

NONDESTRUCTIVE RESEARCHES OF ALSÓVADÁSZ-VÁRDOMB

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE: PRELIMINARY RESULTS

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Kivonat Alsóvadász a Cserehát dombvidék déli részén terül el, a Vadász patak partján Miskolctól északkeleti irányban kb. 25 kilométerre. A Vadász-patak völgyében található, eddig ismert tell települések, a Hernád-völgyének azonos korú településeihez hasonló mintát alkotnak. E rendszerben helyezkedik el a mai település délnyugati határában található dombtető összekeskenyedő nyúlványa, mely Várdomb néven ismeretes. E szabályos kör alakú, árokkal körülvett területről sajnos kevés régészeti adattal rendelkezünk, hiszen bár több alkalommal kutatták, a dokumentációk java elveszett. 2018 tavaszán megkezdjük a település roncsolásmentes vizsgálatait, melyek újabb adatokkal bővítik a településről szerzett ismereteinket. Bár a kutatás még csak korai szakaszában jár, a további eredmények segítségünkre lesznek a település egykori életének komplexebb értelmezésében.

Kulcsszavak bronzkor, hatvani kultúra, tell település, roncsolásmentes kutatások, előzetes eredmények, Vadász-patak völgye

Keywords Bronze age, Hatvan culture, tell settlement, non-destructive research, preliminary results, valley of the Vadász stream

The geographical location of the site

We can observe similar settlement pattern structures on the Hernád plain and its embankments and in the valley of the Szerencs stream. Taking a look at the map, we can see a network formed by Bronze Age settlements, all roughly at 5-10 kilometres from each other (Fischl & Rebenda 2012a: 10. kép; Fischl & Bakos 2015: 1. kép). A similar pattern consisting of settlements from the same period can be found in the valley of the Vadász stream, right side tributary of the Hernád-valley; its known tell settlements so far include Alsóvadász- Várdomb and Felsővadász-Várdomb (Fig. 1).

The village of Alsóvadász is located in the Szikszó District of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County, 25 kilometres northeast of Miskolc, at the southern side of the Cserehát hills, on the bank of the Vadász stream. The site is located at the southwestern edge of the present day settlement, at the area above the cemetery known as Várdomb. It is bordered by the wide North-South valley of the Vadász stream from the east and the western tributary of the stream known as Völgyárok from the south; flanked by these two valleys, the medium-height hill is at the south-eastern edge of a protrusion (Fig. 2–5).

Várdomb is separated by a near-perfect circular ditch from the rest of the hill. With a roughly 40 m diameter, the profile of the slightly domed plateau is unclear, its original dimensions could only be determined through excavation. The ditch remained most intact on the side closer to the protrusion, where it is 4–5 metres deep and 50 metres at its greatest width. On the western and eastern sides of the hill the ditch is only traceable in the form of a terrace. Unfortunately, despite having been researched many times before, we have little data on this site as most of the documentation was lost (Fig. 6).

Research history

The site is first mentioned in 1906 by József Hampel. According to his report, an excavation was led there by Lajos Márton, adding three hundred and sixty-four prehistoric artefacts to the collection of the National Museum; however we lack any other information on the excavation itself (Hampel 1906).

Nándor Kalicz classified Várdomb as a fortified settlement of the Hatvan culture (Kalicz 1968: 117).

