

Under the auspices of the Russell Trust (of Edinburgh University and of Professor Talbot Rice), a final season of work on the wall paintings of Ayasofya was successfully carried through with the co-operation of the Department of Antiquities at Ankara. Work began on the 7th May and continued through until October 26th with the author acting as Field Director. Mrs. Wainwright again acted as draftsman for the Expedition and she was also responsible for much of the work of toning - in damaged areas of the paintings. Bay Muhittin Uysaldir acted as representative of the Department of Antiquities for a third season and we were grateful both for his help with the paintings and for all the hard work which he put into making a success of the final season. Bay Osman Köroğlu who had worked with the Expedition since 1958 acted as foreman and was of great help in training and looking after two new workers.

The removal of plaster and the initial cleaning away of the whitewash coverings in the pendentives, drum, and cupola was accomplished in 1961. In May 1962 we began work on the final cleaning of these areas, and at the same time erected a scaffold in the north vault of the narthex. This vault, the east side of which was uncovered in 1960, was only covered with two layers of whitewash. There was no plaster covering and this made our task easier although the whitewash had in some areas become very hard difficult to remove. The west side of the vault was found to contain two registers of painting with miracle scenes. The upper register portrayed "Christ walking on the Waters", and the "Calming of the Storm", in a combined scene, while the lower register represented the "Healing of

Simon's Wife's Mother". In all of these scenes much of the tempera painting had come away and the colours that remain have darkened considerably, perhaps as a result of damp, although in this case it was difficult to understand why, since a room above the narthex protects its vaults from any direct penetration by rain, such as has happened in the vaults of the naos

A small amount of final cleaning remained to be done in the exonarthex, which we had opened up in 1961. This, together with the toning - in of the damaged areas, the photography and the descriptive notes were completed and the scaffold dismantled by 12th June. The exonarthex contained an elaborate representation of the "Last Judgement" on its vault and walls, but unfortunately the greater part of the wall plaster and painting have fallen away over the centuries, through neglect of the structure and the action of damp. The painting that survives is in poor condition, with little detail work to add interest to it. A section on the South wall contained a representation of "Hell" covered by a particularly tough layer of whitewash; as much as possible of this was removed, but an obstinate layer remained and resisted the efforts of a hard wire brush rotated by an electric drill and the application of concentrated acetic and hydrochloric acids. We had to admit defeat and leave this particular section uncleaned but as little paint remains anyway. The loss is not great.

The north vault of the narthex was finished at much the same time as the exonarthex, and work was begun on the centre vault of the

narthex and on the south porch of the building. The latter area had been used as a mosque until March 1961, by which date a new mosque had been completed the villagers, and the Expedition was left with a free hand in the old building. The state of the roof of the south porch was revealed as being very poor when it was renovated in 1961, and we neither expected, nor did we find much of the original plaster. Two small fragments low down on either side of vault was all that remained of the paintings, and neither subject was recognisable. The west fragments contained a bearded figure with a green halo in the act of blessing or curing a young man, while the east fragment contained the helmeted heads of a number of soldiers with spears and swords. More interesting were some quick sketches done by painter on the stonework of the south wall above the east column. There are several sketches of hands, a geometric pattern, and a rather confused full length sketch of a warrior with a helmet exactly as shown in the east side of the vault; so that it was perhaps while he was engaged on the east side of the vault that the painter did his sketches. There is a freshness about them which is more revealing of the manner of the painter than many of his finished paintings. In addition to the Byzantine paintings in the south porch an oval plaque of arabic writing was preserved. This was the only piece of decoration dating from the mosque which remained in good condition. It is in white writing on a black ground and is from a commentary by Elmalili on the 18th Cin suresi of the Koran.

On completion of the south porch a scaffold was erected in the north porch and we began the work of stripping off the plaster and the whitewash. Very little of the original painting is left on the walls of the porch, but there is a fair amount of painting in variable condition in the vault and above the arches on the north side. In the east part of the vault are the remains of a "Tree of Jesse" in fragmentary condition. It is a monumental composition and probably stretched from the top centre of the vault down to the ground, but the lower

part has entirely disappeared. In the west half of the vault are fragments of a scene of the "Teaching of the Scriptures" in the upper register, a "Baptismal" scene in the register below, and eight standing warrior saints below this. Of the register at ground level nothing remains, but it probably consisted of standing saints. On the south wall of the porch, in the upper register is a fragment of a painting which probably represents a part of the "Hospitality of Abraham". Near to it, on the stonework is a small sketch of an angel done in a black wash. This is a lively figure which as the illustration shows, might easily be mistaken for a drawing by a Renaissance artist (Pl. 1.) It is of interest in showing what the painter could do when not confined by rules of iconography and technique.

All the paintings mentioned above are in poor condition, with pitted surfaces to the plaster and little of the tempera layers of detail painting preserved. However, on the north side of the porch above the columns we were lucky enough to find some paintings in fair condition. The spandrels between the arches contained full length figures of a Prophet and of 'Job smitten by Boils' (Pl. 2. 3.) In the semicircular space above this was a scene in three parts containing, from west to east, "Jacob's Dream of the Ladder with Angels ascending to Heaven", Jacob wrestling with the Angel', and a ghostlike Angel with wings (Pl. 4.) The rest of the scene concerning the ghostly angel has fallen away but it perhaps represents the vision of the "Angel in the Burning Bush'. The painting of the angel is unique in that he is done in white with only a few pale red feature lines and garment lines, so that he appears as an unearthly spirit. The central scene of "Jacob Wrestling with the Angel' is a fine piece of composition with the two figures arranged in pyramid form, while at the same time there is a circular movement outwards from the interlocking bodies of the two figures.

