

A REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE BYZANTINE INSTITUTE OF AMERICA, 1957

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The Byzantine Institute's campaign in Istanbul for 1957 began early in April and continued until January 15, 1958. As has been the case since 1948, work was principally centered at the Kariye Camii. It is a great satisfaction to be able to state that all the mosaics in the two narthexes and two of the three mosaic panels that still exist on the walls of the nave have now been cleaned and repaired. To all intents and purposes, therefore, this completes the restoration of the mosaics of the Kariye Camii which, without doubt, now form the most splendid array of mosaics of the Palaeologan period that still exist. Since the Müzeler Umum Müdürlüğü has, officially established the Kariye Çamii as a museum the glories of these mosaics can now be seen by the public and already large numbers of visitors and tourists are attracted.

Simultaneously with the cleaning and repair of the mosaics the staff of the Institute continued its work on the frescoes in the Parecclesion. Most of the frescoes in the vaults above the cornice and somewhat more than half of the figures on the walls below have been uncovered and treated. The few frescoes that still remain to be uncovered will be put in condition by mid-summer of 1958. Progress in the restoration of the frescoes was delayed when it was found necessary to remove extensive arches in two arches and pendentives that support the dome of the Parecclesion. This became imperative in order to rebuild the crown of these arches which had been badly shattered by earthquakes. The intricate and delicate task of removing the frescoes was performed with great success under the supervision of Mr. George L.

Stout, Director of the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum of Boston. The dome was then shored up and the damaged parts of the arches were rebuilt. The frescoes that had been removed have now been put back in place under the supervision of Mr. Carroll Wales of the Institute's staff.

Now that most of the frescoes have been uncovered, cleaned, and repaired, the Parecclesion conveys an impression of completeness in its decoration that approximates its original appearance (Fig. 1). The paintings constitute the only extensive series of paintings to have been discovered and preserved in Constantinople from the thousand years of Byzantine rule and as such they are of great importance to the history of Byzantine art. The theme of the paintings is devoted to the role of Christ and the Virgin in the salvation of mankind. In the western vaults is a series of five Old Testament subjects (The Bearing of the Ark of the Covenant to Solomon's Temple, The Angel Slaying the Assyrians before Jerusalem, Aaron and His Sons before the Altar, Jacob's Ladder, and Moses and the Burning Bush) which are represented as prefiguration-s of the Virgin (Fig. 2). In the vaults of the eastern half Christ's redemption of mankind is depicted in another series of five scenes (The Harrowing of Hell, two of Christ's miracles of resurrection, The Last Judgment, and the Entry into Paradise). These subjects make it clear that the Parecclesion was intended as the funerary chapel of the monastery. This is borne out by the presence in its walls of four sepulchral monuments in the form of arcossolia which once contained sarcophagi of important personages. Two of these still contain fra-

gments of portraits of the deceased, one depicting the Grand Constable Michael Tornikes and his wife, the other depicting a man and wife in the costumes of the imperial court together with two nuns. The woman in court vestments cannot be identified precisely, but monograms on her costume indicate that she was a member of the Asan and Palaeologan families.

Four more arcosolia were discovered this past year, three in the outer narthex and one at the northern end of the inner narthex. The latter was found to have been decorated entirely in mosaics and fragments of these still exist. In the top of the arch was a bust figure of Christ **which** is almost entirely lost. In the back of the niche is a bust figure of the Virgin of the type of the Zoodochos Pege which is almost intact. The portraits of the deceased once stood at each side below, but only small pieces of their crowns have survived together with remnants of inscriptions. The inscriptions make it evident that this was the tomb of a man named Demetrius whose family names began with that of the Dukas family. In all probability he was a Palaeologan and in that case he might be identified as the Despot of Thessalonika and son of the emperor Andronicus II, Demetrius Dukas Angelus Palaeologus. Each of the three tombs discovered in the outer narthex contains fragments of paintings. Somewhat more than the lower half of each of the three portrait panels on the backs of the niches have survived and in one arcosolium (in the fifth bay from the north end of the narthex) paintings occur in the soffit of the arch above and in the jambs at the sides. In the soffit of this last tomb is a bust of the Virgin flanked by medallions of SS Cosmas and John Damascene, while in the jambs are standing figures of a monk and a nun. From a study of the monograms of the family names that occur on the costume of a woman in the portrait panel in the back of the niche, from the inscription that accompanies the figure of the nun, and from a text found in a fifteenth century docu-

ment, it can be established that this tomb belonged to Irene Raoulaina Palaeologina, the wife of Constantine, younger brother of Andronicus II, Palaeologus. She was also the mother of John the Panhypersebastos who married Irene, the only daughter of the Grand Logothete Theodore Metochites, patron and rebuildler of the Church of the Chora. Immediately to the north of this tomb is one which contains only the lower part of the panel of portraits. In this painting a man, child, and woman were portrayed. The man wears a cloak on which are golden monograms of the Palaeologan family and double-headed eagles. The costume of the woman also bears golden monograms which give the names of the Palaeologan, Asan, and Dermokaites families. The exact identity of these persons, however, is unknown. The fragment of painting in the third arcosolium of the outer narthex, near the north end, depicted the figure of the deceased standing before the enthroned Madonna and Child. There is no way of identifying the person to whom this tomb belonged, but the painting itself is extraordinary. Its style indicates an acquaintance with Italian painting of the fifteenth century for its spatial organization, perspective treatment, and sculptural rendition of figures and drapery can only have been achieved a short time before the Turkish conquest of the city.

The structure of the Kariye Camii has also received considerable attention by the staff of the Institute with the purpose of assuring the safety and appropriate presentation of the fine works of art contained within it. The entire system of wooden tiebeams of the Byzantine period had rotted away. All tie rods and reinforcing beams within the lengths of the walls have, therefore, been replaced with steel and concrete. The two small domes at the east, which still contain fragments of frescoes, have been rebuilt. In addition, the marble pavement and floors in the nave and the inner narthex have all been cleaned and hand polished to their original brilliance

and then waxed to retain the freshness of their colors and the patterns of their veining. Some areas of lost marble revetments are being replaced by new marbles of the original types. Where walls or vaults were no longer covered by mosaics or revetments, the covering plaster has been removed and the masonry cleaned, repaired, and repointed wherever necessary.

In the Spring of 1957 the Institute received permission from the Maarif Vekaleti to conduct excavations at selected places within the building with the view to determining the earlier history of the site. For this work the author enjoyed the collaboration of Professor George H. Forsyth Jr., of the University of Michigan during a short campaign of six weeks. Excavations were restricted to the apse as an area most apt to yield important evidence and because the pavement no longer existed there. Careful record was kept of the very complicated stratigraphy, but it is still too early to form very definite conclusions. It is planned to resume work in this and other areas during the season of 1958.

During the season of 1957 work was

resumed in the side chapel of Michael Glabas Tarchaniotes at the Fetiye Camii. The mosaics in the apse, which had been partly uncovered in previous years, again received attention and considerable progress was made. In addition, a scaffolding was erected to gain access to the mosaics in the central dome where the Pantocrator and the Prophets have always been visible. The lower parts of the Prophets had been covered over with plaster, but soundings indicate that they are still largely intact. Further soundings have been made in other parts of the chapel and other mosaics have been located. During the season of 1958 the staff working at the Fetiye Camii will be increased with the view of making more rapid progress there.

On two occasions staff members of the Institute were assigned to aid the staff of Ayasofya Museum to provide technical help in removing frescoes that had been accidentally discovered during excavations for new construction. Two important but fragmentary frescoes have thus been salvaged. Much can be done in this way to preserve works of art that would otherwise perish.

