

EXCAVATIONS AT SARAÇHANE IN ISTANBUL, 1965

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Following a short preliminary campaign in 1964, excavation was resumed at Saraçhane on 24 th May 1965 for a period of thirteen weeks¹. This work, by kind permission of the Turkish Department of Antiquities and the Municipal Authorities of Istanbul, is being undertaken jointly by Dumbarton Oaks and the Istanbul Archaeological Museum². Again, our investigations were divided between the great roadworks excavation (the construction of the Şehzadebaşı Caddesi - Atatürk Bulvarı underpass) and the nearby site of the 6 th century church of St. Polyeuktos.

Work on the underpass had continued throughout the winter of 1964-65, and structures revealed by the mechanical excavators were recorded by Dr. Firatlı. Most important were the massive foundations of the İbrahim Paşa Hamamı³, and, at a deeper level, considerable remains of large buildings of the 4 th and 5 th centuries; an East - West wall, traced for more than 80 metres, should probably be associated with the *Mese*, the great colon-

naded street which once traversed this region⁴.

By means of trenches on both sides of a provisional road (Fig. 1, Pl. 1), the main lines of the church's groundplan have been recovered; and the three adjacent structures, which were located in 1964 and then called A, B and C, are now seen to be the south - east corner, the apse - platform, and the north - east corner of the church. Excluding the projecting apse-platform and the western narthex, the plan of the church is 52 metres square; there is a small crypt beneath the bema (Pl. 2) and at the centre of the building a solid elliptical platform which probably supported the ambo. The nave is divided from the aisles by two enormous foundation - walls, each about 7 metres thick and deep, which evidently supported the nave-colonnades (Fig. 2). Only the substructures of the church have survived *in situ*, but these penetrate to a considerable depth, and their chambers and passages were found to be choked with debris containing important architectural fragments. The probability that the church carried a dome is corroborated by elements of an open exedra, and on present evidence a central dome of perhaps 20 metres in diameter, crowning a basilical scheme, seems the most likely reconstruction.

Evidence for the decoration of the building was again prolific and sumptuous. Three more fragments of inlaid column were recovered from the area of the apse, one with much of the elaborate inlay (amethyst, green and gold glass)

¹ For reports on the first campaign, see *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 19, p. 230 f., and M. J. Mellink in *American Journal of Archaeology* 69 (1965), p. 149. Interim reports are also appearing in *Türk Arkeoloji Dergisi*, *Annual of the Archaeological Museums of Istanbul*, and *Anatolian Studies*.

² The staff included Mr. G. R. J. Lawson (architect), Mrs. Harrison (photographer), Dr. J. W. Hayes (pottery specialist), Dr. N. Asgari, Miss Ü. İzmirli-gil, and Mr. C. Arthur (field assistants); we were, moreover, considerably assisted by the technical staff of the Archaeological Museum. For the whole enterprise the constant guidance and help of Mr. Necati Dolunay, Director of the Archaeological Museum, is again most gratefully recorded.

³ Cf. H. Glück, *Die Bader Konstantinopels* (Vienna, 1921), p. 142, fig. 105.

⁴ Cf. *De Cerimoniis* (Bonn ed.), p. 75-6.

still adhering. Considerable quantities of other inlay (green and blue glass and mother - of - pearl) were found, and thin pieces of agate. The polychrome marble revetment included material from more than a score of different regions, including Numidia, Egypt, Asia Minor and Greece. There were fragments, too, of wall - and pavement - mosaic and of crudely painted plaster.

More than three thousand architectural and sculptural fragments (mainly of Proconnesian marble) were recorded, ranging from large lintels, jambs, and cornices to small pieces of windowframes and openwork screens. Amongst the more important items are :

(1) Part of an arch, with twisted vinestem in the spandrel and a frontal peacock in the intrados, carries an inscription readily identifiable as line 32 of the long text which once stood in this church (Pl. 3)⁵. A similar niche, carrying line 31, was discovered in 1960⁶ and is now on display in the forecourt of the Archaeological Museum. Niche and Arch were clearly adjacent. Moreover, their faces present a concave curve in plan, and the inference is that these two blocks were part of an open exedra.

