

EXCAVATIONS AT ALAHAN - 1972

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After a two year interval, during which much of the excavated material was profitably studied in the Archaeological Museum in Konya, excavation was resumed at Alahan during July and August 1972. The preceding summer of 1971 will always have pleasant associations for our small team, working as it did in close association with Bay Hadi Altay and Bay Gürbüz Alp, Director and Assistant Director respectively of the Konya Museums, as also with Bayan Ayhan Alp and Bay Mustafa Ambar, then Director and Assistant Director of the Archaeological Museum in that city. It was a special pleasure, therefore to meet Hadi Bey again in 1972 in his new post as Director of the Ayasofya Museum in Istanbul, and Bay and Bayan Alp so soon after they had taken responsibility for the Museum at Bergama.

As in earlier seasons, the writer would wish to express his gratitude to the Turkish Department of Antiquities and Museums for the renewal of his excavation permit, and to Bay İlhan Temizsoy, Director of the new Museum at Karaman, who acted as representative of the Ministry of Education. His active and sensitive participation in our work was much appreciated, and when work came to an end on the 18th August, his departure was much regretted by the workmen as well as by the Canadian and British personnel of the expedition. We are grateful also to the bodies which financed our work; to the Canada Council, the Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, the Royal Ontario Museum and the Reid Charitable Trust of Great Britain. In 1972, for the first time, one of the Director's Canadian colleagues, Professor Michael Sheehan of the

Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, took part in our work.

It may be recalled that, in 1967, the small *han* at the base of the monastery hill, (a *han* of considerable historic interest and mentioned by Evliya Çelebi as existing three centuries ago), was most generously loaned to our expedition to act as a storage depot for sculpture recovered from the the monastery and presently in danger of exposure to the weather. When, as a result of violent storms in 1970/71, the roof of the *han* was ripped off by *poyraz*, the timbers broken and the walls in a dangerous state, we assumed the obligation of restoring the building, and of doing it in such a way that its original character was not impaired. Our advisor in the work was Bay Mustafa Bakan, whom the Director of the Konya Museums in 1971 very kindly made available to us in July of that year. (Pl. 1).

The repair of the *han* involved the removal of all that remained of the corrugated iron roofing and also of the timber trusses and perlon which, after some forty years, were in need of renewal. The walls, weakened by the partial wreckage of the roof, were in a dangerous state, and so repair to the *han* was given priority. It took six weeks to complete, the work being first in charge of Mr. Roger MacMichael, a qualified Belfast architect, and afterwards by Professor Sheehan. Four workmen, all from Geçimli, were employed on the job, and the building is now in first-class condition. (Pl. 2). All the material was obtained locally in Mut, where we had the familiar friendly cooperation from all the tradesmen and craftsmen concerned. Of the workmen, only one was a trained *inşa'at*

ustasi, but the other three soon reached a high state of efficiency, and will in future be very useful in any conservation jobs that may arise. Inside the *han* the sculpture fragments have been now laid out in such a way that it may be easily understood by the interested visitor.

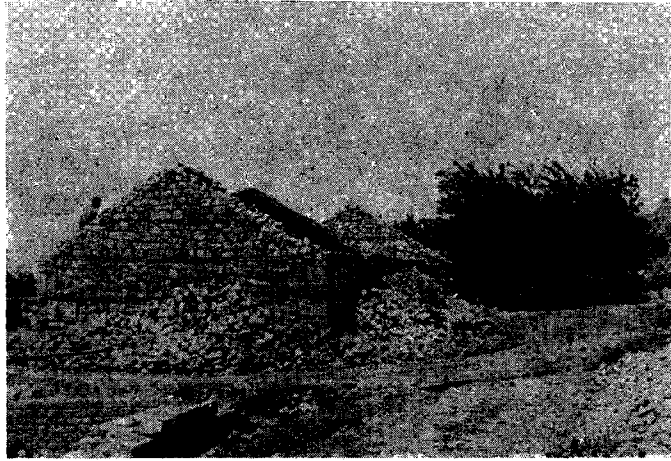
Before excavation began at the monastery itself, we spent about ten days in improving the access road to the site, and in constructing paths and flights of steps to enable the various buildings to be visited without too much difficulty or fatigue. The excavated area now comprises about 3.00 sq. m. of rocky and sometimes difficult terrain, but presents few difficulties to the normally active tourist. Indeed the number of tourists, both Turkish and foreign, has increased vastly over the past few years.

