

PRELIMINARY REPORT FROM A PENDING EXCAVATION OF A MIDDLE BRONZE AGE  
CEMETERY AT ENCS (NORTH-EASTERN HUNGARY)

Ákos Mengyán<sup>a</sup>, Áron Dávid<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup>undergraduate, Eötvös Loránd University, Institute of Archaeological Sciences, Budapest  
mengyanakos@gmail.com

<sup>b</sup>Salisbury Ltd. dabanhorz77@gmail.com

**Kivonat** *A cikkben egy középső bronzkori temető jelenleg is folyó feltárásáról adunk előzetes jelentést. Az Északkelet-Magyarországon, a Hernád-völgyében fekvő lelőhelyet az eddigi megfigyeléseink alapján kíséreljük meg bemutatni néhány képpel együtt. A leletmentés 2018 tavaszán indult és jelenleg is tart, az eddigi adatok szerint ez a Kárpát-medence legnagyobb sírszámú, feltárt Füzesabony-kultúrába tartozó temetője (továbbiakban OFCC).*

**Kulcsszavak** *Kárpát-medence, középső bronzkor, temető, Füzesabony-kultúra*

**Keywords** *Carpathian Basin, Middle Bronze Age, cemetery, Otomani-Füzesabony Cultural Complex*

### The Site

The site of Encs – Mérnöki-teleptől délre is located near the modern city of Encs, in the Hernád Valley (Figure 1). There is started a rescue excavation in May of 2018, under the direction of Zoltán Farkas and Áron Dávid (Salisbury Ltd.), because of the M30 motorway construction work.

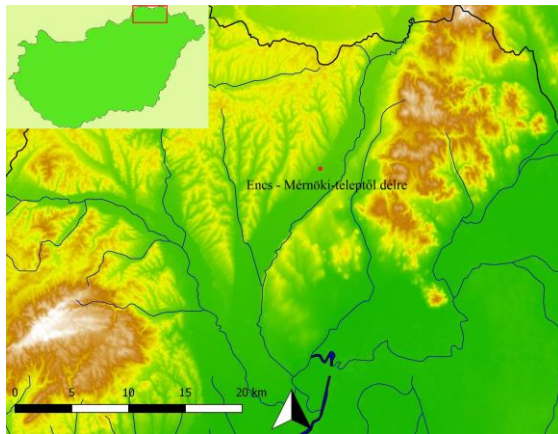


Figure. 1. The location of the site

The archaeological site was localised by geophysical survey, field walking and test excavation in 2017. After these, we could localise the site on around 8 ha. We have found a long, ditch-like object, but after we made a profile into this it seems likely, that it was an old stream channel, probably it was the part of the old Hernád

river. The western edge of the cemetery is at the foot of the terrace, we have found a few burials here too. The eastern edge is close to the modern city of Encs. The western part's name is Encs-Devecser-Dél, because it is on the other side of the number 3 main road; therefore, it was registered as a different archaeological site (Fig. 2).

We have found not only the Bronze Age cemetery on this site. There was a large, prehistoric borrow pit. Moreover, there was excavated a palisade at the northern bank of the old river channel, which were parallel with each other. In one of the postholes, we found a bronze, long-socketed double-edged arrowhead. Probably this could be younger than the Bronze Age burial ground.

### The Middle Bronze Age cemetery

We excavated around 1200 graves on ca. 6 ha. (until November of 2018), which can be dated to the Middle Bronze Age, OFCC.

In the rites of the burials we have been observed a rigid order which is general at the burial grounds of the OFCC. However, this cemetery is differ from the North-South and South-North orientation, which is usual at the known, larger OFCC burial grounds. At Encs, the males' head were oriented to West, they were lying on their right side and their faces looks to South. The females' head were oriented to East, they were lying on their left side and their faces looks to South.

