of America). They both traveled all

over Europe, the Americas, and beyond in search of, especially in the case of Alexander, Apulian red-figure pottery. Alexander also spent several weeks in the former U.S.S.R. studying Greek vases, and was given nightly tickets to the Bolshoi Ballet during his time there, which he much cherished. As collaborators, Dale and Alexander worked well together, publishing monographs that will remain for years to come seminal and standard works of reference. Despite this, Alexander always regretted not devoting more time to their collaboration, especially on account of his duties as director of the AAIA. As collaborators, they were in some ways an odd couple. Dale could not stand the heat of Australian summers, whereas Alexander could not abide the cold and often had a small space heater at his feet, even during the warm weather in Sydney. As for Dale, when the going got tough, he was known to venture into the kitchen, open the refrigerator, and poke his head inside for relief.

Alexander's scholarly and administrative acumen was well rewarded. In 1987—the year I completed my Ph.D. degree with Alexander as my *Doctorvater*—he was made Officer of the Order of Australia (AO) for his contributions to archaeology and international cultural relations in Australia. In 1991 he became the fourth person in the history of the University of Sydney to receive the prestigious title of Doctor of the University. (I still recall the over-the-top yellow silk academic gown that Alexander wore with his usual elegance for the ceremony.) In 1998, the Republic of Greece made him Commander of the Order of the Phoenix, and in 2003 he was awarded the Centenary Medal for services to Australian society for his work as an archaeologist. In 2015, he was awarded the Ayios Kosmas o Aitolos Award for teaching excellence in Hellenic Studies. He was a founding member of the Council of the Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae and a member of the International Scientific Committee for the Corpus Speculorum Etruscorum. In addition to being a Fellow of the Athens Archaeological Society, he was a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, London, and a Corresponding Member of the German Archaeological Institute. He was a Foundation Fellow of the Academy of the Humanities of Australia (elected in 1968, serving as a member of the Council, 1974–1976), and a Member of the Athens Academy. In 1990, he was honored by his peers and students with a Festschrift volume, edited by Jean-Paul Descoeudres and entitled *EYMOYΣΙΑ: Ceramic and*

Iconographic Studies in Honour of Alexander Cambitoglou (*MeditArch*, Suppl. 1, Sydney).¹ The list of contributors includes not only his students and colleagues in Australia and New Zealand but also John Boardman, Hélène Cassimatis, Jacques Chamay, Nicholas Coldstream, R.M. Cook, Paul Courbin, Gianna Dareggi, Ettore De Juliis, Maurizio Harari, Ann Harnwell Ashmead, R. Ross Holloway, Spyridon Iakovidis, Lilly Kahil, Eva Keuls, George Korres, Anneliese Kossatz-Deissmann, Donna Kurtz, Veronika Mitsopoulou-Leon, David Ridgway, Martin Robertson, Konrad Schauenberg, Margot Schmidt, Erika Simon, J.G. Szilágyi, Michalis Tiverios, Cornelius Vermeule, Ioulia Vokotopoulou, and Nikolaos Yalouris. And the *Tabula*

Gratulatoria read like a *Who's Who* of classical archaeology of the mid and later 20th century.

When all is said and done, Alexander Cambitoglou was a civilized man living during some of the most uncivilized episodes of the 20th century: the Asia Minor crisis, the rounding up and mass extermination of the Jews of Thessaloniki by the Nazis, World War II and the Greek Civil War that followed, not to mention his time in the segregated South of the United States in the mid 1950s. I will remember him most for his learning and erudition, his elegance (the old adage for the Hollywood legend George Sanders—if you covered him in garbage, he would still have style—could equally apply to Alexander), and, above all, his humanity.

¹ A full bibliography of Alexander's academic publications (1949–1989) was presented in the Festschrift volume (xx–xxii), and an updated bibliography is provided by Descoeudres in "Alexander Cambitoglou (15 February 1922–29 November 2019)," forthcoming in *MeditArch* 31, 2018 (2020).

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