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WORK AT KALENDERHANE CAMII IN ISTANBUL:
FIRST PRELIMINARY REPORT

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To Richard Krautheimer

DURING the summer of 1966, an initial season of work was carried out at Kalenderhane Camii in Istanbul under the joint auspices of Dumbarton Oaks and the Department of the History of Architecture of the Istanbul Technical University.¹ The purpose of the first season's work was three-fold: to initiate a thorough investigation and survey of the existing structure, to carry out those temporary conservation measures deemed most necessary for the immediate security and safety of the building, and to formulate plans for a contemplated restoration of the building of wider scope.

The season's effort was confined chiefly to the preparation of the architectural survey, the cleaning and removal of later accretions which encumbered the structure, and the insulation of the roof; but sufficient information of interest was recovered in the course of this work and through the removal of plaster from the masonry to warrant its publication in preliminary form.

The building stands in the region of Şehzade about ten meters to the south of the eastern terminus of the Aqueduct of Valens. It has been variously identified in the past as the Monastery of Valens and Daudatus

¹ The work was directed by the authors representing the two institutions respectively. We are pleased to acknowledge our gratitude to the General Directorate of Vakıflar for permission to undertake the project, and to the Department of Antiquities and the Municipality of Istanbul for permission to excavate. We enjoyed the willing cooperation of the Archaeological Museum, and our thanks are due especially to Mr. Lütfi Tuğrul and Dr. Nezih Fıratlı. Finally, we benefited greatly from the counsel of Mr. Ernest J. W. Hawkins. Figures A and B were drawn respectively by Orhan Biçakçı and Doğan Elgin.

and the Church of St. Mary Diakonissa,² but since Laurent,³ it has been generally accepted as the Monastery of Christ Akataleptos.⁴

Corresponding variation exists in opinion as to the date of the main structure. The safest estimate was that of Lethaby⁵ who placed it between Justinian and the eleventh century; and while various more precise dates between these two extremes have been suggested, most recent opinion assigns it on stylistic grounds to the mid-ninth century.⁶ Our investigations so far have yielded no evidence for an exact date or identification of the building. It has nonetheless been possible to establish a tentative relative chronology for the various components of the structure at ground level, and to explain in part its complexity and irregularity of plan (fig. A).⁷

² Respectively by Paspates and Mordtmann. The essential literature on the building is given by A. M. Schneider, *Byzanz* (Berlin, 1936), p. 51, and R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin*, pt. 1, vol. 3 (Paris, 1953), pp. 518-520.

³ In *Echos d'Orient*, 34 (1935), p. 227, a review of Tahsin Öz, *Zwei Stiftungsurkunden des Sultans Mehmet II Fatih*, *Istanbuler Mitteilungen*, 4 (Istanbul, 1935), q.v.

⁴ With reservations, however, since even this identification rests on scant evidence. Caution is justifiably expressed by S. Eyice, *Istanbul: Petit guide* (Istanbul, 1955), p. 265, and again in *Corsi di cultura sull'arte ravennate e bizantina*, 12 (Ravenna, 1965), p. 265.

⁵ *Medieval Art* (London, 1912), pp. 66-67.

⁶ E.g., R. Krautheimer, *Early Christian and Byzantine Architecture* (Baltimore, 1965), p. 205; a date first suggested by J. Kollwitz, in *Römische Quartalschrift*, 42 (1934), p. 238, and generally accepted since.

⁷ Some schematization has been necessary in the rendering of the plan. The sub-phases, for example, designate location rather than chronology.

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Pre-existing Structures (Phases I and II)

No one who has written on Kalenderhane has failed to comment on the great irregularity of its plan: the curious shape of the prothesis and diaconicon, their dissimilarity to one another, and the variance in axis of the naos and that established by the narthex doors. These irregularities are not to be explained easily or by a single factor. While much still remains to be investigated, interior soundings in the narthexes and prothesis make it evident that the northern part of the building is a complex amalgam of largely pre-existing structures from various periods. These were subsequently incorporated into the fabric of the principal existing structure, the naos (Phase III); and they account to a great extent for the anomalies in its otherwise regular plan at ground level.

