

The Excavation of the Prehistoric Burial Tumulus at Lofkënd, Albania



Volume 1: Text

John K. Papadopoulos, Sarah P. Morris,
Lorenc Bejko, and Lynne A. Schepartz

For Review Only

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CHAPTER 5

CONSERVATION AT THE LOFKËND ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT, 2004–2008

Vanessa Muros

INTRODUCTION

The conservation of excavated artifacts and their long-term preservation have always been an essential component of the Lofkënd Archaeological Project. The work of the conservators and their collaboration with the archaeologists and other specialists on the project has played an important role not only in the preservation of material but also in the study of the excavated finds. It was the goal of the conservation team to ensure the stability and safe storage of the archaeological material of Lofkënd to allow for research and publication, and in turn to aid in the interpretation of the site and of greater prehistoric Albania.

This report summarizes the objectives and treatment procedures of the Lofkënd conservation team during the 2004–2008 field seasons. The aim of this report is to provide general information on the conservation approaches undertaken. The conservation of any artifact is specific to that particular object, and this report is not meant to serve as a manual or handbook for the conservation of finds at other sites. The hope is that others reading this report can take away information on the overall approach to various preservation issues encountered in the field and to adapt some of the methods described for the conservation of archaeological material at other excavations. The report deals mainly with the conservation of inventoried small finds associated with the graves and not necessarily the bulk ceramic sherds from fill or modern materials found within or on the tumulus.¹

¹ “Bulk finds” refer to all non-inventoried material, largely fragmentary pottery and daub. All of this material was washed,

LABORATORY FACILITIES AND CONSERVATION MATERIALS

The first conservation lab at the Lofkënd Archaeological Project was established in 2004 during the initial season within rooms of the Byzantine monastery and museum located at the Apollonia Archaeological Park. The park is also the location of the excavation house of the project where team members lived and worked.

During the first season, some treatments were undertaken, but the primary goal for the conservators at this early stage was to document and examine objects, undertake some minor treatments, and pack and store the artifacts safely to be treated the following season. As with any project, the conservation treatments and approaches evolved and changed as more material was excavated and the conservators adapted their approaches based on the condition of the objects and the materials available. The work during the first season helped to guide future treatments and establish protocols for examination and storage that were carried through all the subsequent seasons. Despite changes that may have been made to the approaches for conserving artifacts in the lab, the overarching goal of the conservation team was always the same: to aid the archaeological interpretation of the site by examining and treating materials, to ensure the preservation of the excavated material, and to implement the highest standards of treatment possible in a field situation, similar to those practiced in museums and other institutions.

quantified, and weighed, and pieces requiring conservation were stabilized.