

The Russell Trust of Edinburgh University, in co-operation with the Department of Antiquities at Ankara, were able to carry out a season of 28 weeks work lasting from April 20 th. to October 31 st.

The work was carried out by Mr. Winfield and Mr. Smith and we were again most fortunate to have the assistance of Mr. Yakup Kemer and Mr. Osman Köroğlu who had worked with us in the previous season and become proficient in the work of cleaning and restoration of the paintings. Miss Aliye Aşırbay, of the History Department of the High School at Trabzon again acted as Representative of the Department of Antiquities and I should like to record my thanks here for her valuable assistance in solving the various administrative problems which arose in the course of the season.

In 1958 work was mainly concentrated on cleaning the wall paintings in the bema of the Church, while very little was done in the way of preservation. By contrast, the 1959 season has been spent primarily on the work of preservation, although some further cleaning work was undertaken, revealing paintings which although badly damaged, are of great iconographic interest.

CONSERVATION WORK

The climate of the south eastern Black Sea region, with its high rainfall and consequent humidity of the atmosphere, is ill adapted for the survival of wall paintings, and it is a tribute to the technique of the painters that so much of their work survives despite the decaying action of centuries of damp weather.

The humidity made it essential to use some porous form of preservation for the paintings, which should at the same time be neutral in colour and have a low refraction index. We used polyvinyl alcohol for this purpose, mixing it with a strong fungicide, sodium pentachlorophenate, to prevent the growth of mould on the surface of the paintings. This combination of

polyvinyl alcohol with a fungicide had in fact been used in 1958 for the immediate consolidation of powdery pigments where the binding material of the tempera had decayed. In the final stage of conservation work in 1959 the whole surface of all the paintings so far uncovered was given two separate and complete coatings of a 1 1/2% solution of the same chemicals. No work of conservation can hope to do more than restrain the process of decay and since polyvinyl alcohol has not previously been used in the conservation of wall paintings it is impossible to say how long the protective film formed by it may last.

In securing the paintings back to the wall, and in plastering damaged edges a composite plaster of casein, lime, and marble dust, with the addition of a small quantity of fungicide, was used. Casein has been used for many hundreds of years in the preparation of plaster for wall paintings and forms a strong and stable binding material which yet has some resilience and allows moisture to pass freely, thereby preventing any damage from excessive accumulation of water in the plaster. In some areas the plaster of the original paintings had become slightly detached from the wall of the building, but in no case was this sufficient to permit of the injection of a fixative behind the paintings unless they were first removed from the wall and then replaced, a lengthy operation which the condition of the paintings did not seem to warrant. A compromise solution to this problem was adopted, in which the many hundreds of chip holes made in the surface of the paintings to key on the plaster which covered them were opened up back to the stonework of the wall and filled with a new plaster mixture as described above. In this way they will act as so many staples to prevent further movement away from the wall.

There are many opinions as to the policy which should be followed in restoring wall paintings to something of their original appearance. It was the view of Professor Talbot Rice of Edinburgh Uni-

versity, under whose direction the work at Trabzon is being carried out, that the small chip holes should be toned in to correspond with the original intention of the painter but that no extensive restoration of damaged areas should be undertaken since the result of this type of restoration, although it may be initially pleasing to the eye, is to confuse the older work with the modern, and lead inevitably to some falsification. Restoration was therefore confined to the colouring of the chip holes in such a way that they do not interfere with the viewing of the paintings, but can nevertheless be found if the onlooker wishes to do so.

Some surface scratches in the paintings were also coloured in the same way, while in a few places where outlines were perfectly clear on close inspection of the painting but would have been impossible to determine from the ground, these lines were emphasised by washing them over with a solution of the original colouring. An example where this has been done is with the figures of the Mother of God and the Child Christ in the conch of the main apse where the form of the figures would have remained obscure if the colouring had not been intensified.

UNCOVERING AND CLEANING

In the side chapels at the north east and south east sides of the main apse paintings in poor condition were found in the vaults only, since those on the side walls had crumbled away. Those in the north east chapel vault were the meeting of Elizabeth and Mary and the Annunciation to Mary, while those in the south east chapel vault were concerned with the lives of Joachim and Anna, the texts for which are to be found in the Apocrypha. The latter provided some fine detail work which had survived where the tempera layers of painting remained intact (a detail of a border decoration from this chapel is illustrated) and the series was found to continue in the south east corner vault of the naos where work is not yet finished. In the north west corner of the naos some

fragments of three scenes remained. Two of them were identified with reasonable certainty as the Betrayal of Christ by Peter, and Pilate washing his hands. These scenes were both on the west wall, while the vault in this corner, a quadripartite structure, contained in one segment only the remains of a figure in royal robes.

Some work was carried out on the north wall where the remains of a scene of the Descent into Hell was cleared and preserved, and in the north doorway. The soffit of this doorway contained two figures of Stylite Saints in good condition, of which one is illustrated here, while the tympanum contained the figures of four of the Desert Fathers. The latter were of great interest since in removing the covering plaster in this area, it was found that the original doorway had made use of the full round arch, but had later been filled in to form a rectangular door, over which the four Desert Fathers were painted in a different and later style to that so far found in the rest of the building.

Paintings of two bishops of the early church were found in soffits of the north east window of the main apse of whom one, Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus, is illustrated. This was a particularly fine head with the colouring of the face built up in varying shades of red and a dignified linear patterning in grey for the hair and beard.

We were very pleased to receive a visit in the course of the season from Mr. Ahmet Dönmez, Regional Director of the Department of Antiquities and were very grateful for the financial assistance which the Department has given in arranging for new frames and glass to be put in all the windows, and for sections of the roof to be re-tiled.

Our work would not have been possible without the assistance of both the Belediye and Vilâyet of Trabzon who have always been helpful and we were particularly indebted to the valuable assistance and interest taken in our work by the Vali Muavini and by Mr. Fikri Karaniş, deputy for Trabzon.