

The Russell Trust's fourth season of work at Ayasofya, Trabzon, in co-operation with the Department of Antiquities, began on May 9th and ended on October 15th. Mrs Wainwright acted as full time assistant and was responsible for the drawing of the paintings that were uncovered and for the work of colouring-in the damaged areas, after these had been replastered. Bay Muhittin Uysal of the Conservation Department of the Archaeological Museum Istanbul, acted as representative for the Department of Antiquities throughout the season; we were most grateful for his help in both the actual work and for acting as liaison with the local authorities. Yakup Kemer and Osman Köroğlu, both completed their third season with the Expedition and have become very competent in the work of cleaning and restoring wall paintings. In the course of the vacation we were glad to receive several weeks of assistance from Mr Hale and Mr Richardson of Oxford University and from Mr Clogg and Mr Flaherty of Edinburgh University.

During the earliest part of the season work was concentrated on the completion of the north-east and south-east corner vaults of the naos where operations had commenced towards the end of the 1959 season. The cleaning of the south-east vault was largely completed in 1959, and there remained only the colouring-in of the damaged areas which was done by Mrs Wainwright. This vault contains the Presentation of the Virgin in the south half and the Birth of the Virgin in the north half; a continuation of the

episodes from the lives of Joachim and Anna which were revealed in the vaults of the south-east chapel early in 1959. The Presentation scene is combined with the Feeding of the Infant Virgin by an Angel. The Birth scene is noteworthy for its architectural background with a free standing column with Corinthian capital, and a domed structure supported by four barley-sugar columns.

The cleaning of the north-east corner vault proved extremely difficult owing to the action of damp which, throughout the centuries, had petrified the whitewash covering and, in many places, fused it with the underlying pigments. The work was hard and not very rewarding, however, we were able to recover fragments of scenes in either half of the vault, one of which represents a martyrdom. Two new decorative patterns were also revealed in the borders of the archways.

By courtesy of the Vali and of the Director of Forestry for the Vilayet, we were able to acquire, at cost price, some new major timbers for scaffolding. Towards the end of May a scaffold was erected to clear the east vault of the naos. The vault itself proved disappointing and contained only fragments of a scene with a central mandorla. But in the moulding where the east vault narrows into the bema, parts of a border with medallions surrounded by stylised floral ornament were revealed. The central medallion contains a fine representation of the head and shoulders of the Child Christ, painted against a red background. The head was in good condition but most of

the shoulders and the plaster on which they were painted had fallen away as a result of a structural crack at this point. To the south are two more medallions of beardless saints against green and red backgrounds respectively. They were both badly damaged, and crude in technique and style in contrast to the head of Christ. It was interesting to find that the chip marks made to lay on the plaster covering stopped at the face of Christ. Both of the other medallions were covered with particularly numerous chip marks but the face of Christ had been left untouched. In a subsidiary border a pattern of interlocking fleur de lys in green and yellow was revealed.

By the end of June we were able to pull down both the main and subsidiary scaffolds in the east part of the church; the large scaffold was re-erected in the north vault of the naos. The north side of the church is directly exposed to the north westerly Black Sea gales, and we neither expected nor did we obtain much result from work there. The mortar of the vault contained the rotted roots of plants, indicating that the roof must have been neglected for long periods. There was however, enough left to reveal a central red line dividing the paintings of the vault, and fragments in the east half portrayed Christ with an angel and a group of figures, probably Apostles. On the north wall the cleaning and conservation of the lower part of the Crucifixion scene was carried out. This was in the third of four registers of painting on the north wall. Work on the second register, containing the Anastasis had been completed in 1959. Only fragments of plaster remained in the lower and upper registers.

At the beginning of July we began work in the narthex where a "mail scaffold" was erected in the north vault. The narthex and exonarthex each had open

archways. It was necessary to close up all these entrances in order to prevent further damage to the paintings, and the Department of Antiquities generously supplied the money for doors and iron railings so that the paintings are now fairly well protected.

At the same time the scaffold in the north vault of the naos was pulled down, and re-erected in the west vault of the naos. This side of the church is no less exposed to weather than the north side, and we did not expect to find much painting since the covering plaster was green with mould in many places. We were mistaken for the vault proved to contain most of the Last Supper (about 15 ft. long by 8ft. high), the Washing of the Feet and the 'Agony in the Garden', and a fragment of a fourth scene. The plaster covering was removed from these and the initial removal of the whitewash completed, but the final cleaning remains to be done. Much of the tempera layers of final painting had fallen away but some interesting detail work survives. The iconography of the 'Agony in the Garden' appears to be unusual.

In the Narthex this season's work was devoted mainly to the cleaning and preservation of paintings on the east wall already partially uncovered. On either side of the main door into the church are figures of Christ the Merciful and of the Virgin. The faces of both figures showed clear signs of having been repaired, perhaps at the time when the form of the doors was modified to allow the addition of the marble jambs and lintels. To the south of Christ are a standing figure of Saint Sabbas and a Baptism scene. The latter was a painting of great beauty, with a picturesque rock background in which a tree and shrubs are growing. Above the hand of Christ is a dove representing the Holy Spirit, but instead of the normal stylised bird, the

painter has succeeded in representing a bird swooping with wings outstretched in a most realistic fashion. In the River Jordan around the legs of Christ are some fish and a serpent.

To the north of the Virgin were the figures of a saint, now lost, and the Deesis of which only fragments remain. In addition to the normal figures of Christ with the Virgin and John the Baptist on either side there are the Archangels Michael and Gabriel in imperial dalmatics.

In the east half of the north vault and in the upper register of the north wall a painting of the miracle of the Feeding of the Five Thousand was uncovered. The vaults of the narthex appear to be covered only in two thick layers of whitewash, and not with plaster; a fact which simplifies considerably the work of uncovering. The initial uncovering of the miracle scene was completed together with some necessary conservation of loose fragments, but the main work remains to be done next season. The painting is noteworthy for the freedom of composition which it shows and in the realistic manner in which some of the

figures are depicted. Among a group of onlookers on the north wall are two with markedly oriental features which the painter must have drawn from memories of oriental merchants whom he may have seen in the bazaars of Trabzon. A number of mediaeval Graffiti of ships were discovered on the paintings in the narthex which must date from the same period as the graffiti on the exterior of the apses. Since the church is by the sea it is possible that sailors came to pray for a safe voyage, and left these rough pictures of their ships on the walls.

in the course of weekend journeys in the neighbourhood of Trabzon the author pursued his studies of unrecorded antiquities in the area, and several more antiquities were surveyed, including a

small basilica which may well be the earliest church so far discovered in the Pontic region.

in concluding, I should like to thank again the Department of Antiquities and their Representative with us, and the Vali of Trabzon for their kind cooperation and interest in the Expedition.