
REVIEWS

CAVES OF GOD: THE MONASTIC ENVIRONMENT OF BYZANTINE CAPPADOCIA. By *Spiro Kostof*. Drawings by *Malcolm C. Carpenter*. Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1972. 25 figures, 45 plates. xviii, 296 pp. \$18.50.

In the wake of the pioneering work by Father Guillaume de Jerphanion (*Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, 1925–42) in the first half of this century and the more recent publications of N. and M. Thierry (*Nouvelles églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, 1963) and Marcell Restle (*Die byzantinische Wandmalerei in Kleinasien*, 1967), Spiro Kostof attempts a synthesis of the important Byzantine rock-cut architecture and painting in Cappadocia. He aims it at the educated layman who might go to (or already has visited) the sites and at the scholar for whom the book will be a useful summary and guide to the monuments and the current state of research on their problems.

The text is organized in three parts. A brief introduction on “The Setting” gives a rapid historical survey of the region. Then follow the two main chapters dealing with “The Buildings” and “The Paintings.” Along with a glossary, notes, and index, there is a valuable hand list of the extant decorated churches arranged chronologically with salient bibliography for each, and a useful bibliographical note.

Kostof disclaims presentation of any new archeological material, but plunges into the scholarly discussion of a number of problematic buildings and their decoration. Specialists will debate with him matters of dating, stylistic relationships, iconographic sources, workshop methods, and Armenian influence, among others. Nonetheless, for the general reader he succeeds in bringing reasonable order out of the imposing array of monuments dating from the Early Christian to the late Byzantine periods, focusing mainly on the years between 843 and the late eleventh century for the paintings. The remarkable architecture sculpted out of the Cappadocian tuff is clearly explained in its variety. And Kostof ably analyzes the complicated programs of decoration without doing violence to the problems they present. This is done with the political and especially the monastic religious context of Byzantine Cappadocia constantly before the reader.

Despite its nature as a kind of handbook, however, *Caves of God* will require reference to the plates in Restle for a satisfactory reading. Although the illustrations, plans, and drawings accompanying the architectural chapter are fairly adequate, the photographs of the paintings are less satisfactory in quality (compare the Gebhard and Stump photographs with those reprinted from Restle) and fewer in number. And clearly the oddest feature of the book is the inclusion of eight unidentified color plates, all of which are also reproduced in black and white with captions later in the text. Such duplication is useless and needlessly inflates the price of what is otherwise a very good introduction to the monastic art of Byzantine Cappadocia.

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