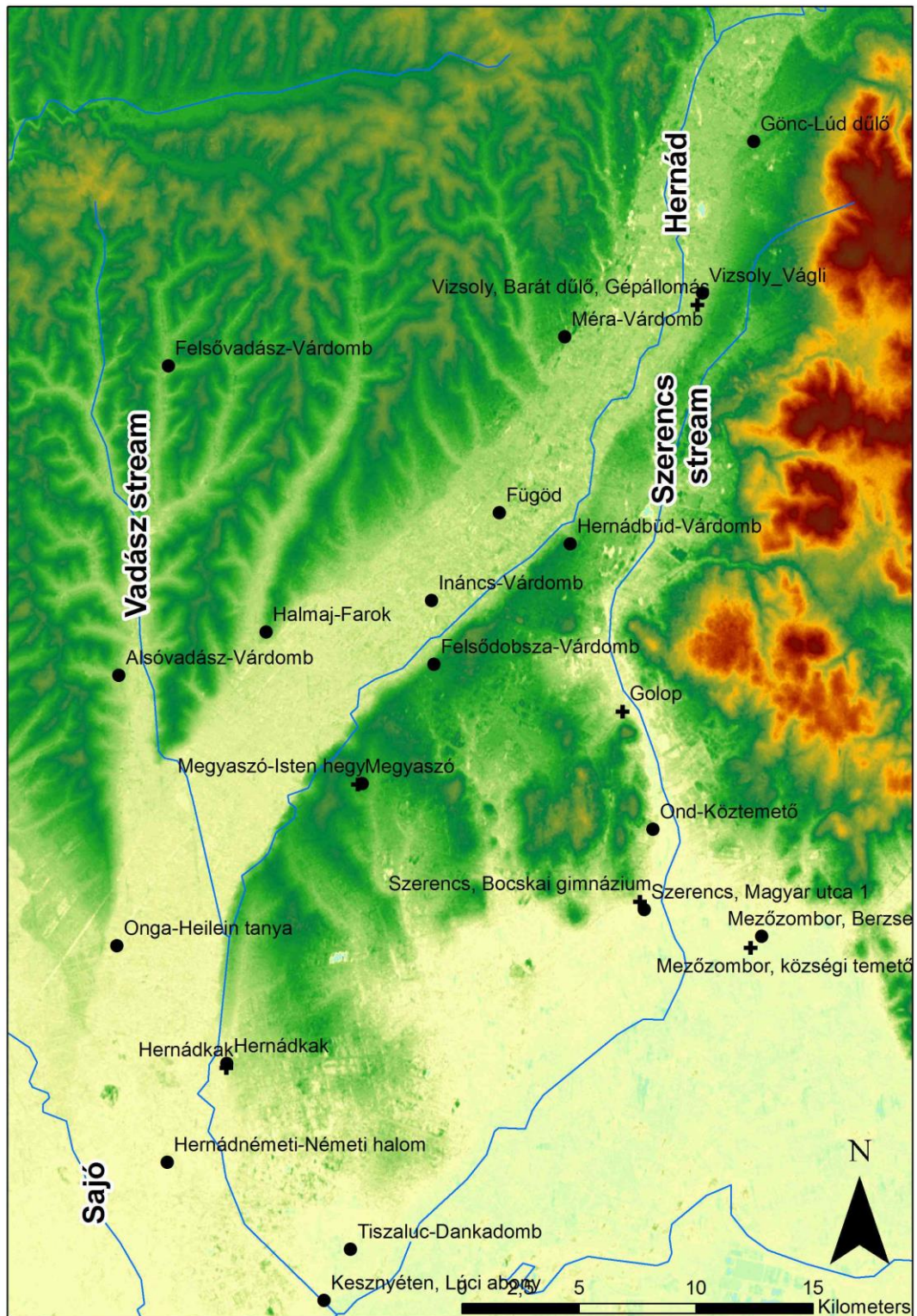


Figure 1. Bronze Age site sin the Hernád Valley and tributaries (made by Klára P. Fischl)



