The Murals of Ipapandi Chapel, Chios:
A Cultural Bridge Between Greece and Hawai‘i

Halfway around the globe from Hawai‘i in a village on the remote Greek island of Chios stands a small Greek Orthodox chapel like no other on earth. Inside on frescoed walls Hawaiian mynah birds peck and strut through the scarlet tulips of a Chios spring, and an island breeze stirs a royal coconut palm. A Hawaiian chief in feathered cape and helmet sounds his conch shell. Not far away a hula dancer responds with uplifted feathered gourds. The Hawaiian figures and their Greek companions are shown as angels and function as a commentary to the Biblical scenes painted with great reverence and delicacy elsewhere throughout the chapel.

More than a curiosity, the chapel is a significant artistic achievement of Hawai‘i muralist Juliette May Fraser (1887—1983). Fraser’s first murals were fanciful paintings created in 1925 on the exterior walls of a young Ben Dillingham’s playhouse. The Pearl Harbor playhouse of the well-known businessman has long since disappeared, but many of Fraser’s later murals survive as ornaments to Hawai‘i’s public buildings. Fraser’s work draws deeply, intimately, and almost exclusively on themes from Hawaiian culture and history, and although honored in Hawai‘i—she was in 1982 named a Hawai‘i Living Treasure and was a 1977 recipient of Hawai‘i’s highest artistic award, the Order of Distinction for Cultural Leadership—she remains little known outside the islands. In 1938 her mural scenes of ancient Hawai‘i were part of the San Francisco World Exposition, but this

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mural has since returned to Hawai‘i, and the only Fraser mural now to be found beyond the boundaries of the Hawaiian Islands is on Chios. Paradoxically, the Chios mural is her best.

Controversies, intercultural misunderstandings, and disfigurements have befallen the Chios mural, but now a happier chapter promises to unfold. The prospect of restoration of the chapel calls for a reflection in some detail on the history of the chapel and its iconography.

THE GIFT

An unlikely traveling pair they were. A proper spinster in her seventies with a reputation to consider as one of Hawai‘i’s leading and best-loved artists, she worried about the proprieties and was careful to book her hotel rooms at a respectable distance from the debonair bohemian who in that spring of 1962 had accompanied her to Greece. He too was an artist of note, but his best and most noble abilities had to do with nurturing the work of other artists and in organizing community support for the arts.

Their relationship was one of those rare bondings between a man and a woman wherein sexuality and age barriers are bypassed in favor of friendship. Invariably her letters to him began with “Dear wee David,” and he and the succession of young men of his entourage became for her the family she had outlived. In turn, she seemed to bring out a touching sweetness in his otherwise prickly personality. He served as her protector, kept her supplied with her favorite fig newtons, and handled her business affairs; she was, in the loftily worded contracts he drew up for her various art commissions, “The Artist.” He delighted in bringing a sense of gaiety into her somewhat ascetic life. There was mulled wine for special occasions, and once, as they worked together on a mural depicting a ballroom scene, he taught her to waltz.

In 1962 a chain of fortuitous circumstances brought these two, Juliette May Fraser and David Asherman, to the Greek island of Chios. Both Fraser and Asherman had fallen under the spell of Greece. As artists, of course, they had been deeply moved by the artistic treasures of Greece, but they had also come to love the people of Greece. In Athens, they set about learning Greek. Easter was at hand, and Ath-
ens was fast emptying as city Greeks left for the traditional trek back to the country villages where they were born. The tutor of the artists had relatives on Chios and suggested an Easter holiday trip to that island.