The form of the *prothesis* is determined by structures from at least four separate periods. In the west and the south its walls are common respectively to the piers of the naos and the wall of the bema. What would normally, however, have been the eastward extension of the principal structure (Phase IIIa) along the north wall, is interrupted by the projection of an earlier wall (Phase Ib) showing a fair south face and broken surface along its northern extension. The exterior ground level around the church at this point is five meters above the level of the prothesis floor, preventing further clarification of this structure for the time being. At a later date an arch in north-south axis was inserted into this wall (fig. B), dividing the prothesis into two chambers which were then irregularly vaulted. Prior to the insertion of the arch, the south face of the wall bore ornamental mosaic decoration, traces of which were recovered when plaster in the spandrel zone was removed.

The complexity continues in the eastern chamber of the prothesis. Except for a late fill to the west, its north wall (Phase Ic) consists of broken faced brick masonry with slight curvature which continues to project beyond another late fill forming the eastern terminus of the prothesis. The chronological relation of this wall to the remainder of the prothesis cannot as yet be determined. In any case it is probably earlier than the north

wall of the bema since part of what appears to be the same system is imbedded in the south wall of this chamber directly opposite (fig. A). The north face of this small segment is correspondingly fractured, and soundings behind it revealed mosaic decoration on its south face (fig. B).

Our investigation of the northern portion of the two *narthexes* indicates that the builders of the existing church encountered similar problems here with earlier structures. Soundings in the walls and floor, and the removal of a late rubble fill which obscured the northern part of the exonarthex (not shown on the plan in fig. A for reasons of clarity) revealed remains of the southern part of a circular niche or chamber (Phase Ia), five meters in diameter. The structure was cut and partially enveloped by the later north wall of the exonarthex, but its continuation outside the building to the north can perhaps be recovered by excavation. On the esonarthex side a smaller circular chamber 1.60 m. in diameter was let into the southwest wall of the larger chamber. The rising wall of this smaller chamber could be followed to the springing of its dome, and its surface bears fresco remains. The fine quality of the masonry of the structure suggests it to be the earliest of the pre-existing structures.

The most significant finds were brought to light to the south of this structure imbedded in the wall separating the two narthexes. Soundings in this wall revealed substantial remains of a tribelon system (Phase II), complete with its columns, capitals, and lintel (figs. A, B, and 2). The system is flanked by two massive stone piers to the north and south, each pier measuring one meter in breadth, and rising one meter above the present floor level of the esonarthex, at which point it is cut. Between the piers are two marble columns, placed so as to divide the seven-meter space into three passages of equal width. A heavy molded lintel spans the two meters between the columns, and the door thus formed serves as the present entrance to the esonarthex. Surmounting each of the columns are well-preserved melon capitals in *à jour* technique, in turn bearing impost blocks (fig. 3). The very close similarity of the capitals to those in the north

presbytery gallery of S. Vitale dates them securely in the early sixth century.⁸

The coherence of the system leads us to believe that it is original rather than spolia, and that it represents the probable remains of an earlier church of Justinianic date. In any case the components of the portal originally belonged together, since the molded jambs of the door formed by the columns and the columns themselves are a monolith, and the molding projects outside the diameter of the column shaft. The system appears to be continued to the west by a pier imbedded in the west wall of the exonarthex corresponding to the north pier of the tribelon.

The desire on the part of the builders of the naos to preserve the tribelon in situ, and at the same time to widen the naos of the new structure, accounts, it seems, at least in part for the shift in axis of the naos three meters to the south of the axis of the tribelon.

Although the subsequent transformations in this part of the building are diverse and are probably posterior to the erection of the naos, they are best described here. The flanking piers of the tribelon were cut to their present level and a massive brick arch was erected between them, supported in its center by the columns (figs. B and 2). In this phase the triple passageway remained open, as is evident from fresco remains on the soffit of the arch above it. Later, four brick piers of irregular shape were built to the west (Phase IVa) to carry the pendentive vault which forms the present covering of the entrance bay of the exonarthex. Subsequently the spaces between the flanking piers of the tribelon and the columns were filled (Phase IVb), obscuring the columns and capitals. The southern part of the narthexes remains to be investigated in detail.