(2) A richly decorated cornice block, with monograms between the modillions (Pl. 4)⁷.

(3) Fragments of three concave screens each decorated with two registers of stylized plants (Pl. 5).

(4) Part of a pier, with vinestem, rosettes, and 'inclined fret' motif (Pl. 6)⁸.

⁵ *Anthologia Palatina* I, 10; cf. C. Mango, I. Sevcenko, "Remains of the Church of St. Polyeuktos at Constantinople", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 15 (1961), p. 243 f.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*, for a similar cornice amongst the finds of 1960.

⁸ There are close similarities with the piers of the *Pilastri Acritani* in Venice (cf. note 11, *infra*).

The wide range of unusual motifs and the extremely high quality of the carving throw important light on the metropolitan rôle already assumed by Constantinople at the beginning of the 6th century. The church of St. Polyeuktos is dated to the years 524-7,⁹ and the ruins of this richly decorated domed basilica provide a unique opportunity to study the immediate antecedents to the period of St. Sophia and the great building programme of Justinian. Less than two - fifths of the main area of the building have so far been excavated, and none of the atrium; it is hoped to recover the complete plan in the course of future seasons.

The later history of the site is becoming clearer. The church was still in use in the 10th century¹⁰, but appears from pottery and coins to have been abandoned by the 11th. Architectural members were transported in the 13th century to Venice, where the so - called *Pilastri Acritani* can still be seen¹¹, and the major collapse of the structure, choking the underfloor vaults and sealing the site with debris, occurred before the end of the 15th century. From the late 15th to the 17th century the site served as a quarry for building stone; and robber - pits, back - filled with rubbish, provide an important series of pottery - groups of the early Turkish period. Iznik I (Pl. 7), so - called 'Miletus Ware', 'Golden Horn Ware', and Chinese porcelain are particularly well represented. Later groups include one in which Çanakkale dishes with floral decoration occurred with Kütahya cups of early 18th century type, suggesting that the Çanakkale potteries were active rather earlier than has sometimes been assumed¹².