Chios, relatively remote and less visited than many of the Greek islands, presents a rather unpromising appearance to the newcomer. An array of concrete buildings represents rebuilding efforts after the dual catastrophes of the nineteenth century. In 1822, the Turks sacked much of the island in retaliation for a supposed Chios uprising against three hundred years of Turkish rule. The severe earthquake of 1881 caused large-scale destruction to many buildings not destroyed by the Turks. And yet there is much to interest the visitor who lingers. Chios, a thriving city-state of ancient times, was likely Homer’s home island. Guides point out an eroded stone as a remnant of one of Homer’s schools. There are numerous relics of early Christian times: the Byzantine mosaics of Nea Moni rank with the better-known masterpieces at Daphni and Osios Loukas on the Greek mainland. The achievements of Chios artisans were of a very high level, and there is evidence that the celebrated bronze horses of St. Mark’s in Venice were created by artists of Chios.¹ In modern times, Chios entered the consciousness of Western art connoisseurs through one of the most famous of all French paintings, Delacroix’s *Massacre of Chios*. Little wonder it was that Fraser and Asherman, scholars as well as artists, were drawn to Chios.

On Chios, Mrs. Aphrodite Makri, the mother of their teacher, welcomed the Americans with the delectable honey cakes of the Easter season and glyko, the distinctive Chios fruit preserves. Makri had retired from a successful dressmaking business in Athens and Istanbul to return to the small village on Chios where she was born. Tours to the famous archaeological sites of Chios were arranged for the Americans, but of all the sights, Fraser was most touched by a small, bare chapel next door to Makri’s house in the simple village of Vavylia. Makri had named the just-completed chapel Ipapandi, *The Presentation*. Previously, the 1881 earthquake had leveled the original Vavylia chapel, and until 1961 the villagers had made do with an open-air shrine. Upon returning to her village from Athens, Aphrodite Makri had embarked on a fund-raising campaign and, drachma by drachma, had collected money to build a new chapel. There was
no money for interior decorations, and at the time of Fraser's arrival, the villagers were preparing to whitewash the inside walls as the final touch for the chapel.

Whitewash. No phrase could have been more provoking to a seasoned mural painter, and to one, moreover, with deep affection for the exquisite small "painted churches" of the Hawai'i countryside. It was Asherman who first voiced the thought of frescoes for the walls, but Fraser later said that even as Asherman spoke she had been mentally picturing saints and scenes for the walls. The artists asked only that the church supply paint and brushes. Both Fraser and Asherman quite correctly realized that the small size of the chapel called for a consistent style throughout, and so Asherman proposed that Fraser should design the murals while he would serve as her technical assistant. Aphrodite Makri advised that permission of the bishop must first be obtained. Fraser prepared preliminary drawings for the bishop. "Not Byzantine enough," said the bishop. Fraser modified her drawings and received permission to proceed.

In July of 1962, Asherman sailed off for the monasteries of Mt. Athos in northern Greece, a corner of ancient Byzantium that has survived into modern times. No women are admitted to the region (not even the famous Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri, who once unsuccessfully tried to defy the ban). At Karyes, Asherman, as a demonstration project for the artist-monks of that monastery, created a fresco mural, *David and Goliath*. Fraser spent that July touring the Byzantine churches and monasteries of Yugoslavia near the Greek border.

By August Fraser and Asherman were back on Chios. They leased a house with a studio in Chios town. Roses and jasmine climbed on the walls, but the plumbing was primitive, and several times a week the artists, carrying their suitcases, were to be seen trudging down the streets en route to the public baths. Detailed working mural cartoons and tracings occupied Fraser's attention throughout the early fall of 1962. The drawing took many months, and Asherman, who had little to do during this phase, fumed. When he tried to hurry Fraser along, she became flustered, and in the end, Asherman was reconciled to letting her work at her own pace.

The Americans befriended a young artist of Chios, Niko Yialouris, who later was to assist in the painting of the chapel. To test the colors
they had ordered from Italy and the composition of the lime, Yialouris, Asherman, and Fraser painted a mural scene on a wall of Aphrodite Makri’s house. Yialouris’s scene was the coastline of his native Chios, Asherman’s the pines and seashore of his home state, Maine, and Fraser’s a Hawai‘i seascape, the three being tied together by a shared horizon line between the three panels.