Existing Church (Phase III)

The dominant form of the existing building is determined by the *naos* which is

⁸ Illustrated in F. W. Deichmann, *Frühchristliche Bauten und Mosaiken von Ravenna* (Baden-Baden, 1958), fig. 306. Capitals of this type are discussed by the same author in *Studien zur Architektur Konstantinopels* (Baden-Baden, 1956), *passim*.

laid out as a regular cross-domed structure around a central square whose sides measure 7.70 m. The naos has been adequately described elsewhere, and at this point it is sufficient to state that our investigation established the main supporting structure of the naos to be homogeneous at ground level (fig. A, Phase IIIa). The principal access from exonarthex to naos was originally through a tribelon which was subsequently reduced to a single passage by the extension of the cruciform piers which flanked it, up to the columns. The masonry of this fill is similar to the filling in the aforementioned tribelon in the narthex.

The north and south arms of the naos were originally opened by a triple arcade on two free-standing columns. The removal of the marble revetment covering the fill between the columns revealed a Turkish brick fill of recent date. The western column of the north arm is crudely notched on its lower western face allowing for the possibility that the lateral passages of the arcade were closed by screens. No evidence for screens, however, was found elsewhere in the north or south arcades, and passage was probably originally possible through them.

The *bema* is formed in its western part by the projection to the east of the L-shaped piers of the naos for a distance of 2.40 m. Beyond this, doors, subsequently filled, communicated with the prothesis and diaconicon. The walls continue further to the east in a different masonry from that of the naos (Phase IIIb), and while the chronological relation of the two cannot as yet be unambiguously determined, they may be close in date to one another. At a distance of 0.50 m. to the east of the doors, the walls are offset toward the center axis of the bema, and then continue for three meters before being interrupted by the flat Turkish wall which now forms the eastern terminus of the bema. Curiously, the bema walls are penetrated in this eastern portion, as well, by doors leading to the prothesis and diaconicon. These have been subsequently blocked.

Investigation in the *diaconicon* was restricted by the presence of fresco remains covering much of the wall surface. The western portion of the diaconicon has common walls with the main structure of the naos,

and its eastern wall is a crude fill. A detailed analysis of its structure must await further study.

Numerous observations were made elsewhere on the superstructure of the interior, on the exterior, and on the roof; and they will be presented in subsequent reports as their significance becomes clear. One, however, is worth recording at this point, since it bears directly on an issue in which Kalenderhane has always figured: that of the five-aisled plan.⁹ Soundings on the exterior walls of the crossarms of the naos, above the triple arcades, revealed post holes that could only have been set in the course of the original construction of the naos (fig. 4). It is premature to speculate on what sort of structure these holes supported; but some type of structure flanked the naos to the north and south, and was accessible, as we have suggested above, through the arcades in the crossarms. The structure—perhaps a porticus—may have extended to the west to include the flanks of the esonarthex, since the esonarthex was originally opened by doors in its north and south walls, and the masonry to each side of these doors differs from that of the naos.

Revetment and Paving

A distinctive feature of the interior aspect of the naos is its fine polychrome marble wall revetment. In many areas the revetment has been lost, and in others cut up and reset, but especially on the western piers much of it remains intact. The revetment will be considered in detail at a later date, but at this time a correction should be made of a misinterpretation by Brunov¹⁰ which has been perpetuated in subsequent literature. Brunov observed that beneath the upper east corner of the north bema wall where the revetment has fallen, a blocked arched opening was revealed (fig. 5); and he concluded from this that none of the revetment was original. The area which he observed, however, is one in which the

⁹ The literature on the "five-aisle thesis" proposed by Brunov is collected and reviewed by A. H. S. Megaw, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 18 (1964), pp. 283–286.

¹⁰ *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 32 (1932), p. 55.

revetment has been most severely disturbed and reset in an improvised fashion. Our investigation thus far has revealed nothing to indicate that where the revetment is intact, it is not contemporaneous to the erection of the naos.