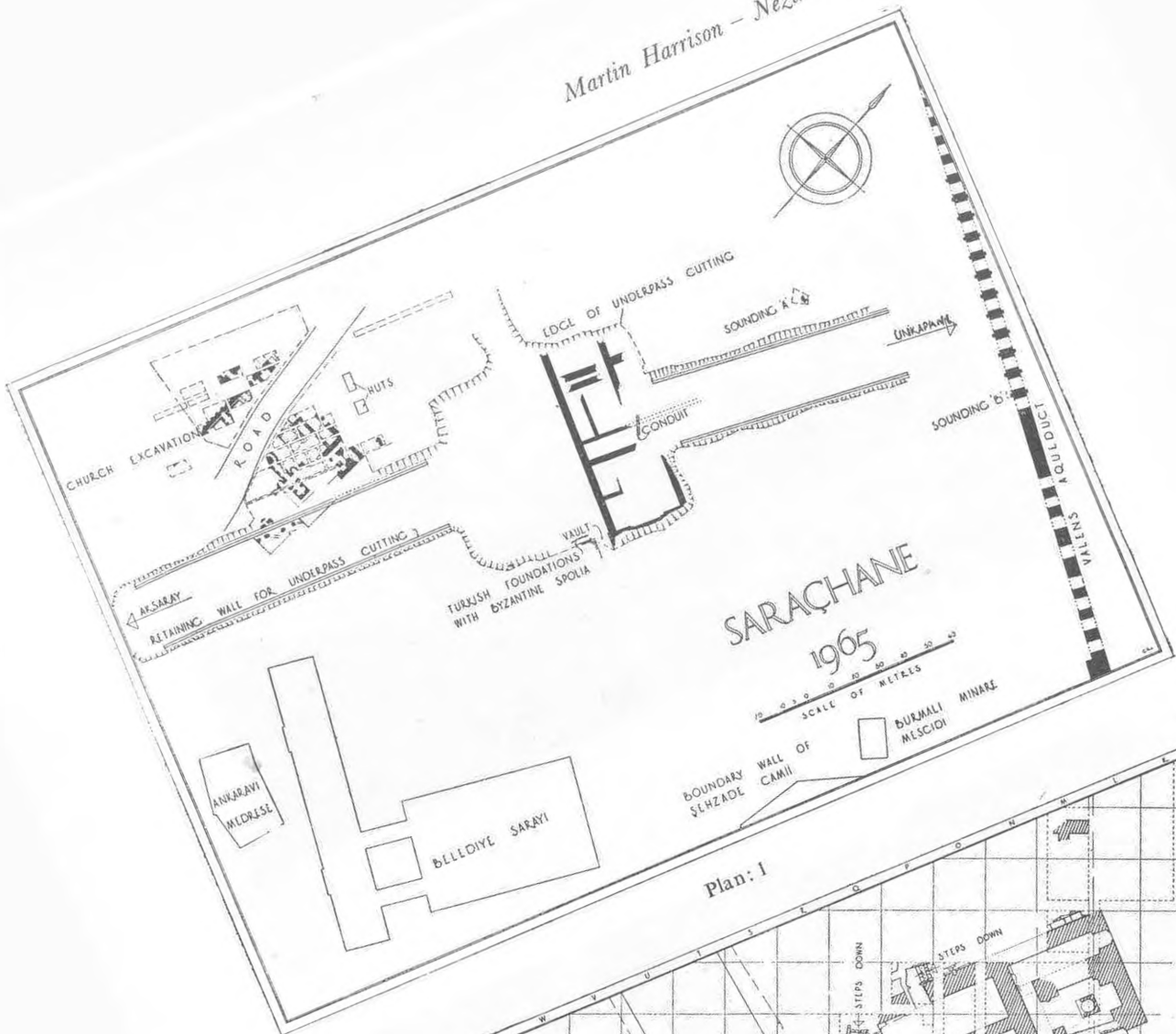
⁹ Cf. Mango-Sevcenko, *op. cit.*

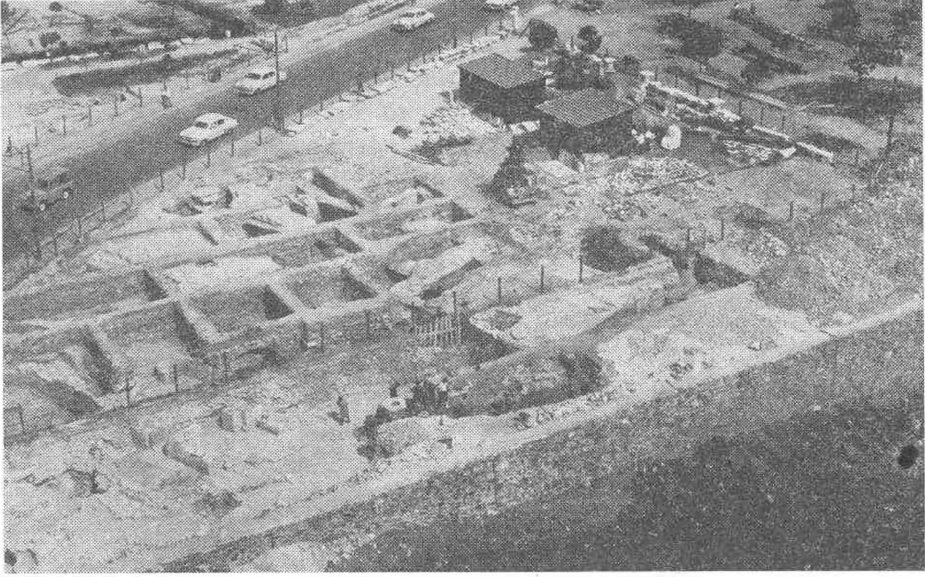
¹⁰ Cf. *De Cerimoniis* (Bonn ed.), p. 75-6.