"LET THE WALL SPEAK"

Fraser had long been attracted to the beautiful translucent color effects inherent in “buon fresco,” paintings created through the application of pigments into wet lime plaster. The method is very old; the wall paintings in the palace of Knossos are examples of genuine fresco painting. Fraser had studied buon fresco in Hawai‘i under the master muralist Jean Charlot, and it was this medium that she chose for the Ipapandi chapel. Many months passed as Fraser engaged in a communion with the walls of the chapel, a necessary step in her opin-
ion. "Rapport must exist between a wall and the artist," Fraser was to write, "for it is the wall which indicates what it wants and needs."4

Plastering and painting of the chapel murals began in mid-November and continued through a long, cold winter. Daily the artists took a forty-five-minute bus ride from Chios town to the village, stumbled through the cobblestone village streets, and continued work until nightfall. The village had no electricity, and on plastering days work continued by kerosene light well into the night. The church was unheated until Asherman, fearful that Fraser might develop a pneumonia—and that as a Christian Scientist she would refuse medical treatment—found a kerosene heater. When villagers tactfully pointed out to Fraser that the long trousers she wore to keep warm were considered inappropriate inside the chapel, Fraser just as tactfully invited the villagers inside for a look at the scaffolding on which she perched, and the matter was dropped. With respect to technique, Fraser used the "incised" method of transferring the cartoon to the chapel walls: with a blunt nail she followed the lines of her tracing, making faint impressions into the damp mortar, then colored the lines according to the color scheme she had chosen. In applying the colors throughout the murals, she departed from the "Italian method" she had learned in Hawai'i in favor of the Byzantine style. The Italian fresco artist begins with light colors, gradually progressing to dark hues. In contrast, the Byzantine artist begins with dark colors, adding light as required by mixing lime into the colors of the dark background.5

By virtue of two small niches built onto each side of the chapel, Ippapandi chapel is a cross-like structure. Two large facing scenes in the body of the chapel dominate the murals, complemented by small panels depicting saints. The panels are set off from one another by broad Greek-key borders; in addition, plain broad bands define the architectural form of the chapel. Because of the diminutive size of the chapel (it is 36 feet long, 10 feet wide, with a ceiling of 10 feet) the panels were designed to be viewed at a very close range. The tiny proportions of the chapel suited Fraser's innate preference for small, detailed designs, but her murals were also very much in keeping with Byzantine traditional church art, which, in contrast to the monumental dimensions of Italian church art, tends to be intimate in size.6
SAINTS AND SYMBOLS

The namesake scene, the Presentation, is to the left of the chapel as one enters. By tradition, this location is set aside for the figure or scene to which the church is dedicated. The Ipapandi panel represents Joseph and Mary at the presentation of the Christ Child in the temple with Simeon descending the temple stairs to receive Jesus as an infant in the arms of his mother. The setting is a walled courtyard of Chios with gates painted after the graceful arched doorways Fraser had seen on the island. A tower of St. Nicholas church rises in the background. A long curve of shoreline is a composite of locales on Chios. In her use of local scenes, Fraser believed that she remained within the limits of Orthodox convention and indeed was careful to explain her thinking in a formal written statement:

The masterful Byzantine Church painters who certainly represent one of the greatest epochs in the history of world art, were artists of their own times. They did not attempt to copy classical Greek art, or Egyptian, or any other previous style. They were primarily painters of their own period. They painted with the language which could most readily be understood by the general public of those times. Possibly to help the simple devotees relate the universal Bible stories to their own lives, the Byzantine painters used in their backgrounds the architecture and landscapes which they knew best—the buildings and scenes which were everywhere about them. They did not, for instance, attempt to reconstruct the architecture of Biblical times nor the actual landscapes one might have viewed in Galilee itself. This is the reason that in the backgrounds of my murals for this church, I have used landscapes and buildings which suggest the island of Chios.7

Facing the presentation panel on the opposite wall of the vestibule is a parallel scene, the presentation of the young Mary. St. Anne and Joachim stand in the background. Again, the scene is a typical Chios walled courtyard, with many engaging touches. The sheep in the stable, drawn from life, are the distinctive broad-eared, flat-tailed creatures of Chios. At the center of the panel, over the wall, can be seen the balcony of Aphrodite Makri’s house with its tracery of grape vines. A garden gate was drawn from a scene not far from the chapel. A cam-
FIG. 2. *Presentation of the Infant Jesus.* Detail. (Juliette May Fraser/David Asherman Papers, Special Collections, University of Hawai‘i Library.)
panile is modeled on the upper tower of St. Nicholas church on Chios. The woman on the left, wearing the characteristic embroidered apron of Chios and peering intently at the grouping of holy figures, was inspired by an inquisitive Vavylia villager whose avid curiosity proved a bit irksome to Fraser during the painting of the murals.