Figure 2. Location of the site on the 1. Military map

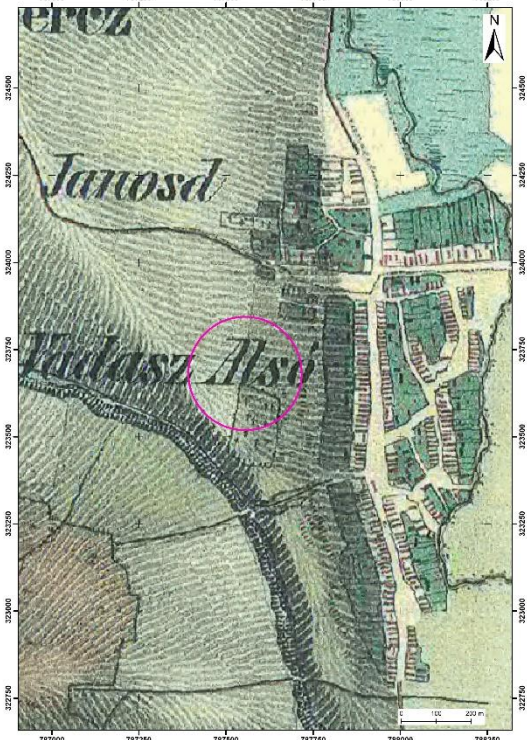


Figure 4. Location of the site on the 3. Military map



Figure 3. Location of the site on the 2. Military Map

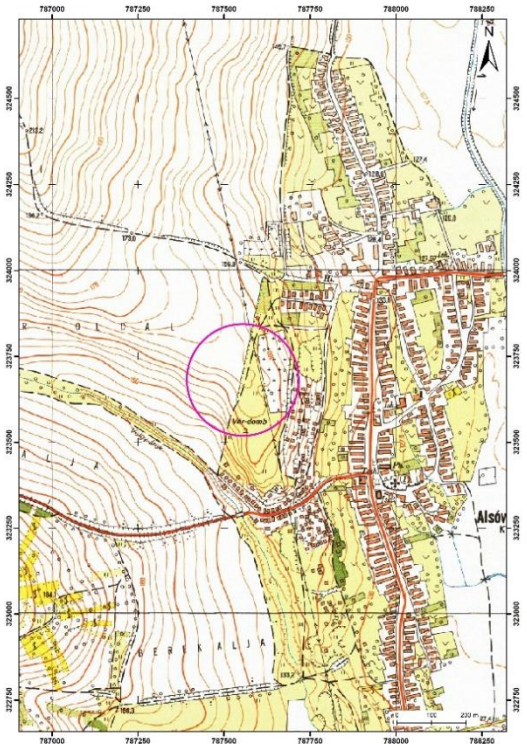


Figure 5. Location of the site on the topographical map

In October 1978, president of the waste management company (MÉH) president István Illés contacted the Herman Ottó Museum via letter that human bones and pottery sherds came to light during the earthworks of a planned shooting range at Várdomb. The site was disturbed 1.5 metres deep on a 10 x 20 metre area, unearthing polished and carved bone items, grindstones and ceramics characteristic of the Hatvan culture and the remains of a portable stove (Gábor et al. 1979).

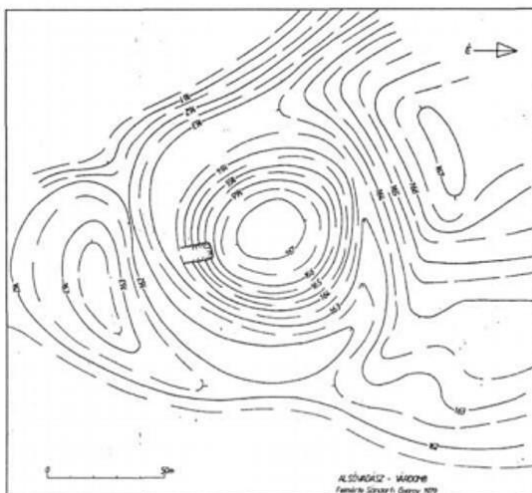


Figure 6. Site plan of Alsóvadász-Várdomb (Sárközy-Nováky 2001, 2. kép)

In the spring of 1979, Gyula Nováki and György Sándorfi completed a site-level survey of the site. In this years June, during a rescue excavation led by Katalin Simán, a 5x5 metre surface was excavated 3 metres deep down to the subsoil. Five separate settlement layers were identified during the excavation, which included a few house remains. Based on the finds, the topmost layer was classified as of Ottomány culture while other layers were deemed to be of Hatvan culture by Katalin Simán. The floors of the houses from this culture were renewed with daub, and rush imprint was observed on a house floor in found layer IV. The lowest layer, layer V, was only a few millimetres thick and without any assemblage (Simán 1980; Hellebrandt and Simán 1980). Finds came to light during this excavation can be found in the collection of the Herman Ottó Museum. Ildikó Szathmári started processing them (primarily Füzesabony finds after the Hungarian classification); in the future, I will be working on what has not been processed yet. Unfortunately the excavation record and

documentation were lost in this instance as well. In 1980 Emese Lovász, Mária L. Wolf, Katalin Simán and Judit S. Koós held an inspection visit at the site. They ascertained that near the earlier profile, the site was disturbed again which affected the top layer. They collected the pottery sherds which mostly originated from a stove (L. Wolf & Simán 1982).

Description of the finds

Finds from these two excavations are most pottery sherds; however they still include many items of interest: portable stove, miniature animal figures, spindle-whorl, spoon, stone axe fragments, stone tools, just to name a few. A souring vessel sherd came to light from one of the house remains. Based on these sherds a specialized household can be distinguished within the settlement, suggesting the presence of some kind of farm building (Fig. 7–8).

