

## EXCAVATIONS AT SARAÇHANE IN ISTANBUL, 1966

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Excavations at Saraçhane were resumed by Dumbarton Oaks and the Istanbul Archaeological Museum on 13th June 1966 for a period of eleven weeks<sup>1</sup>. The main lines of the sixth-century church of St. Polyeuktos had been defined in 1965; substantial foundations were traced of a basilical building 52 m. square, with evidence for a vaulted superstructure<sup>2</sup>. Pending removal of the temporary road which still lay across the middle of the site, the principle task this year was to explore the area of the narthex and atrium where Byzantine levels were relatively undisturbed (Figs. 1, 2)<sup>3</sup>.

Structural additions to the plan of the church include (a) walls extending north of the narthex (a gallery ramp?), (b) an external vault built against the central part of the outer wall of the narthex (staircase from atrium to church?), and (c) a large cistern with brick piers supporting cross vaults (Fig. 1). This cistern was a secondary structure, inserted against the northern part of the outer wall of the narthex (Fig. 3); its extent has not yet been determined.

<sup>1</sup> Facilities afforded by the Directorate General of Antiquities, the Archaeological Museum, and the Municipality of Istanbul are very gratefully acknowledged.

<sup>2</sup> Apart from this journal, reports on the 1964 and 1965 campaigns have appeared in *Annual of the Archaeological Museums of Istanbul* and *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*.

<sup>3</sup> Our staff again included Mr. G.R.J. Lawson, Mrs. Harrison, Dr. J.W. Hayes and Mr. C. Arthur, and we received welcome assistance from Misses Y. Akyürek, I. Muslubas, P. Pfeiffer, E. Sanford, M. Turunç and M. Williams. As before, the Museum's technical services were invaluable for our work.

In the area of the atrium a series of rectangular robber-pits, which were completely filled with light destruction debris, indicate that masonry had been removed immediately before the main collapse of the church. That this collapse was in the late 12th or early 13th century is indicated by the pottery from the extensive light debris layer which covers the site; 12th century sgraffito wares are here predominant (Fig. 4).

Securely stratified in the destruction debris of the narthex was a series of small figured panels of marble (average 0.35 m. square). Represented are Christ, Mary and the Infant Christ, and four Apostles (Figs. 5, 6); the Apostles are without haloes. Each figure had been systematically defaced, a circumstance most easily attributable to the outbreak of Iconoclasm. If, as seems probable, these panels are of the 6th or 7th century, they are of the utmost importance<sup>4</sup>.

Lying deep in the cistern were numerous marble fragments, including shattered window-frames (Fig. 7). Two of these window-frames were reconstructed, one (ht. 2.46 m.) from fifty-six fragments (Fig. 8, left), the other (ht. 2.53 m.) from seventy (Fig. 8, right).

Pieces of architectural carving were again abundant, and several new motifs were added to the Saraçhane repertory. Two of the more significant items are here illustrated:

I) Impost, decorated with repeating motif of an upright sprig set against a

<sup>4</sup> A significant parallel might be the figures recorded.

nine-lobed "leaf" (ht. 0.26, base  $1.33 \times 1.05$  m.; Figs. 9).

II) Fragment of pier, with grapevine and pomegranate beneath crowning fret motif (Ht. 0.615, w. 0.47 m.; Fig. 10). This exactly matches the so-called *pilastris acritani* in Venice, which our earlier reports proved were taken, not from Acre in Palestine, but from Constantinople.

Excavation at Saraçhane is emphasizing both that the art of pre-Justinianic Constantinople was more varied than had been realised, and that Constantinople at this period was already a pre-eminent artistic centre.

The absence of pottery of the Palaeologan period indicated that this quarter was unoccupied during the retrenchment of the last two Byzantine centuries. Apart from this understandable gap, the sequence of finds at Saraçhane, from the fifth century to the nineteenth, provide an extraordinary continuity of evidence

for this city. Much of the Mid-Byzantine pottery is unfortunately from mixed deposits and is rather scrappy; for the Early Islamic period, however, there is a fine series of pit-groups, and their careful separation has made possible a detailed study of both fine and coarse wares.

