

## THE CHURCH OF THE PANAGHIA TOU ARAKOS AT LAGOUDHERA, CYPRUS: THE PAINTINGS AND THEIR PAINTERLY SIGNIFICANCE

EDITED BY DAVID WINFIELD AND JUNE WINFIELD (DUMBARTON OAKS STUDIES 37).

This book is the fruitful result of several years of patient, passionate, meticulous, and pioneering fieldwork in Cyprus, where June and David Winfield have participated in several seasons of wall painting restoration. Here, they publish the results of their work, cleaning, preserving, restoring, and studying in detail the Byzantine wall paintings (dated from 1192 to the 14th century and later) in the church of the Panaghia (Virgin) Arakiotissa (or Arakou or Arakos, phytonymic epithet based on the word for a wild vetch, *arax* in Greek). The church is situated in the village of Lagoudhera, in the Troodos mountain range of western Cyprus. The fieldwork lasted from 1968 to 1973 under the joint auspices of Dumbarton Oaks (Harvard University) and the Department of Antiquities of Cyprus, with encouragement of the Bishopric of Kerynia.

After a few introductory *pages d'usage* (a complete list of figs., color pls., text figs., and delicate drawings by June Winfield, iconographic nos. and key to the iconographic plans by Richard Anderson), a list of abbreviations and bibliography are presented. The mass of iconographic material testifies to the tremendous work that the authors have accomplished as restorers as well as inspired scholars.

The book is organized into five major parts. Part 1 consists of a general introduction in five chapters. Chapters 2 and 5, on the architecture of the church and the conservation and restoration of the paintings, are instructive and detailed. Chapter 4 on iconography contains important information, though it should have

been considered through my study on the iconography of the church of Lagoudhera ("La Panaghia Arakiotissa," *DOP* 50 [1996] 1–137).

Part 2 is short (23 pp.) and it concerns the paintings in the apse that illustrate the earliest phase (pre-1192) of decoration in the church. It should be noted that "the unidentified saint" (98, fig. 40) was identified by me as Demetrios of Chytroi. Besides a detailed description of the paintings in the apse, one may appreciate the method and style of the "confident master" who intervened there as well as in the southeast corner of the church. The authors' idea that the builder of the church was the father of Lord Leon Authentis (the donor of the wall paintings dated to 1192) must be viewed, in my opinion, as a seductive hypothesis.

Part 3 constitutes the major section of the book (160 pp.). It contains an extensive description of the frescoes dated to 1192. The order of the descriptions is provided clockwise, from the heavenly top to the earthly lower parts of the church: the dome and its drum and pendentives, the north sections, the bema (sanctuary) on the east, and the south and west areas of the building at the end. The descriptions are so detailed that the reader can get a sense of the measurements used for constructing the figures as well as the process of the *a fresco* execution of the painter—diagrams and exquisitely detailed drawings are inserted where needed.

Part 4 completes and enriches the previous parts. It demonstrates accurately the wall painting techniques that are specific to this

Cypriot church. This part is undoubtedly the *pièce de résistance* of the book, for it reveals the passionate approach and the outstanding labor of the authors as expert restorers of Byzantine wall paintings. David and June Winfield have been able to penetrate and reveal not only the Lagoudera atelier's secrets, such as the advanced modular system of proportion, but also the general "grammar of the Byzantine system of wall painting." Their discussion demonstrates the chronological order of the construction of the frescoes, the plastering and the preliminary drawing, the proportions of the human figure, measurements for the head, the colors, textures, materials, and tools, the light, perspective, and, finally, emotion. This meticulous study provides refined statements concerning the Lagoudera Byzantine Master and his atelier: it was composed of three or four assistants who did some of the work from March or April to December 1192. This assessment is based on the attentive and patient examination of the *giornate* (the sequences of plaster-laying for the paintings). Having in mind that the Byzantine painter in general was acting in a "religious silence," leaving no written registers of his work behind him, the achievement of the Winfields' book is that it contributes to our understanding of any other

Middle Byzantine wall painting atelier's organization, work, and challenges.

Part 5 is a short addendum describing the paintings of the 14th century—a minor decoration—in the narthex and on the exterior north wall of the Arakos church, where some later paintings are also seen. A useful iconographical index is placed at the end of the book preceding the photographic documentary. The majority of the color plates, however, do not convey the vividness and variety of the colors of the paintings (apparently some of these negatives, dating back to the 1970s, were not well conserved). In any case, this book can, among the numerous publications on Byzantine mural decoration, be considered a rare and authentic approach to the Byzantine artist's work in wall painting. Art historians of Byzantium, and even of Romanesque and the medieval West, fully can benefit from it.

ANDRÉAS NICOLAÏDÈS

LABORATOIRE D'ARCHÉOLOGIE MÉDIÉVALE  
MÉDITERRANÉENNE  
UMR 6572-CNRS  
UNIVERSITÉ DE PROVENCE (AIX-MARSEILLE I)  
AIX-EN-PROVENCE 13100  
FRANCE  
NICOLAIDES@MMSH.UNIV-AIX.FR