At the commencement of our work, the floor of the naos and bema was covered with a late wooden floor in poor repair. Its removal revealed an ornamental pavement in the central axis of the naos, of polychrome marble slabs disposed in a simple rectilinear pattern consonant with the decor of the wall revetment. A porphyry disc 2.65 m. in diameter is set into the paving on the central axis directly in front of the main entrance to the naos (fig. 6), and a smaller granite disc, 1.30 m. in diameter, is set into the east end of the bema floor on the same axis, now partially overlaid by the Turkish mihrab (fig. 7). Directly to the west of the disc a reused marble inlay frieze, with inhabited palmette motifs, is set into the bema floor, originally spanning its width. Its southern part is likewise covered by the mihrab (fig. 7).

Mosaic and Fresco Decoration

Despite the discovery of large quantities of loose tesserae in soundings throughout the building, no mosaic decoration was recovered in the course of the first season beyond that already mentioned.

On the other hand, several figural frescoes, in addition to the ornamental remains already mentioned, were discovered in various parts of the building. The largest number were found in the diaconicon where, even before work was begun, there could be seen in the vaulting a nimbed jewelled cross surrounded by tendril and rosette motifs. The cleaning of the walls of the diaconicon¹¹ revealed further: a badly damaged fresco of three standing female saints, the damaged bust of a male saint, and an almost totally obliterated fresco of Constantine and Helena (Invention of the True Cross). Their location is indicated in the axonometric plan (fig. B). Upon removal of fill in the north diaconicon

¹¹ The frescoes were cleaned and conserved under the direction of Mr. Ernest J. W. Hawkins.

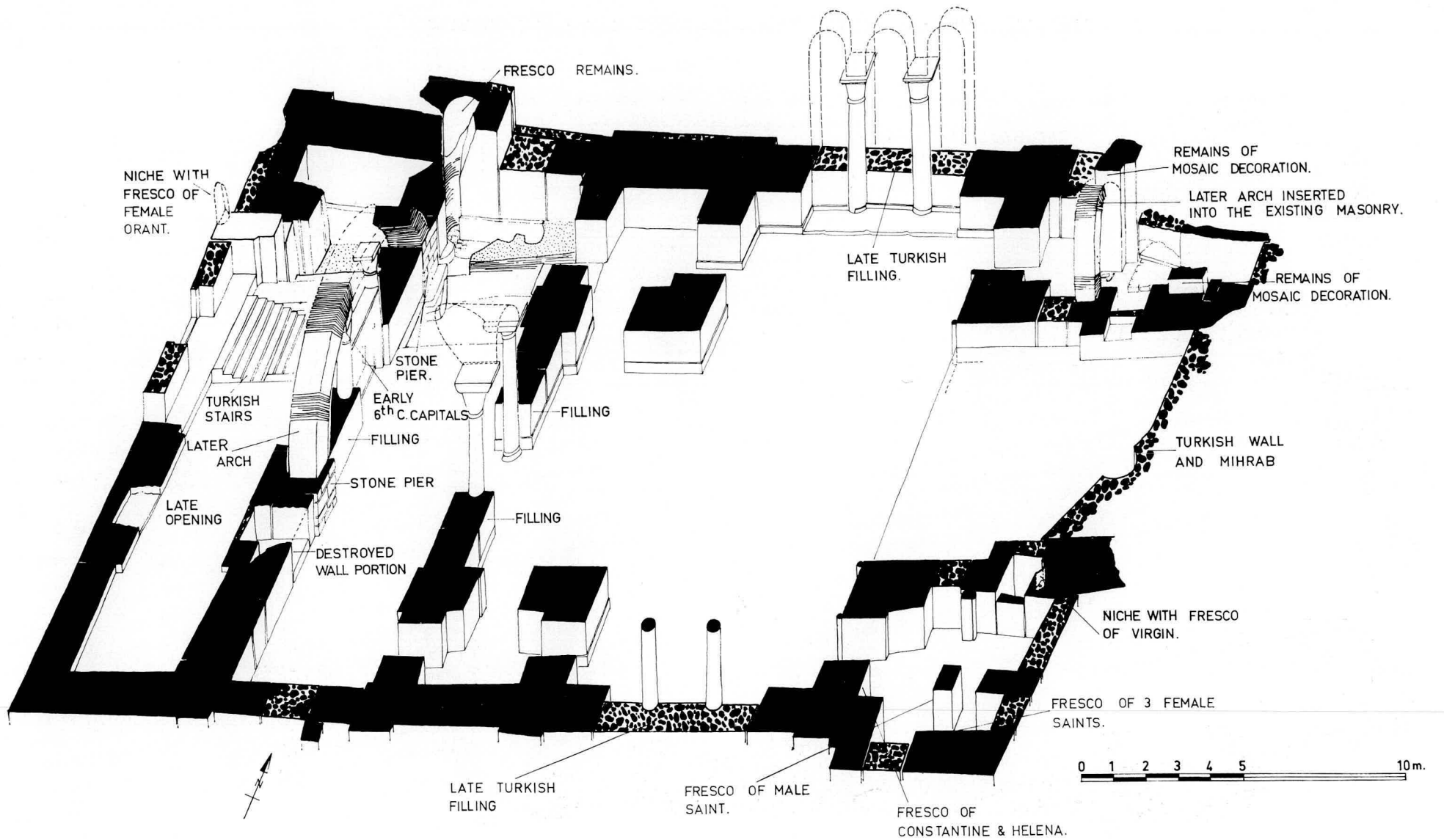
wall, a well-preserved fresco of the Mother of God with a kneeling male donor to her right was discovered in a niche let into the east reveal of the east door between diaconicon and bema. Finally, the removal of fill from a niche on the west façade to the north of the door revealed a damaged fresco of a female orant.

