

**Gina Coulthard\***

### **The excavations in Çiftlik**

Following a survey in 1993, rescue excavations at Çiftlik were conducted from 1994 until 1998 with two study seasons in 2000 and 2001. The project was a collaborative venture between the Sinop Museum and the British Institute at Ankara (BIAA), directed by Stephen Hill, then of the University of Warwick, with funding provided largely by the University and the BIAA.

The site lies on the coast south of Sinop with the principal structure being the remains of a substantial early Byzantine three-aisled basilica church with galleries, which was being washed away by the sea. Other contemporary structures lie in the immediate vicinity. Excavation of the church revealed a complete, but damaged, floor mosaic. Much of the church was constructed using *spolia* from an earlier structure, perhaps a pagan temple, and the architectural sculpture was in many cases left unfinished. Given the substantial quantities of unfinished architectural sculpture, and the fact that many of the glass *tesserae* for the wall mosaics were found in collected deposits without any sign of mortar, it seems the construction of the church was abandoned before completion. The nature of the damage to the floor and the evidence of a deep section to the south indicate the near-complete church was destroyed by a landslide. Subsequently, evidence points to the church and the surrounding area being put to use as a ceramic production centre. A tight assemblage of fine wares, combined with numismatic evidence which cannot be extended beyond the third quarter of the sixth century suggests that even the industrial use of the site was short-lived. Thus the evidence indicates that the building of the church was curtailed as a consequence of natural disaster and that the industrial use of the site was brought to an end by a second landslide.

Given the fragile state of the structural remains and the encroaching sea, much effort was expended in constructing sea defences in order to conserve the remains of the church *in situ*. However, one mosaic from another building in the vicinity, which could not be preserved *in situ*, was removed and can be seen in the garden of the Sinop Museum.

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\* British Institute at Ankara