On 28th July the Saraçhane underpass was formally opened with due ceremony by President Cevdet Sunay. The diversionary road, which had carried traffic across the archaeological site for two years, was now closed; the cobblestones were lifted, and a trench was begun. The road was now closed; the cobblestones were lifted, and a trench was begun. A few centimetres beneath the road we encountered a sixteenth century pit containing Iznik dishes of fine quality (e.g. Figs. 11, 12) in association with red-burnished jugs of local manufacture. This trench was opened in the last week of the campaign; excavation in 1967 will be concentrated upon this important area.

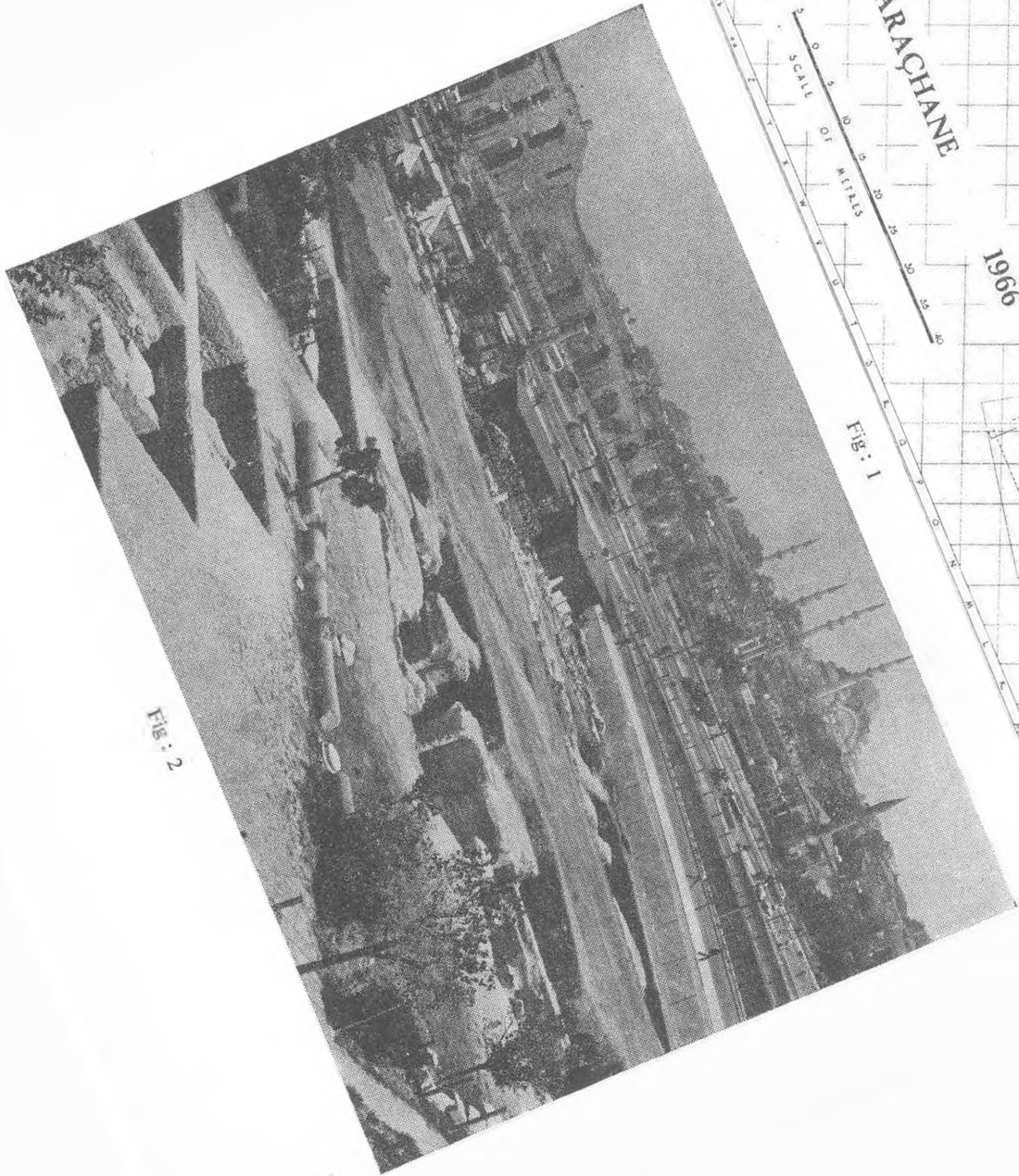


Fig: 2

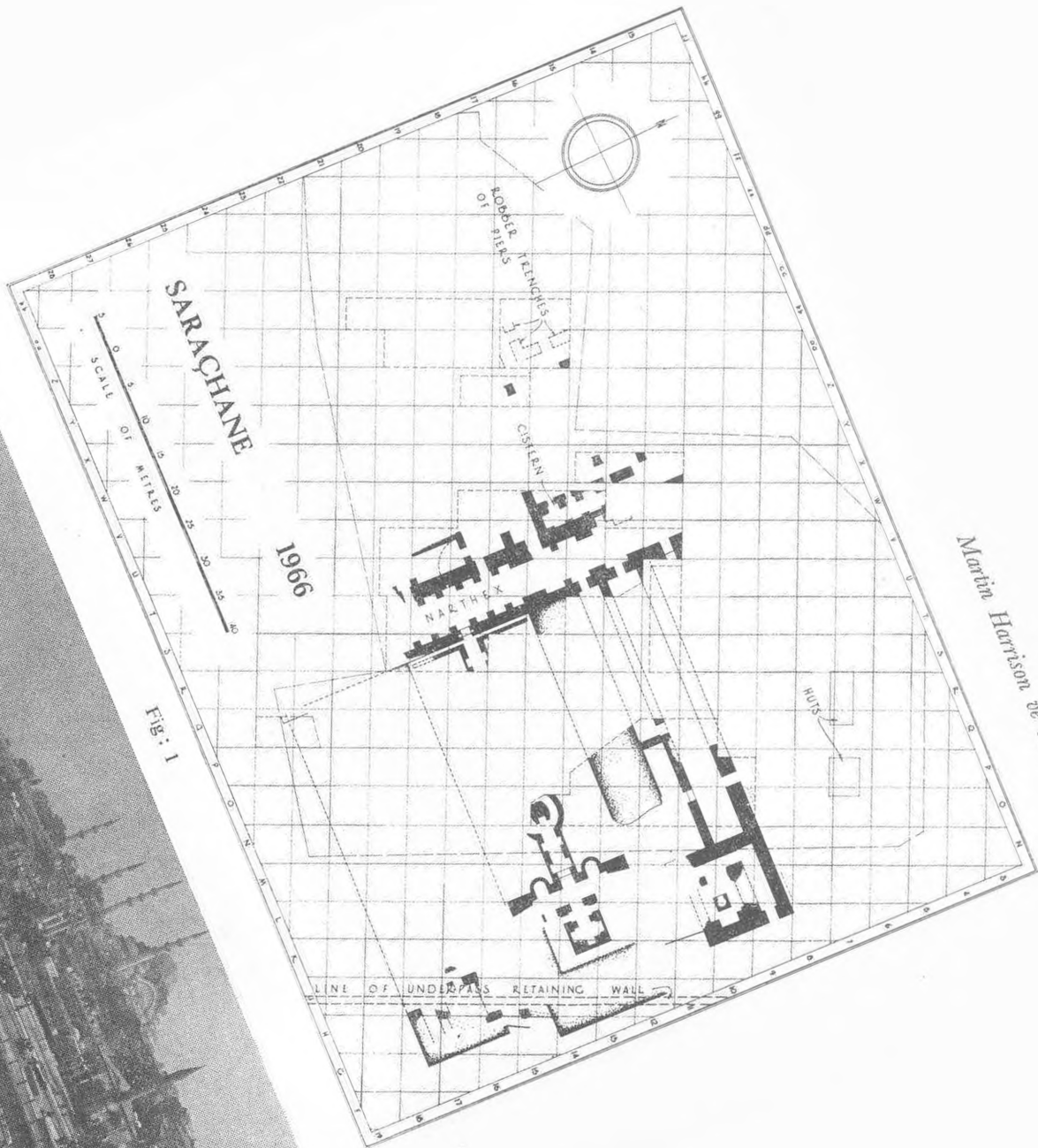


Fig: 1

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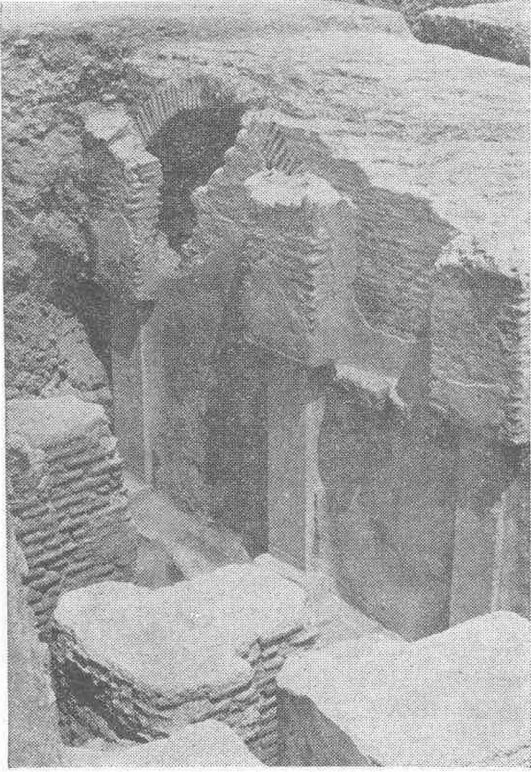