It might be noted that the present

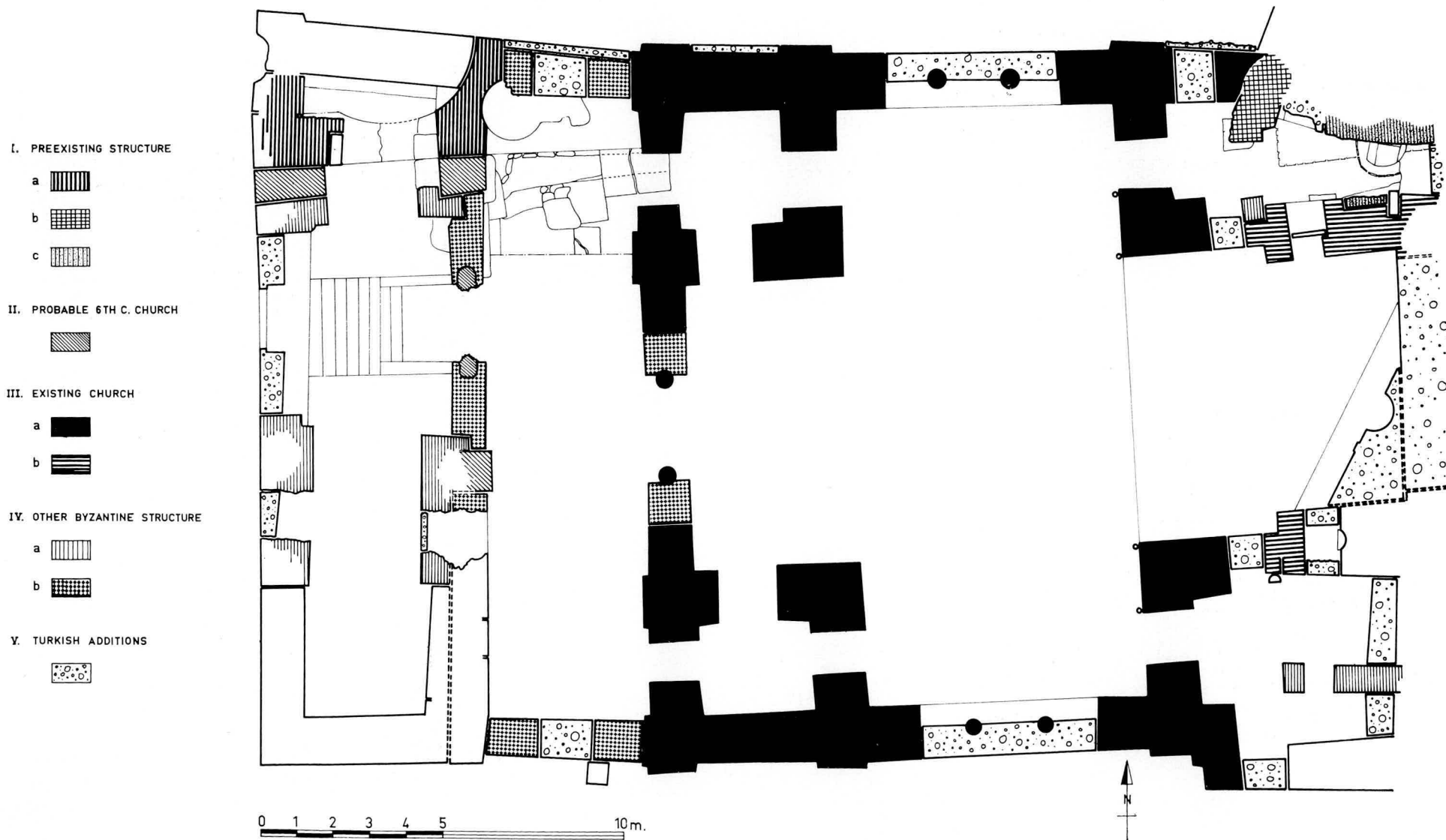
Painted Turkish decoration (fig. 5) is subsequent to the photographs of the building taken for E. Freshfield about 1895.¹²