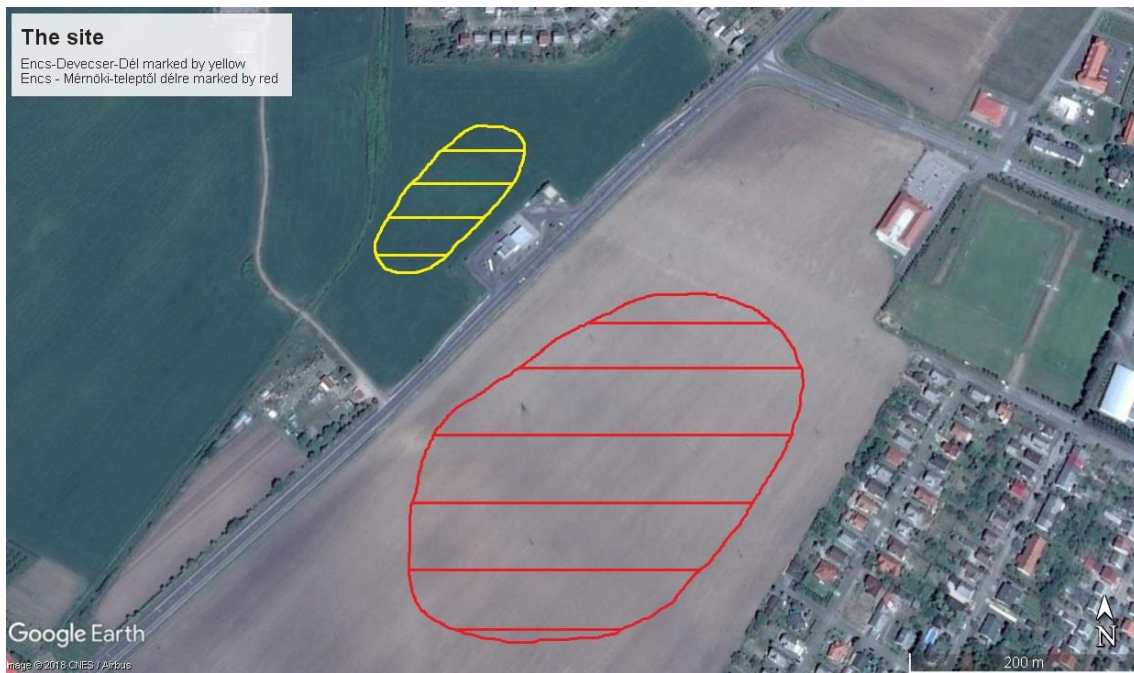


Figure 2. The site: Encs – Devecser-dél (marked by yellow) and Encs – Mernöki-teleptől délre (marked by red)



Figure 3. Grave S816



Figure 4. Grave S645



Figure 5. Grave S504

From the OFCC, we know three more cemeteries, which has similar orientation. These are at Bodrogszerdahely/Streda nad Bodrogom (Sk.) (Polla 1960: 340-341), Gelej (Kemenczei 1979) and Vatta (Somogyi 2010). The bodies were placed into the graves in a contracted position, when the knees were updrawn and the hands were

in front of the chest.

However, there were a few bodies in different positions. For example the S816 burial, whom left foot was straight, the deceased was lying on their abdomen and their hands were putting together in front of the face (Fig. 3).

We have excavated a few graves, which

contained two deceased. For example the S645 burial. In this, we found an adult and a child (Fig. 4). Furthermore, there were two adults in the number S504 burial (Fig. 5). We have found a few cremation graves. Actually, these burials' dating are difficult because the bottom 10-15 cm of the urns were revealable. Finally, we have excavated a few symbolic graves, which contained only the vessels and there were not human remains in these.



Figure 6. Grave S588

One of the richest grave in the cemetery is the S588 (Figure 6). According to the rite, it is a female's burial which was not robbed or disturbed. We observed a trace of a headdress on the head and there were two golden disc on the temporal part of the skull.

A „chain” joined to this, which were made by bronze spirals and tusk shells and it was connected to a large sized bronze pin, which was in the hand of the deceased. The burial contained other grave goods such as bronze hairrings, tusk shells, obsidian, a cup with kantharos handle, a bowl and

a vessel.

We observed the traces of log coffins in many graves, which appeared as calcic discoloration at the bottom. Moreover, we can assume funerary monuments on the onetime surface at a few graves. Namely, we found 3-4 columnholes near the corners of the graves (Figure 7), which can be interpret as a traces of these monuments.

The depth of the graves are various. Under the top-soil, these can change between 10 cm to 1,6 m.