A lunette depicting the annunciation links the two presentation scenes. Mary is shown seated in a Chios garden at the moment when she first knows that the miracle of which she reads will be hers.
From the earliest years of her career, symbolism in art had interested Fraser as much as the details of external representation. This inclination is expressed most fully in Fraser’s images of various saints and apostles in the Ipapandi chapel. Over the doorway are two welcoming angels, one with a lighted candle representing enlightenment, the other swinging a censer (drawn from a censer she had seen in a Chios church), suggesting prayer and thankfulness. These are common enough abstractions, but behind the paintings of St. Demetrius and St. George, placed under the welcoming angels, are meanings more idiosyncratic to Fraser’s own thinking. St. Demetrius striking to earth a wicked giant who persecuted Christians is a “forerunner of all who are devoted to the freeing of men’s minds from prejudices—ministers, statesmen, law makers, etc.”

Fraser’s depiction of St. George caused a to-do among villagers who protested that in Greek icons George’s dragon belongs below the hoofs of the white horse, not, as Fraser shows it, descending from the heavens; moreover, they noted, Fraser’s dragon has a Chinese-like character. According to Orthodox traditions, it is essential that every icon of a holy figure resemble as much as possible every previous image of that figure. Fraser turned disapproval to amusement when
she confessed that her Chinese dragon was inspired by a fanciful village water spout fashioned by an inventive tinsmith in the shape of a dragon. Her placement of the dragon at the top of the mural has to do with balancing the composition of the panel in relation to the companion mural of St. Demetrius.

Panels in the recessed niches on either side of the iconostasis depict saints and evangelists. Following Orthodox convention, each
evangelist holds a book and each is identified by a characteristic symbol. A lion on the spine of a book identifies St. Mark. There is an eagle on St. John's sash and an angel on the cover of St. Matthew's book. The image of St. Luke is somewhat daring in that Fraser chose to paint him as an artist in an artist's smock and with a Japanese paint brush such as that Fraser used to paint the Ipapandi murals. Greek friends had told her that in Greek church lore several surviving icons in Greece are attributed to Luke, and after his sojourn at Mt. Athos, David Asherman had described for Fraser an icon in one of the monasteries there believed by the monks to have been painted by Luke. Fraser left to the villagers the choice of saints in the niche on the left side of the iconostasis. The villagers chose St. Nicholas and St. Sideros for one panel, both of these saints having special significance to
the village of Vavylia, and because of the important role a woman had played in founding Ipapandi church, Saints Mikela and Matrona for the facing wall. Designs in brown below each of these figures relate symbolically to the person above. An anchor and a rope symbolize St. Nicholas, patron of seamen, and a horse stands for St. Sideros, remembered as a cavalryman. Below the women are motifs suggesting bread stamped with religious signs, the “church bread” of Byzantine convention. The stamp is framed by blades of wheat representing immortality.

Fraser did several studies before deciding on the appealing decorative lintel above the iconostasis. One early drawing is an elaborate array of animals and plants, but villagers voted on a simple and very beautiful design of grapevines. The motif suggests the miracle of water turned to wine but also celebrates the famous wines of Chios, preferred above all others from ancient times.

The space behind the iconostasis and above the altar is by custom
reserved for the "All Holy" Panagia, the Virgin Mary. Fraser's Mary is shown with outstretched arms above the infant Jesus, depicted in a nimbus, holding in one hand the pomegranate, symbol of immortality, while the other hand of the infant makes the traditional Orthodox sign of blessing. Once again, kibitzing villagers buzzed their disapproval. The Panagia should be represented as a woman of about fifty, they insisted. But Fraser had taken as her theme for the chapel "Youth and Joy" and her Mary was painted in this spirit. The Fraser Panagia, however, does have the sad, disapproving downturned eyebrows of the typical Panagia. The Eye of God on the arched ceiling is completely Byzantine in spirit. The six prophets beneath the Panagia—Samuel, David, Daniel, Miriam, Solomon, and Moses—were chosen by Fraser because they are the ones familiar to all from the earlier days of childhood, thus appropriate to her theme of Youth and Joy.