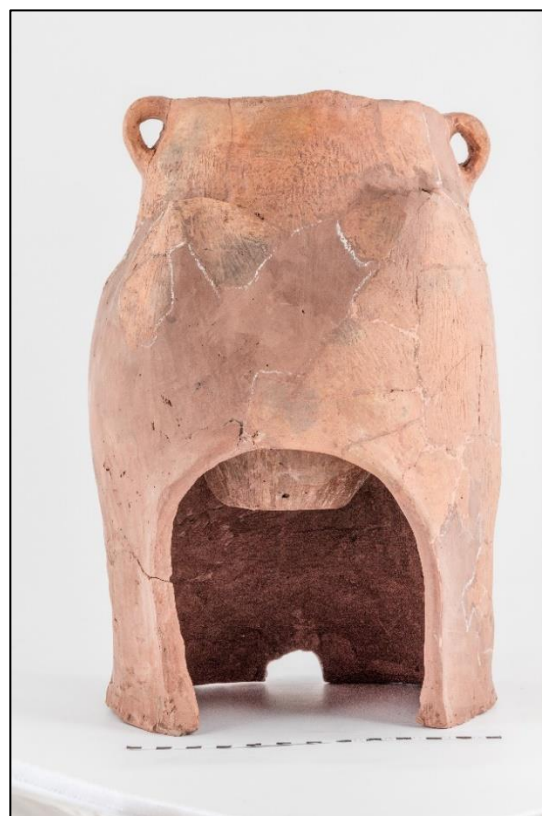


Figure. 7. Restored portable stove from the subhumus-layer I (photo Benedek Baranczó)

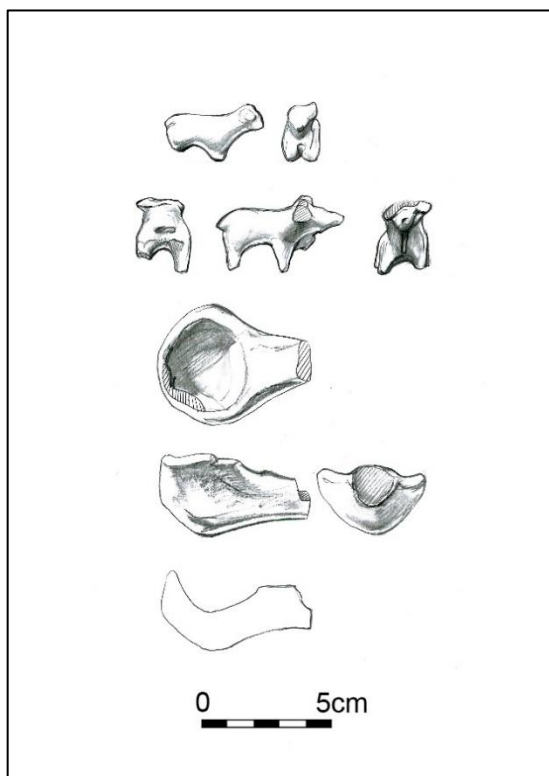


Figure 8. Miniature animal figures and clay spoon excavated by Lajos Márton (Hungarian National Museum 84.1905.70. 65.1905.65; 84.1905.50) (drawings Katalin Nagy)

The askos published by Ildikó Szathmári was from this site as well, the organic residue collected from its inside was put under thorough analysis (Fig. 9). János Csapó, professor at the department of chemistry in the University of Kaposvár, obtained the results from the amino-acid, as well as micro- and macro-analyses of the sample, which he compared to the residue from the askos/wineskin found at the Mezőcsát- Pástidomb site. The high degree of similarity between the two test results confirms that the material once stored in this vessel form must have been of animal origin. As laboratory measurements of the residue from Alsóvadász showed a high iron content, it is possible, that blood had also been present in the sample. (Szathmári 2003: 519–521; P. Fischl & Rebenda 2012b: 493).

Variations of ceramic sherd textile decorations can be well-observed on the material from the Hatvan layers, which appear particularly in the assemblage of the settlement. Further analysis on these can provide data on the technical questions in regards to the textile production of the period

(Fig. 10–11).

As mentioned previously, the topmost layer was classified as of Füzesabony culture while other layers were deemed to be of Hatvan culture. Further examination of the finds revealed however that, even though the majority of the ceramic material found below the upper Füzesabony layer is unequivocally from the Hatvan culture, it does contain some early Szaniszló-type finds as well, sherds of which appear in layer II and are considered to be uncommon in this region (Fig. 12–15) (Dani 2006). This is an interesting phenomenon because it can shed light on the changes, spread and usage of Middle Bronze Age ceramic styles.



