

## FRESCO OF THE VIRGIN DISCOVERED AT ETYEMEZ

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While laying the groundwork for a hospital which was being built in the region of Etyemez by the Labour Insurance Society the excavations led to the discovery of sepulchral reliefs of the 2nd and 3rd centuries (Fig. 1). In the autumn of 1957 the building was extended toward the sea-shore, and this led to the discovery of the lateral wall and apse of a sinan chapel, quite near to the Tekye of Etyemez. Under it was a small crypt, to which was connected a vaulted passage (Fig. 2).

In the apse of the chapel was a fresco of the Holy Virgin. It was transferred to the Museum of St. Sophia. Although the Museum authorities were directly interested in the excavations the contractors did not know that a building might be found in that region, and the bulldozers destroyed a small building, joined to the vaulted passage, and which was probably an osteophyllo.

### 1 - The chapel and crypt:

We can conclude from the remains that the chapel measured 6 by 2,5 metres. It was built with bricks 30X30X2 cms., according to the Byzantine style. They bore the stamps:

INBAIIOAA, INFHAIE KAH and HNHHA YAA The mortar used was pink, and contained thick pieces of brick.

The length of the apse was 1,50 metres, and the width 1,40. The apse was covered with dark red paint to the height of 20 metres from the floor, and the fresco began there.

The crypt occupied the area under the apse of the chapel. The size was 2X2 metres. The interior was completely empty.

### 2 - The frescoes:

In the apse of the chapel were two frescoes, one covering the other (Fig. 3).

The earlier fresco was a representati-

on of Mary in the Blacherniotissa type. Her face was that of a very handsome woman, dressed in blue, according to tradition. On her breast was a medallion representing the child Jesus dressed in white. The workmen did not know that a chapel existed there, and the excavations made behind the wall destroyed part of the figure of Jesus. Only the halo round the head and the left hand remain. On the left of the Virgin's head is the monogram MP, and under it the inscription Y KATA. It has been impossible to decipher and understand the inscription, as that part which should be on the right side of the head has been covered by the plaster of the second fresco. The inscription is in black on a ground of dark brick color (Fig. 4, 5).

*The later fresco:* Because the earlier fresco was deteriorated, of perhaps because it was in a form which did not suit the taste of a later period, or perhaps because they wished to represent the Virgin in a different form, the fresco was covered with a coat of plaster, and a second fresco was painted. So far as can be judged from the remains the second fresco began higher up than the first, and represented the Virgin between two angels. In the course of time the higher part fell off, and there remained in the picture only the chin, neck, and shoulders, and part of it has no inscription. As is seen in the illustration the plaster in the lower part fell off and revealed part of the earlier fresco. For this reason it has been impossible to determine the style in which the second fresco was painted.

The technique in the building of the apse shows that it dates from the middle Byzantine period. The earlier fresco be-

longs to the 12th century, and the second to the 14th century (Fig. 6).

Immediately under the apse a marble slab 55 cms. long, 19 cms. in height, and 13 cms. wide, bears the inscription (Fig. 7).

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It is most probable that this fragment inscribed with a verse from the Gospel, belonged to the chapel.

The vaulted chapel.

A part measuring 2 metres has been examined. It probably joined the crypt to the Steophylakion. The height was 1.75 metres, and the width 1.20. The floor and lateral walls were built with sandstone, and it was covered with a vault of bricks. On each side was laid on the floor a marble band 12 cms. wide. In the lateral walls were niches unsymmetrically arranged, one on the right hand, and other on the left. In a niche built outside the northern wall of the vaulted passage was found in situ an empty box of sandstone. The size was 18X14X11,5. The workmanship was not good (fig. 8). The bricks and mortar used in the building of the vault which covered the passage were identical to those used in the building of the chapel, which indicates that they were built in the same period.

The Steophylakion was situated at a distance of 18 metres from the chapel. As it was quickly destroyed it has been impossible to examine it. A rough sketch drawn from memory by an engineer was confronted with the recollections of the foremen who worked there, and this led to the following conclusions, -

On the south side of the tekye six steps led down to the building. Opposite the staircase was an altar (?) facing south, about 1,60 metres high (Fig. 9). The apse of the altar was painted yellow, with a cross in the middle. The altar rested upon a console of white marble. On the right side of the console was a stone reliquary, identical to that shown in (fig. 8). The console was shaped like a writing desk, the middle being empty, and each side full, and resting upon a leg, on the front

of which was a marble slab with a Byzantine cross. A water pipe coming from the east passed immediately in front of the altar. The left side of the altar was probably connected with the covered passage. On the east side was a room 2,5 metres wide, on the southern wall of which was an empty marble box, one metre long, without either cross or inscription. The water pipe passed through this room and extended as far as a well situated on the east side. That well was perhaps originally a spring which remained in a hollow place when the level of the ground was raised in the Ottoman period, and afterwards a wall was built around to form a well.

Other finds:

1 - In this region variously colored mosaic tessellae were found in front of the hospital building in a mound of earth not yet excavated.

2 - Large quantities of potsherds belonging to the 11th and 12th centuries were found chiefly in the vicinity of the chapel.

3 - In 19:56, 20 metres north of the Steophylakion, in the area now occupied by the hospital buildings were found plain sepulchral stelae of the 3rd century (fig. 1).

4 - In the same region were found plain tombs covered with masonry in the shape of a roof. Inside were bones and lachrymatories.

5 - On the western end of the hospital building, in the earth not yet excavated a very plain sarcophagus of sandstone was partially discovered 1,5 metres below the level of the ground. In a similar sarcophagus discovered previously was found a skull which the responsible authorities sent to the chair of anthropology at the University.

We know that the burial ground of Constantinople was in the vicinity of the city walls. Similar graves were found nearly everywhere in the excavations made in various places in the town. In the excavations made near the tekye of Etyemez it has been ascertained that some of the

cemeteries were in that region, and that they were in use from the 3rd to the 4th century.

It has been impossible to ascertain the nature and length of a wall 1,35 metres thick, which started at an angle from the northern wall of the chapel. It is therefore impossible to conclude if that was an isolated chapel or the lateral chapel of a large church.

Mehmed Ziya Bey has erroneously identified the tekke of Etyemez as the monastery of Dios (1). However R. Janin rightly asserts that that monastery should be localized in the Lygos valley, or on the western slopes of the valley (2). In that region the Church of St. Irene should be localized a little further north, the Church of St. Emilian, near the gate of same name of the Constantinople land walls, and the Church of Theotokos Rhab-

(1) M. Ziya, *Istanbul ve Boğaziçi*, pp. 51 and 515.

(2) R. Janin, *Les Églises Et Les Monastères*.

dos, one of the oldest churches of Constantinople, further west (3).

In the publications published in İstanbul Dr. Paspati, in *Byzantinai Melete*, writes that a Christian monastery existed there, but according to the information he gives himself the monastery was situated on the left of the road leading from Langa to Samatya, between that road the sea-shore (4). The information he gives on that monastery is rather vague, and he merely says that in the Byzantine period the Monastery of Etyemez was called (Μονή - των Ιουδαίων) Skarlatos Byzantios gives no information. In *Hadiqa* it is stated that the tekke was formerly a church (5).

All those sources give no information that might enlighten us on the nature of the chapel. Perhaps the groundwork to be laid in 1951 will result in finds apt to enlighten this matter.

(3) Feridun Dirimtçkin, *Marmara Surları*, p. 46, note 34.

(4) Paspati, *Byzantinai Melete*, p. 397.

(5) *Hadiqa*, I, pp. 32, 22.