At the start of the season, I had decided to make a test near the west end of the Basilica, in an endeavour to find out whether or not there had been a monumental entrance to the whole complex at a level lower than the walkway already known to exist as a link between the main monastic buildings. We began this work on the 12th July, and were immediately disappointed in this particular expectation, for there was no evidence of such a structure. However, we were rewarded with a discovery of perhaps greater human interest in an extensive complex of cisterns, drains and highly sophisticated arrangements for flood-water disposal, all going to show how seriously the monks coped with the problem that still sometimes threatens the site (it may be recalled that floods carried away a 30 m. stretch of the southern fortification wall in the winter of 1966). The rock shelf, on which the monastery was founded, slopes steeply southward below the Basilica, and it was natural that channels should have drainage system. However, this in itself would have been insufficient to deal with an emergency, so that a series of "rooms" was built below the southern fortification wall. Such cistern-like 'rooms' could be utilized equally well for water storage in the sum-

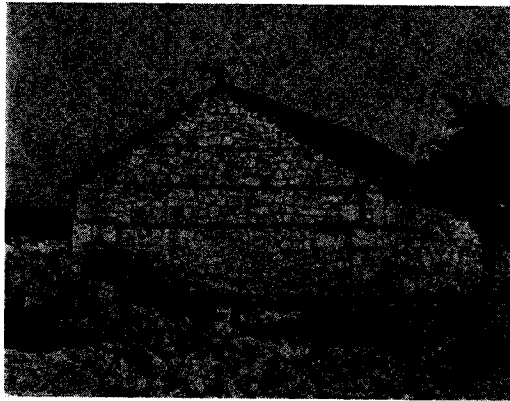
mer as for containment of a flood in the rainy months. With the second end in view, walls either of masonry or hewn from the rock were built on an east-west axis to deflect the flow of water from its natural southward, headlong course and make it less impossibly difficult to control. Very vulnerable was the Basilica, and flood-water was channelled not only immediately to the east of the church, but even diverted into a drain that passed under the floor of the apse!

All this water, and another large supply which fed the monastic cisterns and the hospice, was collected first in the cisterns already described and then finally allowed to escape through a huge arched conduit with a tiled floor. The conduit itself was constructed of fine brickwork (pi. 3).

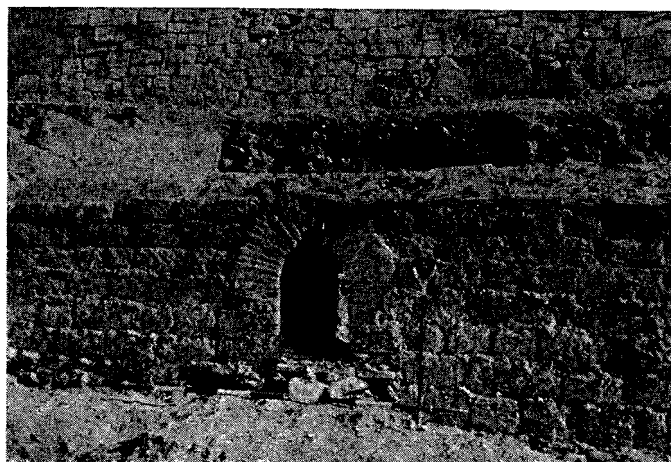
Quite naturally a large amount of dating evidence was recovered from the drainage system, since the monks probably used part of it as a convenient dump. Among the coins were several small fifth century examples pre-dating the reforms of Anastasius; also interesting was a hoard of nine bronze *folles* in excellent condition, none later than the early years of Justinian I. (Pi. 4) Very valuable too was the datable pottery discovered; Roman (North African?) fine ware, the local imitation, well fired and pattern burnished, and a large and very valuable collection of sherds of a specialized type so far known only at Alahan and Dag Pazari. This coarse buff ware, decorated in a fugitive red paint with fish, doves and, sometimes, with crosses, as well as with spiraliform and zigzag motifs, we call "monastic ware" and it seems to be contemporary with the Roman and 'local Roman' pottery earlier described. (Pi. 5). The painters of 'monastic' at Alahan and Dag Pazari used a linear, almost modernistic style which is very distinctive. Its distribution, except in a tiny part of Isauria, is not recorded. Information about finds of similar sherds, particularly in the *vilayets* of Mersin and Adana, would be gratefully received by the present writer.