Figure 9. Restored askos (photo Benedek Baranczó)

Current research and further opportunities

In spring 2018 we began non-destructive examinations at the settlement. Although the central core of the settlement is relatively intact, we found shallow digging-ins in it, filled with recent refuse. Such holes were reported by Károly Tankó as well in his 2006 survey. A deep cut can be found on the southern side of the hill, from the side of the ditch; Károly Tankó identified this as the shooting range mentioned in previous reports; he believes it was there where Katalin Simán conducted excavations in 1979. However, according to my information those excavations were carried out on the northern side (Tankó 2007).

There is a plateau ideal for settlement on the south-eastern edge of the hill outside of the ditch. This area is currently overgrown by shrubs and weeds, the site's spread towards that direction currently remains unclear.

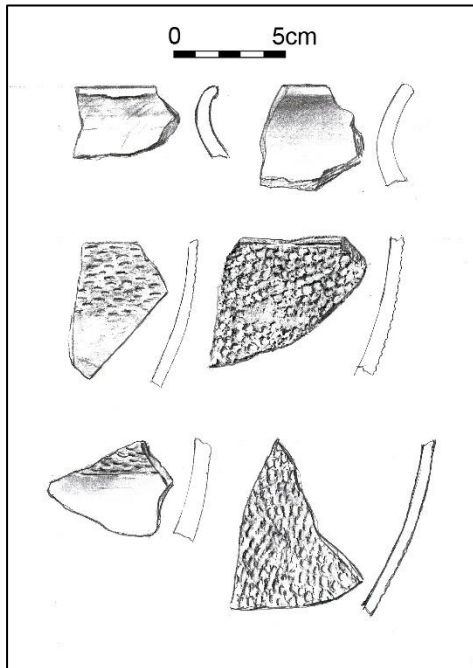


Figure 10. Ceramic sherds with textile decorations excavated by Katilin Simán (drawings Katalin Nagy)

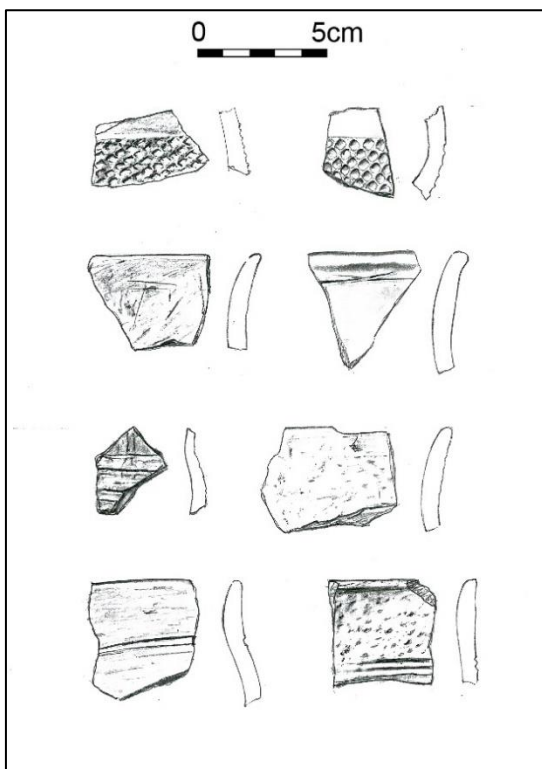


Figure 11. Ceramic sherds with textile decorations excavated by Katilin Simán (drawings Katalin Nagy)



Figure 12. Restored mug from the subhumus- layer I. (1979) (photo Benedek Baranczó)



Figure 13. Restored mug from the subhumus-layer I (1979) (photo Benedek Baranczó)

The East side of the outer settlement is where the present day cemetery is located, the side northwest has an apple orchard over it and the west-southwest side is currently arable land that is planted in. This area is known as Ver-oldal. During his 2006 survey, Károly Tankó localized an intensive site on a 50-60 metre long stretch in the arable land (Tankó 2007). Based on surface finds, the site can be well traced northwards along the fence, up until the mortuary. Bronze Age finds can also be collected on the other side, at the western half of the cemetery up until the northern corner of its fencing. Grassy lawn stretches between the cemetery fence and the apple orchard, crossed by a dirt road in North-West direction.