Fig: 3

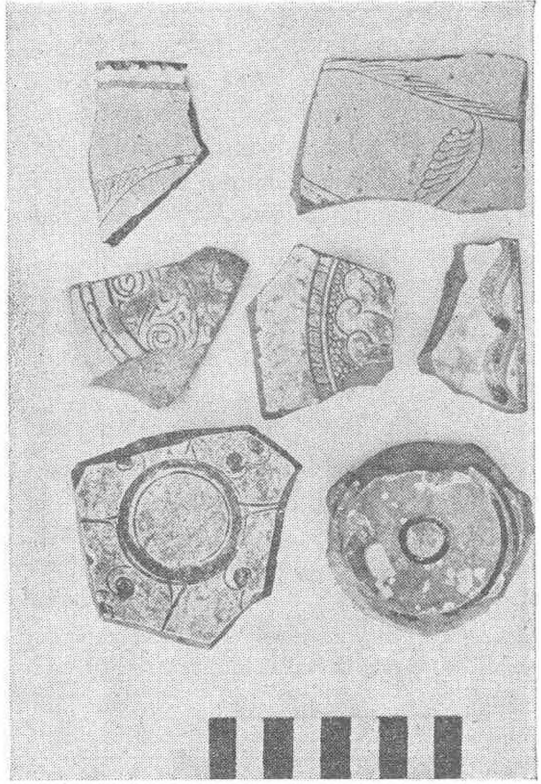


Fig: 4



Fig 5



Fig: 6

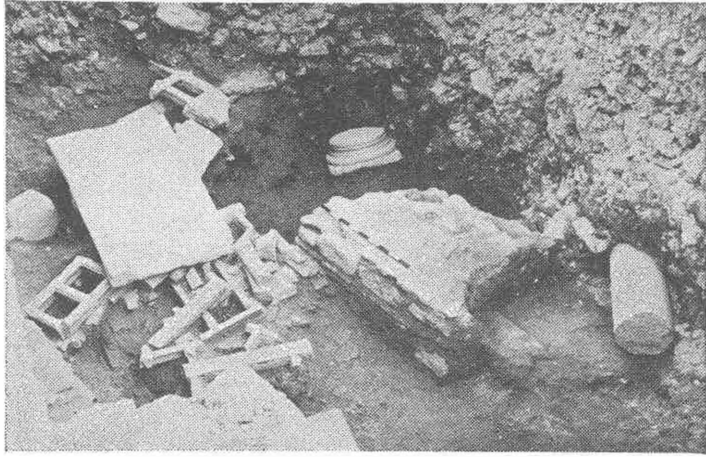


Fig : 7

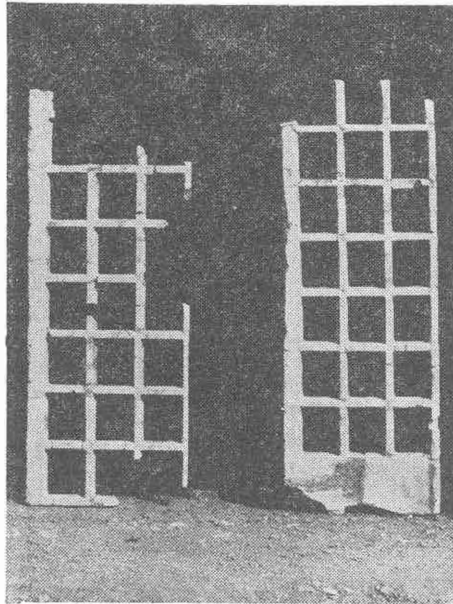


