

## Alahan Monastery Excavations

Michael and Mary Gough visited the monastery complex at Alahan on 14 September 1952 and in September 1953. Though the site had been visited by westerners as early as the 1890s, the Goughs' visits were important inasmuch as they systematically collected squeezes of inscriptions and recorded architectural features around the site that had been excluded in previous written reports.

In 1955 a preliminary sounding was carried out. Three small areas were initially excavated, with the purpose of identifying the building west of the monastery complex and its function. At one end of the building some steps and an altar-like object with Christian decorations were found. It was also determined that the building had been constructed in two phases.

In 1961 between 25 July and 4 September another season was undertaken. The team continued to focus on the building, determining that it had two phases of construction: at first, it existed as a basilica dating to the mid-fifth century, before later becoming the Church of the Evangelists, built in the thirteenth century out of the ruins of the earlier structure. A sculpture and two archangels on the jambs of the church door were also uncovered. Rock-cut channels had been constructed to bring the water to the monastery from a spring to the north.

In 1962 excavation at Alahan continued between 10 July and 1 September. Work was again undertaken on the clearance of the Church of the Evangelists, where the north and south aisles were excavated, revealing some of the remaining bases from the original building. The twin-apsed structure in the centre of the complex was also cleared and discovered to be a baptistery. Archaeological evidence continued to point to the outer colonnade belonging to a later period than the two churches. Some inscriptions were discovered, including four of Diocletian. Finally, some survey work was done at the castle of Mavga, producing a plan, photographs, and some sherds.

In 1963 excavation was continued from mid-July through the end of August. The eastern church (or Koca Kilisesi) provided the focus for this season of excavation. The area west was also excavated and revealed what may have been the monastery's kitchen and refectory; an oven was discovered on the west side. Seventeen coins were discovered, the latest dating to the late sixth century. Pottery from between the fourth and sixth century was found.

Excavation was continued between 24 June to 25 August 1965. Work was undertaken in the eastern church, where they cleared and repaired the floor and restored a broken offertory table. A colonnaded walkway was explored, where many of the columns' bases were still in place. The hostel, or hospice, was also completely excavated, revealing a suite of guest rooms, an oven, and drainage works nearby; pottery and coins from the building point to fifth or sixth century occupation. A well-preserved frieze on the southern wall of the western basilica, and the building itself, was planned. A cave west of this building was also investigated and found to be the earliest church at Alahan; early monks likely settled in the cave cells nearby. A fresco depicting the head of Christ was found and taken to the Museum at Adana. The funerary area, enclosing both the tomb of Tarasis the Younger and four rock tombs containing sarcophagi, was cleared of overgrowth. The following construction sequence was proposed: the cave-church was built first as early as the fourth century, followed by the basilica in the middle of the fifth; the monastery subsequently became a pilgrimage site, possibly due to connection to a holy man, which led to the construction of further accommodation and the eastern church and colonnade then, finally, the baptistery.

From 5 July to 29 August 1967 the team participated in a fifth season of work that involved excavation, conservation, and restoration. Stonework along the basilica's north and south walls was pulled back to reveal the original architecture, which was then studied. Some damage done to the

baptistery by a winter flood was fixed. The south aisle of the eastern church was cleared, with some fourth and fifth century coins found in the process, and a well-house east of the monastery was partially excavated.

The sixth and final season occurred between 27 June and 18 July 1968. It was short, as Gough was shortly due to retire as BIAA Director. The north aisle of the east church and the southern pastophory were cleared. The base of an altar was found on the east wall.