Currently only aerial photography via drone and performing geophysical survey of the settlement core are possible, due to the growing crops on the field at Ver-oldal.



Figure 14. Restored pot from the II/A layer (1979) (photo Benedek Baranczó)



Figure 15. Restored amphora from the subhumus-layer I (1979) (photo Benedek Baranczó)

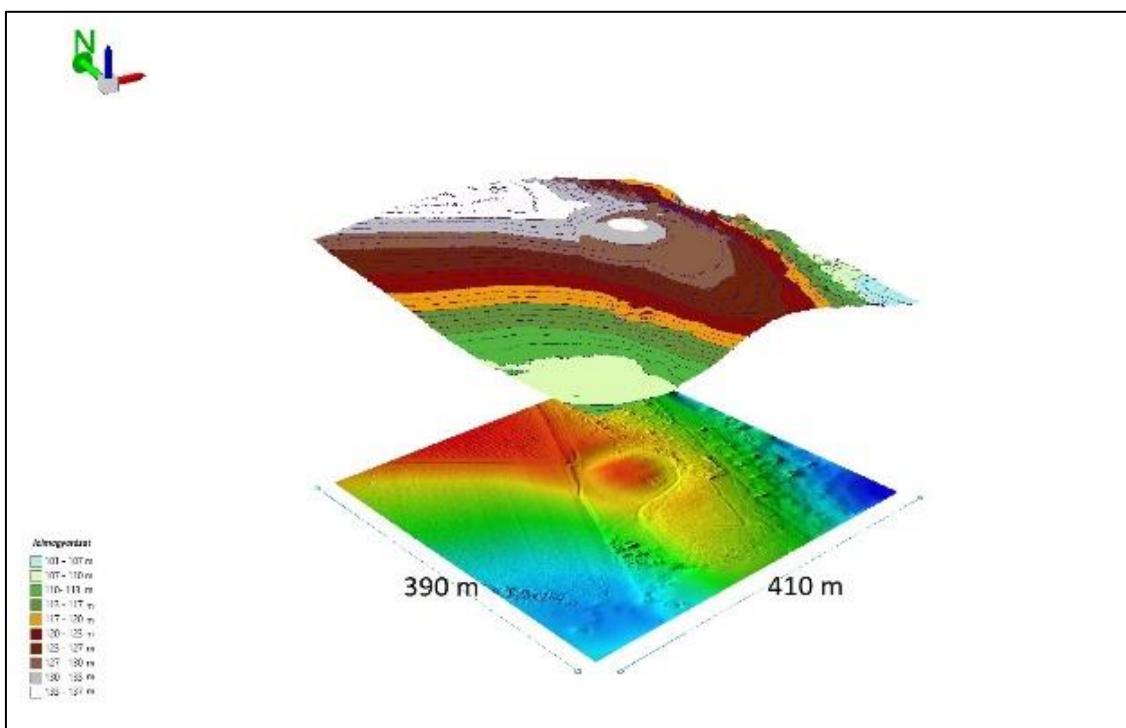


Figure 16. Level model of Alsóvadász-Várdomb (by Dániel Kiss and Szabolcs Honti)

These were further made difficult by the presence of a mobile base station and tower at north, on the highest point of the hill. Based on aerial photography we created the terrain model of the site, which outlines level data spectacularly (Fig. 16).

Even though we could only perform magnetometer survey on a small, 85 by 86.9 m area (Fig. 17–19), it provided a good outline on the ditch surrounding the central settlement core that was also visible on the aerial photography.

The surface is highly polluted due to recent usage and disturbance, which means that anomalies from the same period of the settlement are barely noticeable, if at all. The outer settlement area's soil discoloration over the surface disturbed by ploughing is well visible on satellite images (Fig. 20); moreover we can see its continuation over the apple orchard. We can only conduct further research and determine the size of the outer settlement after the crop has been harvested. The results of systematic surface finds collection, magnetometer surveys and the geophysical survey of the outer settlement, in conjunction with data from the processing of the ceramic material will aid us in getting a more complex read on the former life of the settlement.