Archangels Gabriel and Michael flank the Panagia. These figures posed compositional problems. Because of the prominent space they occupied, they had to be monumental in size, but the space behind the iconostasis is so small that full-length figures cannot be comfortably viewed. Fraser solved the problem by painting the archangels
leaning from heavenly windows. Her Gabriel is adorned with a Mauna-Loa-style lavender orchid lei, Michael with native Hawaiian maile and golden ilima.

Separating the presentation panels and the saints and prophets from the starry ceiling is a frieze of celebratory, musical angels. Here Fraser allowed free rein to her imagination to express a profound affection for her beloved Hawai‘i as well as for Greece, which she had come to consider a second home. One angel, with tapa-imprinted wings, wears the feathered cloak and helmet of ancient Hawai‘i (Ah, said the villagers, the helmet is Greek!) and blows on a conch shell. Another angel, clothed in a gown embroidered with sea creatures, dances a sedate hula and shakes the feathered-gourd musical instruments of old Hawai‘i. Interspersed with the Hawaiian angels are angels dressed in the colorful traditional costumes of Greece. The costume details were careful copies of intricate Greek folk embroi-
dery and weaving patterns. The trees and foliage of the background of the frieze blend Hawaiian and Greek vegetation. Here is the famous mastic tree of Chios, used for gum and varnish, a traditional source of wealth for Chios since ancient times. Here the royal palm of Hawai‘i, paired with a flowering Greek almond. There, an orange tree, common to both Greece and Hawai‘i. Despite the tropical greenery, the mural landscapes throughout the chapel are true to the sparseness and barrenness characteristic of Greece.

Above all these scenes is the starry heaven of the Byzantine traditional artist. Fraser chose to make each of the dozens of stars distinctive in color and design. Her aim, she wrote, was to surmount the presentation scene with angels and the starry sky in “a burst of joy.”

Throughout the creation of the murals the villagers of Vavylia engaged themselves in the project. Village women brought Fraser treasured specimens of local embroidery and weaving which she used as models for the very beautiful costumes of her saints and angels. The men of the village, concerned with the rickety scaffolding the artists had improvised, foraged through the village for wood to strengthen the structure. Makri’s dressmaker’s cutting board was
pressed into service as a platform. Lunch and coffee for the artists appeared regularly, gifts of the villagers. When Fraser needed models for certain difficult poses of her painted figures—uplifted arms of the conch blower, for example—the villagers stood ready. The village priest stopped by regularly to smile his approval.

As completion of the murals neared, villagers came secretly to Asherman asking his advice with respect to an appropriate gift for Fraser. A silver tray perhaps? Knowing that Fraser would be horrified at the thought of such an expense, Asherman after some thought suggested that the street on which the chapel stood be named for Fraser. But, said the villagers, we would be embarrassed that so poor a street bears the name of such a noble friend. With this came a new notion. Without a word to Fraser, Asherman sent a plea for contributions to Fraser's many friends in Hawai'i. Within weeks, more by far than needed for the paving of the street flowed from Hawai'i to Chios.

![Fig. 11. Tea break. Fraser and Aphrodite Makri. (Juliette May Fraser/David Asherman Papers, Special Collections, University of Hawai'i Library.)](image)
Makri, in on the surprise, could scarcely believe the immediacy of the response.