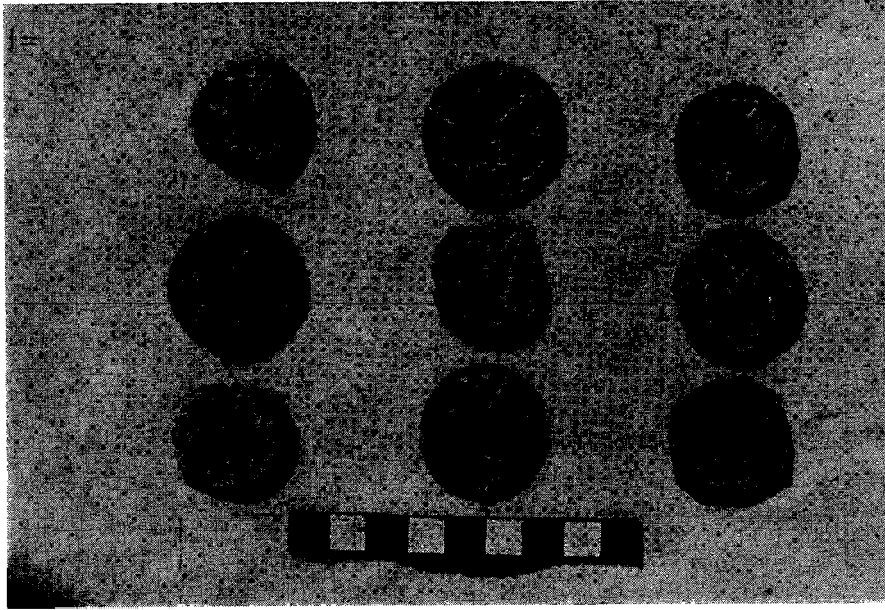
Pl. 1



Pl. 2 (

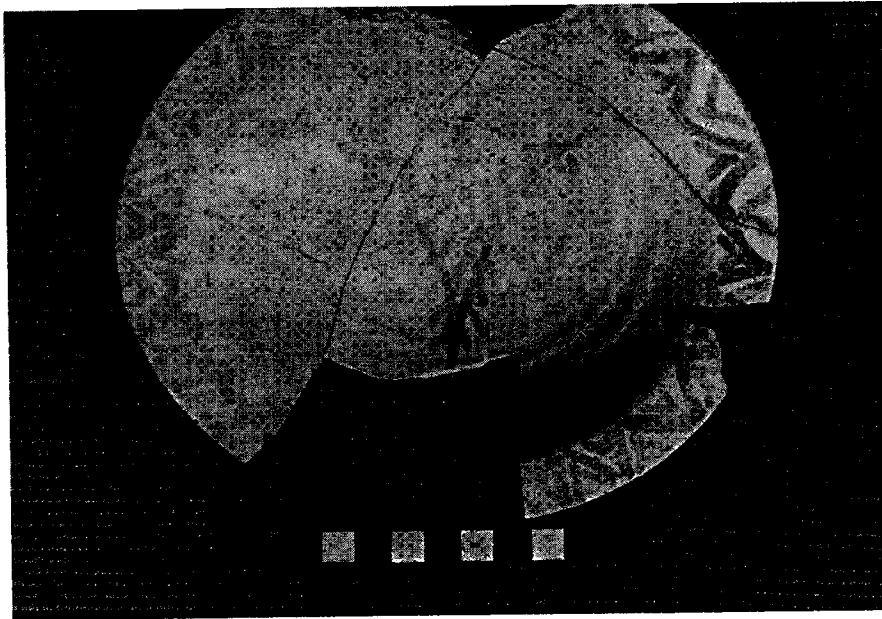


Pl. 3 !



Pl. 4

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Pl. 5

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