While working in the north porch, the cleaning of the north vault of the narthex was finished, and the scaffold moved to the

centre and south vaults. The south vault had been opened up in the 1961 season but the final cleaning remained to be done and this was accomplished, as elsewhere in the narthex, by means of a soft wire brush. The circular brush was fitted to a hand operated electric drill with a speed reduction unit. This proved to be an efficient method of cleaning paintings that were in good condition, and it was used in the narthex and in the north porch, and, to some extent in the dome. The south vault contains scenes of the "Child Christ among the Doctors", and the "Healing of the Blind Man" in the east half of the vault, and the "Marriage Feast at Cana" and the "Healing of the Paralytic" in the west half of the vault. The scenes were divided at the crown of the vault by a decorative band of interlocking fleur-de-lys in yellow and green, and a central circle with an inscribed and jewelled cross. The upper scenes on either side, those of "Christ among the Doctors" and the "Marriage Feast at Cana" are in good condition apart from numerous holes due to stone throwing, but the two lower scenes are only partially complete and much of the final paint has disappeared. The damage from stone throwing is most serious in the corners of the vaults of the narthex where birds have nested in the past and people have thrown stones in order to dislodge them.

The centre section of the narthex is roofed with a quadripartite vault and this was found to contain a composition based on the Revelation of St. John the Divine. At the centre of the vault is a star with the fingers of the hand of God at its centre, and symbols of the Four Evangelists at the points. In the west and east segments of the vault are "Cherubim" with six wings and a haloed head in the centre, accompanied by "Powers" in the form of winged circles. In the north and south segments are "Seraphim" with six wings and a diamond shaped space in the centre which may have contained an **Θ+Θ**. The ribs of the vault are gaily decorated with rows of coloured rectangles, each colour alternating in light and dark shades. On the east wall over the main door from the narthex into the church is a

representation of the "Annunciation" with the angel Gabriel to the north of the archway, and the Virgin to the south; unfortunately the faces of both have gone. The Angel is a particularly fine figure with the folds of his robe painted in complicated and baroque profusion so as to give an impression of movement across the archway, bridging the gap between him and the Virgin. Opposite the Annunciation over the archway from the narthex to the exonarthex is the painting of the "Adoration of the Holy Face" but only half of this remains and no detail is left of the faces of either Christ or the Angel. Work in the dome continued on until nearly the end of the season. Apart from the cleaning of the paintings, the work of plastering and toning - in the holes was a major operation since there were well over 5,000 holes to repair and colour in. The scaffolding was finally removed on October 19th. (Pl. 5 - 10.)

In July a scaffold was erected in the first floor of the Bell Tower adjoining the church. This contains a small chapel with paintings dating from the first half of the 15th century. Excepting the west wall, the cleaning of these paintings was not difficult since they were only covered with an accumulation of dust and pigeon droppings which were removed with sponge and water. The west wall was more difficult since there were the foundations of numerous swallows' nests affixed to the paintings. These are made of a whitish substance of rock like hardness. After repeated soaking with water it was found possible to remove these nests, but a small amount of paint was inevitably in the process. The Bell Tower scaffold remained up until the end of the season and all the edges of the paintings were secured and the holes filled up. No preservative coating was applied to the paintings since they were still exposed to pigeon droppings and it will be more appropriate to apply a preservative when the Evkaf Department have completed the restoration of the tower.

The methods employed for cleaning and conservation were the same as those used in previous years and described in the reports

of work done in 1958 in 1959. Apart from the paintings, the remains of the mosaic floor in the centre of the naos were cemented - in under the direction of Bay Muhittin Uysaldır, to conserve them from further deterioration, and the main outlines of the design of the floor were incised into the cement so as to give some cohesion to the various parts of it.

The Director of the Expedition, Professor Talbot Rice, came to Trabzon, together with his wife, for the first fortnight of September to review the progress of the work and to prepare material for publication.

An increasing number of tourists, both Turkish and foreign, have visited Ayasofya each year of the Expedition's work there, and in order to help them, plaster plaques were placed in or near each painting in the church with the titles of each scene in English and Turkish.

The work of the Evkaf Department

on the restoration of the fabric of the building continued in 1962, and will be completed in 1963, when it should become one of the major Tourist attractions along the Black Sea coast.

In concluding the work of the Russell Trust Expedition and this final report I should like to thank once again the present Vali of Trabzon and the many private citizens and officials who have helped the Expedition over administrative problems. I should also like to express our gratitude to the citizens of Trabzon and in particular to the villagers of Ayasofya Mahallesi for the tolerance which they have shown to a foreign expedition working in a religious building. Finally I should like to thank in particular Bay İhsan Nemli Zade and Bayan Aliye Asirbay each of whom over a period of six years have always given help to the Expedition and welcomed members of it to their homes, and the others who have extended their hospitality to us.