The chapel was Fraser’s masterpiece. The requirement of the Byzantine style brought a new core of strength and discipline to her art, and in turn her fresh and imaginative approaches softened the rigidity of traditional Greek church art. The elongated figures and sharp garment folds of the Byzantine style suited Fraser’s innate preference for geometric forms rather than rounded. The walls had indeed spoken and it is difficult to imagine a more inspired use of the space afforded.
For both Fraser and Asherman the chapel represented a defining experience, both artistically and personally. They had been drawn into the life of the village, and the Chios sojourn remained with them all their lives. “May dearest,” Asherman was to write years later, “time has put a rosy glow on the time in Chios. Forgotten is the cold, the dampness, the bathing facilities—all the numerous unpleasantnesses evaporate and we’re left with only the residue of the happy aspects. I too wonder so much what the villagers are all doing, what kind of people are living in our house. The anemones are in bloom along the road to Vavylia and soon the tulips will be coming out. And it seems so distant. I wonder whether it’s only a dream.”

THE CONTROVERSY

As Fraser and Asherman worked under pressure to complete the frescoes in time for the March 1963 date selected for the dedication ceremonies, a hint came of approaching disaster. A concerned Niko Yialouris, the Chios artist who had assisted with the frescoes, came to Asherman with news that the American artists were to be “put down.” Perhaps sensing something of the sort, Asherman, ordinarily the consummate publicist, had attempted to keep quiet about the project until the paintings were complete and could be judged in their entirety. But he had written to friends in Hawai’i, where soon news articles began to appear, and from Hawai’i word was passed on to Athens. In March of 1963 a four-column article appeared in the Greek-language Eleutheria written by a prominent church artist, Photious Kontoglou. Kontoglou denounced both Asherman and Fraser and pronounced the chapel murals examples of decadent American art.

At issue was a larger dispute between proponents of the neo-Byzantine school of church architecture, founded in the 1930s and 1940s by Kontoglou himself, in opposition to a less rigid post-Byzantine school. Kontoglou, according to Asherman, had not seen the Ipapandi murals, nor even photographs of the paintings. It is doubtful, however, that a viewing of the Fraser murals would have altered Kontoglou’s views. In Kontoglou’s opinion, the archaic Byzantine style was the only kind of painting worth taking seriously. He considered Western-style naturalness, perspective, realism, imaginativeness as
aberrations, believing that only the traditions of classical Byzantine art offered a penetration of Christian mysteries. Kontoglou reserved a special scorn for the secular artist who dabbled in church art. "In the West the same artist who paints the Holy Virgin also engages in secular art painting, for instance, the portrait of some vainglorious woman. There is hardly any difference at all between these two works of the same artist, except for the addition of a halo to the woman who represents the Holy Virgin."

The objections to the Fraser murals raised by conservative church artists were widely publicized, with reverberations reaching as far as the pages of the New York Times. Leery of disputes and insecure in his temporary appointment, the bishop in charge ordered a stop to the Ipapandi project. The local priest, he who had earlier come to smile his approval, came to Aphrodite Makri and suggested that perhaps the best solution at that point was to whitewash the murals. Makri's response was predictable. She took the stand that the church belonged to the village and in her rage stormed that if an inch of the paintings were desecrated, she would turn Roman Catholic, and further, sell the chapel to the Catholics. In truth, the Ipapandi chapel quite deliberately had not yet been turned over to the church, since the artists knew that once consecrated, Fraser would not have been able to paint the areas behind the iconostasis, where, under the rules of the Orthodox church, only men were allowed. After this impasse, the bishop banned all church officials from attending the dedication ceremonies.

The dedication of the chapel took place in March of 1963 with great ceremony. Asherman bravely insisted that the absence of church officials only improved the occasion. Greek, American, and Hawaiian flags flew, the mayor read his commendation, and the crew of the visiting battleship USS John King added to the luster of the day. Tears flowed when Fraser first viewed the new marble plaque proclaiming Juliette May Fraser Street and learned of the plans to pave the cobblestoned street. After the ceremonies, Fraser and Asherman remained on Chios for several more months refining details of the paintings. Although the villagers wondered aloud at what possibly could be needed, Fraser was unsatisfied with small nuances of expression on the faces of several of her saints and worked to perfect these perceived imperfections until she was satisfied. Her instincts were
sure, and the delicacy of facial expression remains one of the distinguishing features of the chapel. Finally Fraser confessed to homesickness for Hawai‘i and flew home. She had given a year to the painting of the chapel at a time of her life when each day was held as especially precious. Asherman remained in Greece for a time, adding, at Fraser’s suggestion, small details to the mural—a fringe on a Greek costume, a sharpening of the scales of the controversial dragon, an emboldening of St. Simeon’s robe.