¹¹ For the discovery last year that the *Pilastri Acritani*, thought to have been brought to Venice from Palestine, were in fact brought from Sarachane, see reports on the first campaign cited in note 1, *supra*.

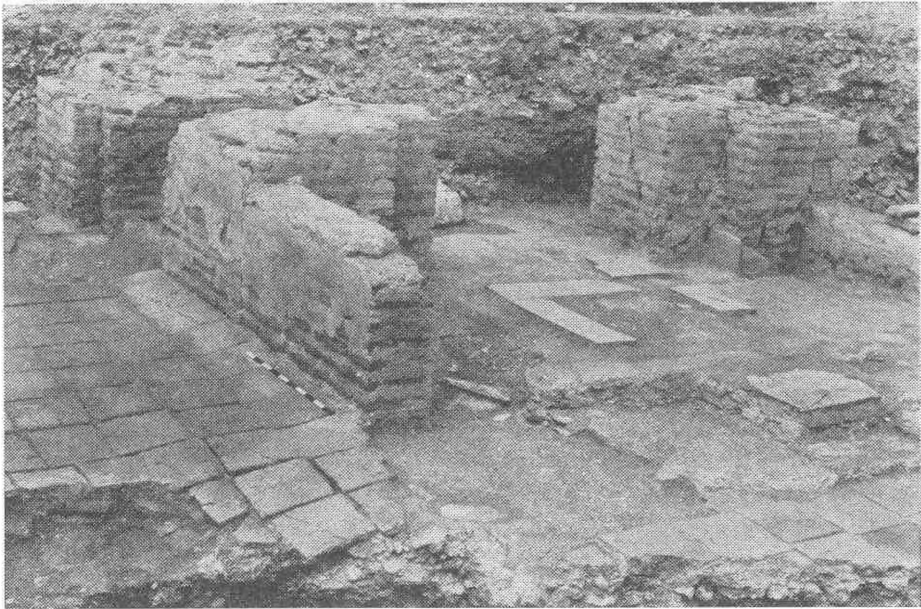
¹² Cf. A. Lane, *Later Islamic Pottery* (London, 1957), p. 65-6.

