



Monks and Masons at the Monastery of St. Moses the Abyssinian, Syria

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The monastery of St. Moses the Abyssinian is located about 90 km north of Damascus, in the Syrian desert mountains. Like many other monasteries, it was founded in the 5th century, but more unusually it survived the Muslim conquest and thrived through the medieval period. It comprises a complex of central buildings, and a system of cave-hermitages spread across the landscape where the monks would have actually lived.

Since 2004 the monastery has been the site of fieldwork by the Royal Ontario Museum. Archaeological research at the site has so far included survey of the region to map caves and other features, especially those that help the monks survive in this desert environment; analysis of the architectural history, including assessment of the seismic history; and petrographic analysis of the ceramics to examine place of production.