The final touch to the chapel was Asherman’s inspiration. Not far from Chios town is the village of Perghi, famous for the gray and white geometric patterns executed in stucco on the exterior walls of many buildings in the town. The style, however, has gone out of fashion, many of the townspeople considering it old-fashioned and preferring the modern. Of the craftsmen able to carry out the distinctive stucco work, only one elderly artisan, Niko Condovris,
remained, and he had not worked in this speciality for many years. When Asherman approached him about stucco work for the Ipanpandi chapel, Condovris suggested, in the interest of economy, repetitive patterns rather than the variety of designs found on the best Perghi-style work. Because there were funds remaining from the street-paving project financed by Hawai‘i donors, Asherman was able to contract with Condovris for the more expensive but finer quality of design work.

Then Asherman was off to Paris for a year, but when he left, it was with the sad realization that the chapel was destined to remain a museum rather than a place of worship. The church insisted that there would be no consecration of the chapel. Both Asherman and Fraser returned to Chios in 1965 and again in 1978 to find that the position of the church remained unchanged. A part of Fraser’s heart remained in Greece. For receptions in her honor in Hawai‘i, she would sit like a queen in the ornate chair she had brought home with her from Greece. Ceremonial cakes were cut with an antique sword, another of Fraser’s souvenirs from Greece, and a weapon which had probably lopped off many a head, she would explain with mock seriousness. For festive occasions, she had commissioned from a dressmaker a gold-colored satin holokū, embroidered with sea-urchin designs inspired by Hawaiian tapa patterns and a squid motif of ancient Crete. The gown was a copy of that worn by Fraser’s hula angel of the Ipanpandi chapel.

Fraser and Asherman remained friends, and together the two completed several mural projects in Hawai‘i. Well past her ninetieth birthday, she was to be seen painting atop high scaffoldings, often as not, the loyal Asherman at her side. It is fair to say that Asherman’s support enabled Fraser to remain productive far longer than might have been expected. In 1982 a broken hip sent her to bed, and she failed to recover from this injury. Asherman died, too young, of lung cancer, short months after Fraser’s death in 1983.

Taken as a whole, the murals completed by these artists in Hawai‘i constitute a monumental text on the sweep of island history. A trek of mural sites takes the viewer from the mythological Hawaiian past (Legends of Hawai‘i and Pure Water—Man’s Greatest Need), to scenes of long-distance voyaging (Eia Hawai‘i, E Moku, E Kanaka). Myriad
FIG. 14. Juliette May Fraser in her hula angel gown, photographed during a 1978 visit. On the ceiling directly above Fraser is the hula angel. (Juliette May Fraser/David Asherman Papers, Special Collections, University of Hawai‘i Library.)
details depict everyday life in precontact Hawai‘i in Fraser’s Makahiki mural. Situated on the real-life location of Benjamin Parker’s Kane‘ohe mission station, Fraser’s Ka Haku Beniamina interprets the interaction of missionaries and Hawaiian country folk. The privately commissioned Contributions of the Chinese to Hawai‘i features, among other scenes, a charming portrait of the young Ka‘ahumanu, wrapped in yellow Chinese silk. Scenes from the Hawaiian monarchy appear in Asherman’s Royal Family Picnic in Kalihi Valley, July 1859, showing Kamehameha IV and his family relaxing in easy familiarity with Kalihi Hawaiians, and in the judicial court scene of the Kauikeaouli (Kamehameha III) era, jointly executed by Fraser, Asherman, and an associate, Mataumu Alisa. Accuracy of historical detail
and a sense of wit and vivacity are the distinguishing marks of all these works.