Fig : 8



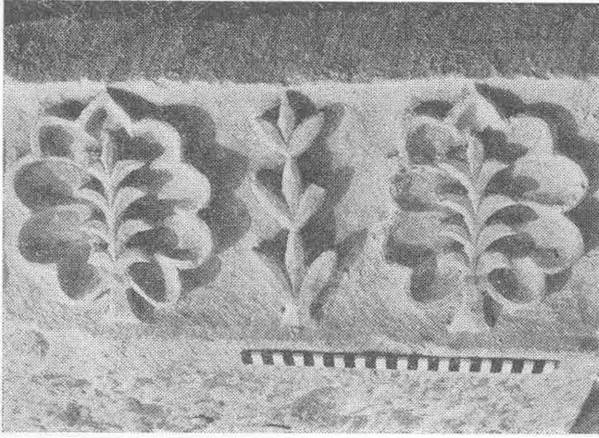


Fig: 9



Fig: 10

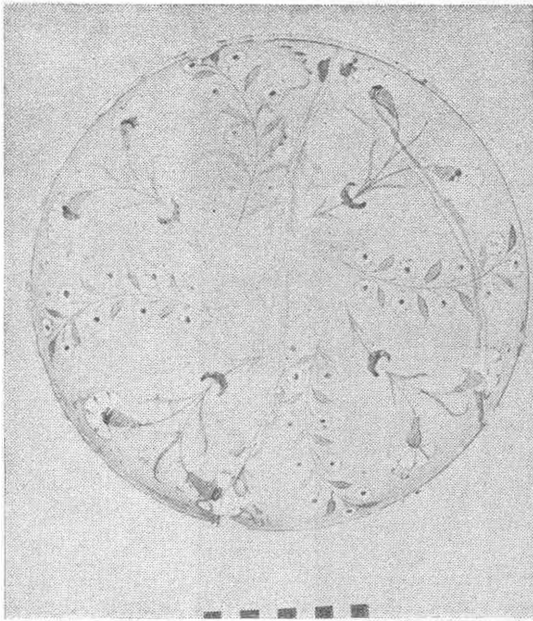


Fig: 11

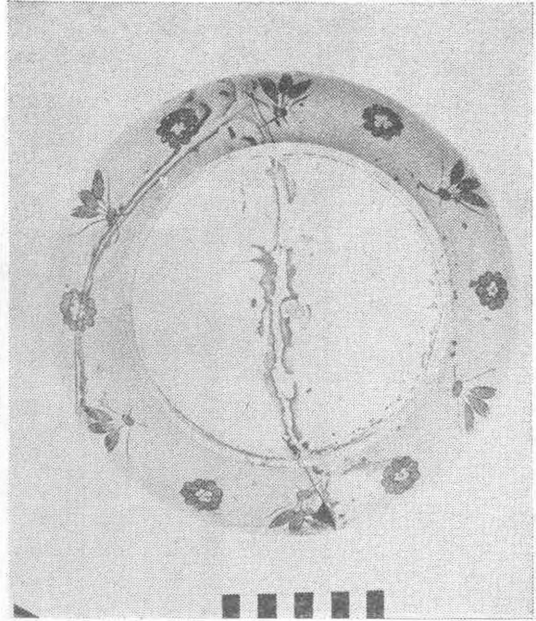


Fig: 12