The adult graves' depth are more various, but the infants' burials are usually shallower. The shape of the graves are various too. There is oval, roundish, square ones with linear or rounded angles and no regularities have been found yet.

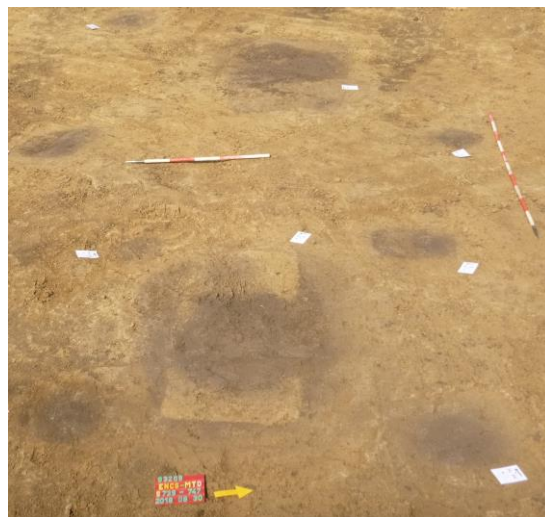


Figure 7. Possible traces of funerary monuments

The human bones are in a very bad condition, which is making difficult the excavation. It is apparent, that the graves were placed in groups, which groups contains 3-4 burials. Furthermore, it is clear that these groups were placed in rows, which direction is West-North or Northwest-Southeast.

### Findings

Most of the graves—around 85-90%—have been robbed or disturbed; however, the quantity and the wealth of the grave goods are grand.

As usual at these large cemeteries, we have found graves without grave goods and graves with lots of funerary equipments. The excavated ceramics are general in the OFCC burial grounds.

These potteries were situating around by the hip, legs and feet. The burials contained one, two or three jugs or mugs. Usually, there is one bowl in the graves (spherical shaped bowls, inverted rim bowls, swedish helmet bowls). Finally, we found household pottery such as cooking pots in the graves.

After the first observations it seems, that the cemetery will cover the complete OFCC period in time and probably we will able to identify different burial groups in space and time.

In spite of the large percentage of the robbed graves, we have found many bronze and gold finds. The most common of them is the bronze spirals and pins. Among the former objects, we found it in lots of and various type (spherical headed pins, toggle-headed pins and wire pins). The hairrings are common too. Most of it were made of bronze (Fig. 8/3), but there were a few

gold hairrings too (Fig. 8/1). We have found one, which could be made of silver or electrum (Figure 8/2), but the analysis will help us to identify this find's material. Moreover, we found bronze bracelets, bronze fishhook, bronze knife, a bronze helve tubed axe with scored decoration on it (Fig. 9) and an axe with a stay for the shaft (Fig. 10).

We have excavated several paste and amber beads, tusk shells, and a few boar tusk pendants from the graves.

There were a few stone grave goods too. We have found a few stone tools, stone arrowheads and there was a base grinding stone on the deceased in one grave. The raw materials are limnoquartzite, a few obsidian, but other materials had been also excavated.

The animal bones are rare in the cemetery. We found a few bone awls and a skull of an aurochs in a disturbed burial.