**Chios Revisited: 1992**

As Fraser had intended, her murals on Chios serve as a bond of friendship between Hawai‘i and Greece. Many a traveler has made the pilgrimage from Hawai‘i to Greece to see the chapel and has returned enriched in spirit by the beauty of the frescoes and the people of Chios. There follows an account of one such pilgrimage:

Winter has come early to Chios and a cold sea wind howls. Scarcely five miles across a channel, the lights of Turkey burn through the darkness, menacingly so it seemed, and in deference to the horror tales of Turkish oppression with which all visitors to Greece are entertained, we shudder. The new tourist hotels that have only recently come to Chios had closed for the season, but just as well, for we like the historic if decrepit Kyma, where the treaty that finally ended the Turkish occupation of Greece had been signed in 1922. We brave the

![Fig. 16. The Chios murals defaced, 1992. (Juliette May Fraser/David Asherman Papers, Special Collections, University of Hawai‘i Library.](image-url)
wind and run through dark and empty streets to the only open restaurant in town. Except for a band of wild cats sporting through the microphones and cymbals of a deserted band stand, we are the only diners. We sit near the fire, grateful to be warm, and after dinner feed our fish heads to the cats.

Friends from the American University in Athens have arranged for an English-speaking guide, and with a new day’s light we hire a cab for the short journey to Vavylia village. One approaches the chapel along “Odos Juliette May Fraser.” As we walk, two matrons of the village, all in black, run to us with the chapel keys. Amidst a torrent of Greek, we can only catch “Juliette May Fraser! David Asherman! Hawai‘i!” The guide is hard-pressed to keep up a translation of the flood of words. They had known her. They had loved her.

When the chapel door is opened, the warm glow of color inside enchant. But delight soon turns to dismay with the realization of the terrible thing that has been done to the murals. Someone, “a religious fanatic,” according to Chios artist Niko Yialouris, has glued religious prints throughout the chapel, with a concentration on the Hawaiian motifs. Many of the posters are tattered by pitiful attempts to peel them away. Villagers who loved the murals, say the matrons, enter the chapel secretly by night and try to remove the posters. The Greek women sense and share our sorrow, and with profound affection show us sections of the murals that have been left undisturbed. “These were my animals!” one says, pointing to the stable in the presentation scene. They divert us with dramatic tales of saints depicted on the walls. “This is our village saint. She was raped by her father. She weeps tears of blood.” The women smile together remembering the real-life model for the curious villager of the presentation scene, but “she is dead now,” they say. Then the taxi driver becomes impatient and it is time to leave. As we close the door, the matrons explain that there is yet a hope for the murals. The village chairman has spoken to the Greek national archaeological service about a professional restoration of the murals. And finally they say that a new bishop has come who reversed the earlier edict and has consecrated the chapel. The liturgy is celebrated.

We return to the Kyma to pack for the flight back to Athens. At the hotel an old man dozes behind his newspaper at the reception desk. He wakes from time to time to offer his memories of Fraser and Ash-
erman, who had on occasion stayed there. He struggles to explain to us somehow that now Ipapandi is consecrated, but his limited English and our non-existent Greek impede communication. Inspiration strikes, and at last the right words come: “It didn’t work—but now it works!”

Notes


3. At the time, Asherman had plans for a mural commission of his own at the Chios Library. Fraser would assist. This project, however, did not materialize. Although Asherman gracefully yielded center stage to Fraser during the execution of the project, in truth, his contributions to the paintings of the murals were substantial. Fraser had difficulties with proportions and the relative sizes of figures and relied on Asherman for correction of these and other problems.

4. Juliette May Fraser, artist’s introduction to brochure issued in connection with Fraser mural exhibition, January 26–February 18, 1977, Contemporary Arts Center, Honolulu, Hawai‘i. Juliette May Fraser Archives, University of Hawai‘i Library.

5. Fraser discussed her fresco technique in an interview recorded by the Watumull Foundation Oral History Project in 1979.

6. Fraser interview.


9. Asherman to Fraser, 18 Jan. 1964. Fraser/Asherman papers, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai‘i.

10. A selection of Kontoglou’s writings has been translated into English by Constantine Cavarnos and published as Byzantine Sacred Art (Belmont, Mass.: Institute for Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies, 1983).


15. Eia Hawaii, E Moku, E Kanaka (Behold Hawai‘i, An Island, A People). American