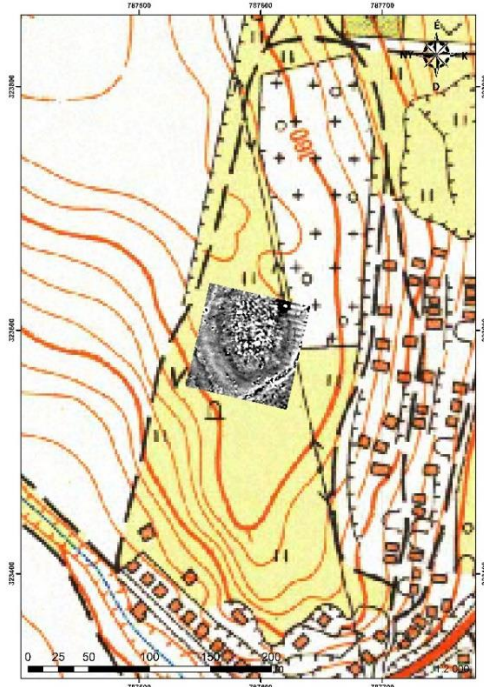


Figure 17. The results of the geophysical survey projected onto an 1:10 000 proportion EO map sheet 98-344 (made by Gábor Bakos, Szabolcs Honti, Dániel Kiss)



Figure 18. The results of the geophysical survey projected onto a digital elevation model (made by Gábor Bakos, Szabolcs Honti, Dániel Kiss)

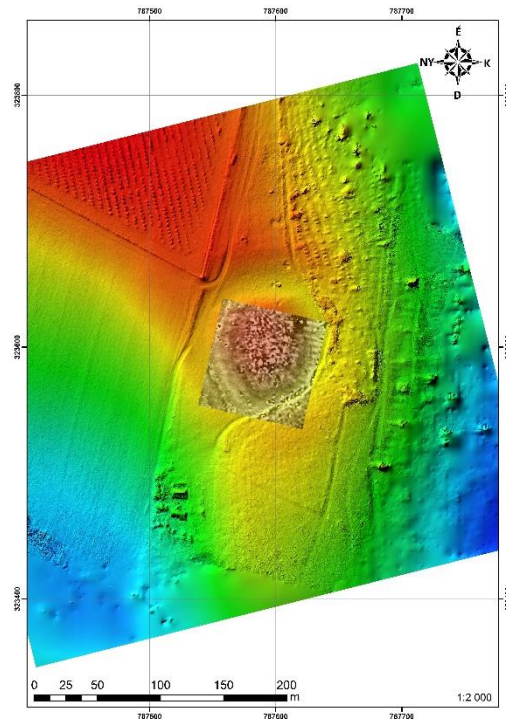


Figure 19. The results of the geophysical survey projected onto an orthophoto (made by Gábor Bakos, Szabolcs Honti, Dániel Kiss)

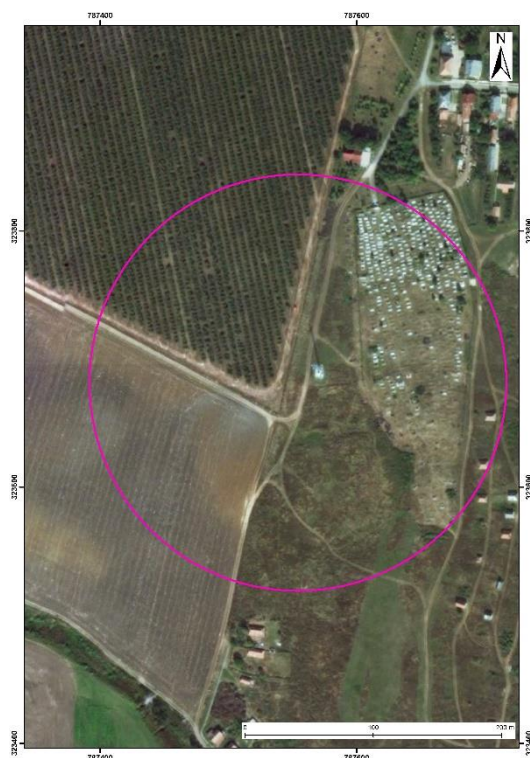


Figure 20. Soil marks of the outer settlement part west from the tell core

Summary

Although Alsóvadász-Várdomb site was examined many times in many waves in the past decades, and we have many interesting bronze age findings, our knowledge is very small about the settlement. We need more researches, processing work and data comparison to draw a complex image. That is what we started in 2018 with the help of my colleges. Our future plan is to continue the non-destructive methods to get more information about the structure, the border and the surface finds of the outer settlement.

I would like to screen the existing artefacts and examine what additional options do they offer to understand the prehistoric life of this settlement.

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