Figure 8. Hairrings made of different material from Encs

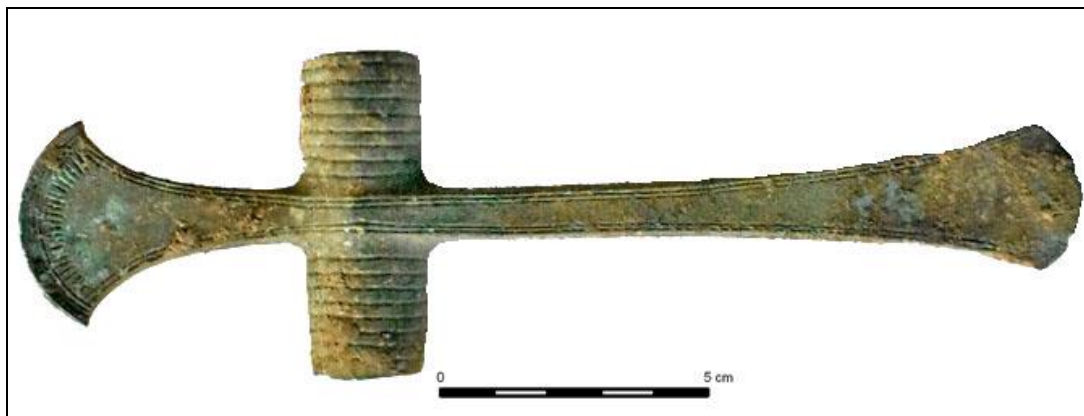


Figure 9. A bronze helve tubed axe

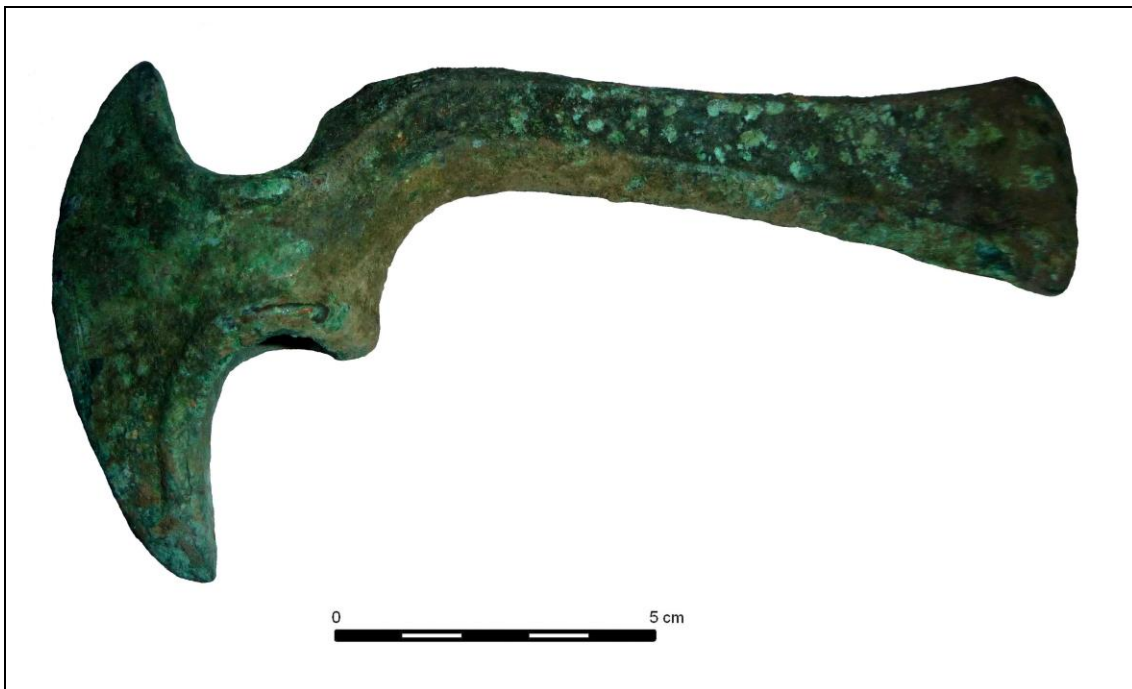


Figure 10. Axe with a stay for the shaft

### Discussion

It seems, it could be the largest, excavated OFCC cemetery in the Carpathian Basin. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the site is the different orientation from other OFCC burial grounds. At the known large cemeteries from the OFCC such as Alsómislye/Nižná Myšľa (Sk) (Olexa & Novaček 2013, 2017), Hernádkak (Bóna 1975: Taf. 154–164; Schalk 1992), Megyaszó (Bóna 1975: Taf. 165–189; Schalk 1994), the cemeteries near Polgár (Dani & V. Szabó 2004: 96.) and Pusztaszikszó (Kőszegi 1968: 101–141) the graves were oriented to N-S/S-N or NW-SE/SE-NW, by the gender. We know three cemeteries which are similar to Encs in the rite (W-E or E-W). These are Bodrogszerdahely/Streda nad Bodrogom (Sk.) (Polla 1960: 340–341), Gelej (Kemenczei 1979) and Vatta (Somogyi 2010). Probably the excavation will be completed in 2019. After the restoration, the analyzing of the material can begin and then we can make a more accurate chronology and conclusions about the cemetery.

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