

Archaeotek:
Medieval Cemetery Funerary Excavation
Patakflava, Romania



Final Report: Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship,
Archaeology Institutes of America

Thanks to Archaeology Institutes of America and the Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarships contributions, I was able to join ArchaeoTek: Medieval Cemetery Funerary Excavation in Patakflava, Romania. Under the instruction of Nyárádi Zsolt from the local Haáz Rezsoo Múzeum and Andre Gonciar, Director of ArchaeoTek Canada, the

Medieval Cemetery Funerary Excavation field school has been running strong since 2013. During this five-year timespan, the goals of the field school



Haáz Rezsoo Múzeum

have been to provided valuable information about the people of the Transylvanian area during the 13-15th century. As well as, provide students with the valuable skill sets and hands on experiences needed in the field of bioarchaeology and forensic anthropology.

The location of the site is in Patakflava, Romania, which is part of the CK fold in Odorheiu Secuiesc, Transylvania. It is with this location that the field school consists of two work groups field and lab. This allows for the two groups to excavate the new discoveries and remains form the site and process as well as analyze the remains for further research. Though I only participated in the excavational portion of the field school, each group worked efficiently and thoroughly with the guidance of professionals.

The field is under the direction of bioarchaeologist,



Patakflava Excavation Site

Dr. Katie Zejdlik from Western Carolina University and her assistant Katherine Kulhavy from University of Tennessee, Knoxville. To participate in this group, students signed up for the excavational portion of the field school when signing up through ArchaeoTek. The goal of this group was to provide students with the tools and resources to gain hands on experience excavating human remains. Upon arrival students are asked about experience prior to allow for dig teams to be made that benefits both students and the excavation as well. Once this has been established, the layout for the month is explained to the group as well as what is expected by each person to make the excavation enjoyable as well as beneficial to everyone.

The first week, consisted of background information on the site in which we were excavating. The site at Patakflava was the site of a medieval church that's grounds



Surrounding Village

are still being used to this day. Dating of the churches primary use is 14th-15th century although, the site shows that it was being used before than as well.

Based upon the history of the site there are three phases of rebuilding for the

church itself. The first church serviced three villages which included the area of Patakflava. This being the case the last church to stand was made out primarily from a rock base that was destroyed during an earthquake. This was the last church to stand before the church was moved to a different location in town that is still being used

today. The history of the site allowed us to understand not only the location of remains based on religious affiliation of the time. Also, being that male and juvenile remains were located closer to the altar while many of the female remains were located outside the church walls. This information was vital since the new trenches that were being excavated were located around the suspected church tower located near Trench 19. This information was the important bases that allowed for the excavation of the remains to have more of a context to the excavators.

The second week of excavation was full of interesting information. This week was to be the first week that the excavation group entered the field though it would not be until later that week that we would be able to go to the field location for the first time. For two days, the excavation team turned to learning



how to
properly
fill out
paper
work



Fortified Churches in the surrounding area with possible similarities to the one that was built at the site.

information about the remains once confirmation of articulated bones was established. This information was crucial due to the nature of the research most information being gathered and used for future research projects. The context of the notes was documented by each individual so that a copy of procedures

would be present in the field as well as soil testing that would be used to identify the soil depth around the remains and other artifacts found on site. After understanding the process of taking notes in the field, the excavation team gathered outside the lab to learn how to clean bones properly without compromising or damaging the bones. This process was explained through example which allowed us to see just how delicate the bones are during excavation as well as during the washing process. To me and many I spoke to, we found that washing bones to be very relaxing and enjoyable way to spend our rain day.

Once the rain finally set side, we were finally able to grab are assigned equipment and jump on the bus living for the field. Upon arrival, the site are duties were explained to us. After everyone understood the duties required to begin trenches were assigned for are first excavational experience. Tarps were than lifted, gathered, and removed from the trenches. Removal of the tarps went well and each team proceeded to their assigned area for excavation. Excavation was a delicate process as each group worked on pedestalling remains and moving slowly down by layers to the next layer looking for any evidence of a grave. By Friday, many groups had started to find possible skeletal remains or artifacts, as



Trench 19 located near the church tower.

well as my team, finding the top of the skull cap before tarping everything delicately for rain and the weekend at hand.

The third week brought forth great interest as many remains were being uncovered or defined so that mapping, depths, and photographs could be taken for each individual. The process of defining individuals was a tedious process requiring one to be patient and delicate with the remains so not to cause excavational damage.

Mapping was the next step at hand for the remains. Each map was set up by Katherine



Kulhavy, who also explained how to start the maps with dots measured by a partner to create a drawn picture of the remains at the excavator's perspective. These maps would allow for the

Pottery rim shard found in Trench 19.

research done for each group that would allow them to see the remains as they were upon being found. After maps were completed, the depths were taken. That just left photos to be taken and for the remains and any artifacts discovered are pulled delicately, placed into bags that are labeled with the grave number and information identical to the notes for cataloguing process.



Map of G-258 with the preserved artifacts represented as they were found.

By the time the final week was in motion many groups had moved around and worked around the site excavating many different remains. My group alone pulled a total of 4 remains by the end of the excavation period. It was also during this time that presentations for the symposium were being created. My group worked on a Osteobiography on grave 258, that also included information on the well-preserved artifacts that were found with the body at the time. This Osteobiography allowed for us to find out information about the remains in question along

with possible reasons behind the preservation of the artifacts (burial shroud, pins, and shoe remnants) that were also recovered with the site. These presentations were then presented at the symposium in town. This would mark the end of the excavational experience and are time in Romania.

This experience was a once in a lifetime opportunity that I will forever cherish. The learning process of all these techniques and skills will help further my educational background and allow me to be prepared for a career in archaeology. I was able to learn a great deal that would be needed and required for me to do in the field as well as presenting at a symposium for the first time. These aspects of the trip I take with me as I continue finding my place in the field of archaeology rather it be in bioarchaeology or

another side of archaeology all together. I am forever grateful for the help that I have received to experience this opportune from Archaeology Institutes of America and the Jane C. Waldbaum Scholarship. This experience will impact my work in many aspects allowing me to learn more about the job at hand and the route in which I am wish to follow.