Martin Harrison - Nezh Firath





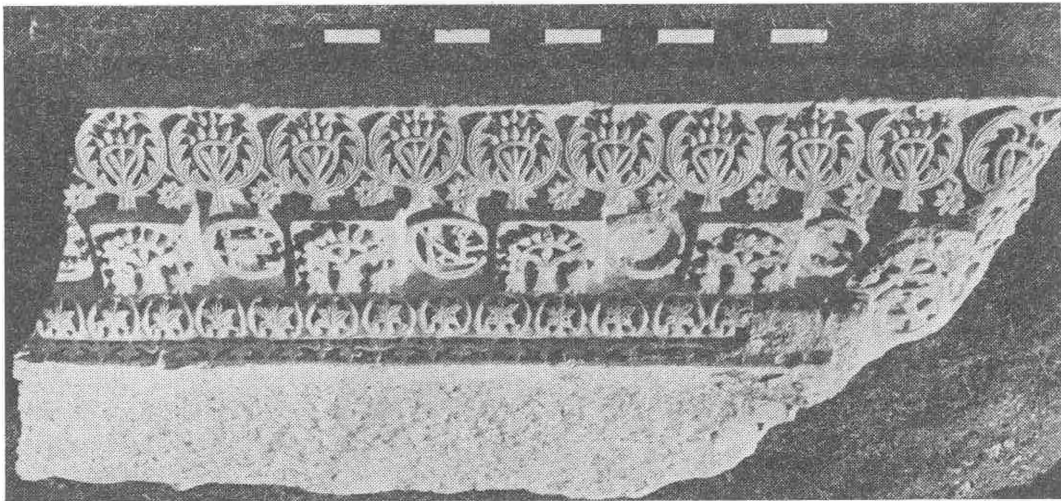
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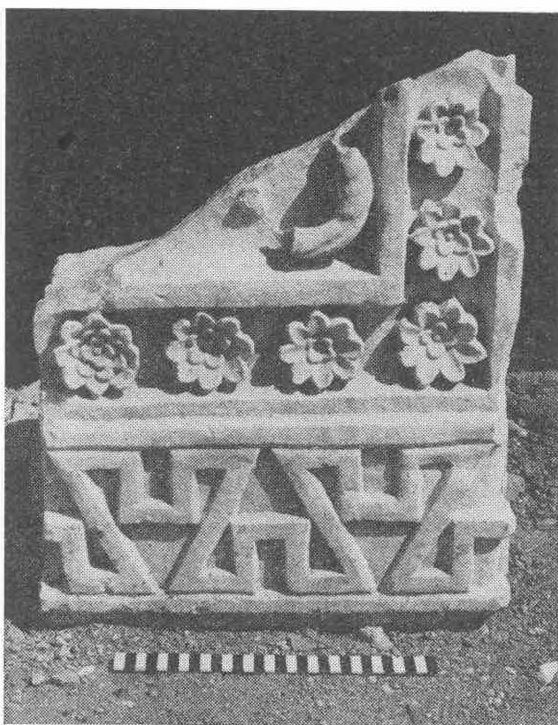
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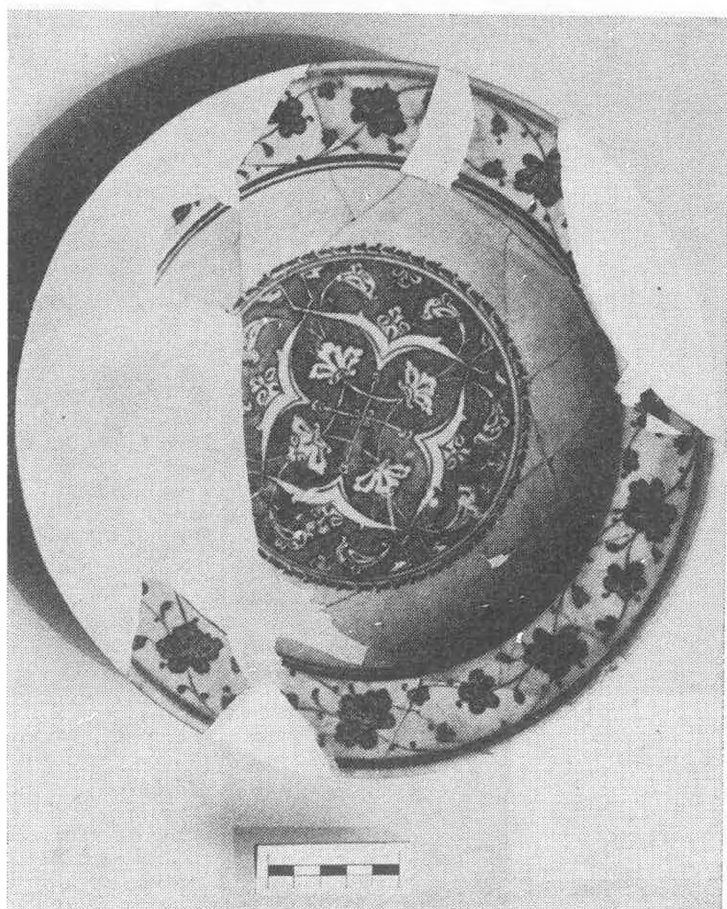
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Res. 6



Res. 7