A detailed description of the frescoes and a report on the pottery and small finds recovered in the course of soundings will be given at a later date.

¹² *Archaeologia*, 55 (1897), pls. 29 and 30.



B. Kalenderhane Camii. Axonometric View, Showing Structural Systems at Ground Level. Based on First Season's Survey



A. Kalenderhane Camii. Plan at Ground Level, Showing Tentative Relative Chronology



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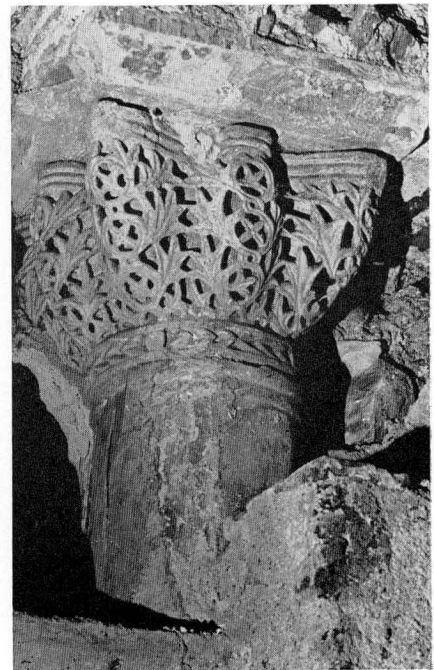
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1. General View from Southwest



2. West Wall of Esonarthex

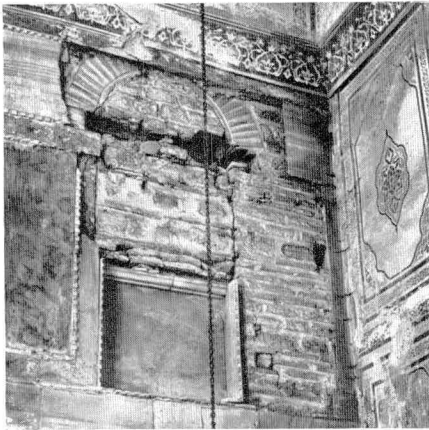


3. Detail of Melon Capital

Kalenderhane Camii



4. Exterior South Flank Wall of Naos



5. Upper East Corner of North Bema Wall



6. Porphyry Disc in Naos Floor, looking West



7. Disc and Frieze in Bema Floor, looking East

Kalenderhane Camii