

DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

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Test excavations in the vicinity of Cserkeszölő (Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, Hungary)

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Abstract

The staff of the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the Eötvös Loránd University carried out test excavations in the autumn of 2015 prior to the construction of motorway M44 in Tiszazug, Jász-Nagykun-Szolnok County, Hungary. This preliminary report presents the most interesting features and finds of this campaign.

In the autumn of 2015, the staff of the Institute of Archaeological Sciences of the Eötvös Loránd University participated in Phase 2 of the Preliminary Archaeological Documentation of motorway M44.¹ Our probe trenches were located on the future track of the road east of Tizsakürt and north of Cserkeszölő. Altogether we excavated 1.8 hectares on nine sites and on four so-called 'potential areas of archaeological interest'. The excavations were finished on the 9th of November, therefore the processing (that is, washing, restoration, etc.) of the finds is now under way. In this preliminary report only the most interesting sites are presented (*Fig. 1*).

M44-03 Tizsakürt-Tópart

The site is located on an evident flood-free bank, marked on the maps of the Second Military Survey as the 'Bank of the Great Ditch'. The meander is a remnant of the former Tisza riverbed, and is a dominant feature of the landscape even now. We opened eight trenches on the future road track in different sizes and orientation. The first human existence at the site can be dated to the Early Copper Age. The settlement features of the Tiszapolgár culture were located in the westernmost trench, directly on the bank. A large-sized pit provided a great amount of finds including pottery fragments with incised decoration. Thus the site can be stylistically connected to the Kisrétpart-group. We also unearthed a few pits belonging to the Late Bronze Age Gáva culture which provided only a small amount of finds. The majority of the archaeological features could be dated to the Sarmatian period. We found five semisubterranean dwellings, two borrow pits, several storage pits of a settlement. In addition, in the southernmost part of the surveyed area we unearthed two Sarmatian graves which may refer to a graveyard.

1 The staff of the project were: Gábor V. Szabó, Gábor Váczi project leaders; Márton Szilágyi leader of the excavations; Kristóf Fülöp MA archaeologist; Ádám Békési, László Kolonits, Dóra Máté, Eszter Rákos, Nóri Szabó BA archaeologists; Ferenc Benus BA student; Ester Lunardon Erasmus student.

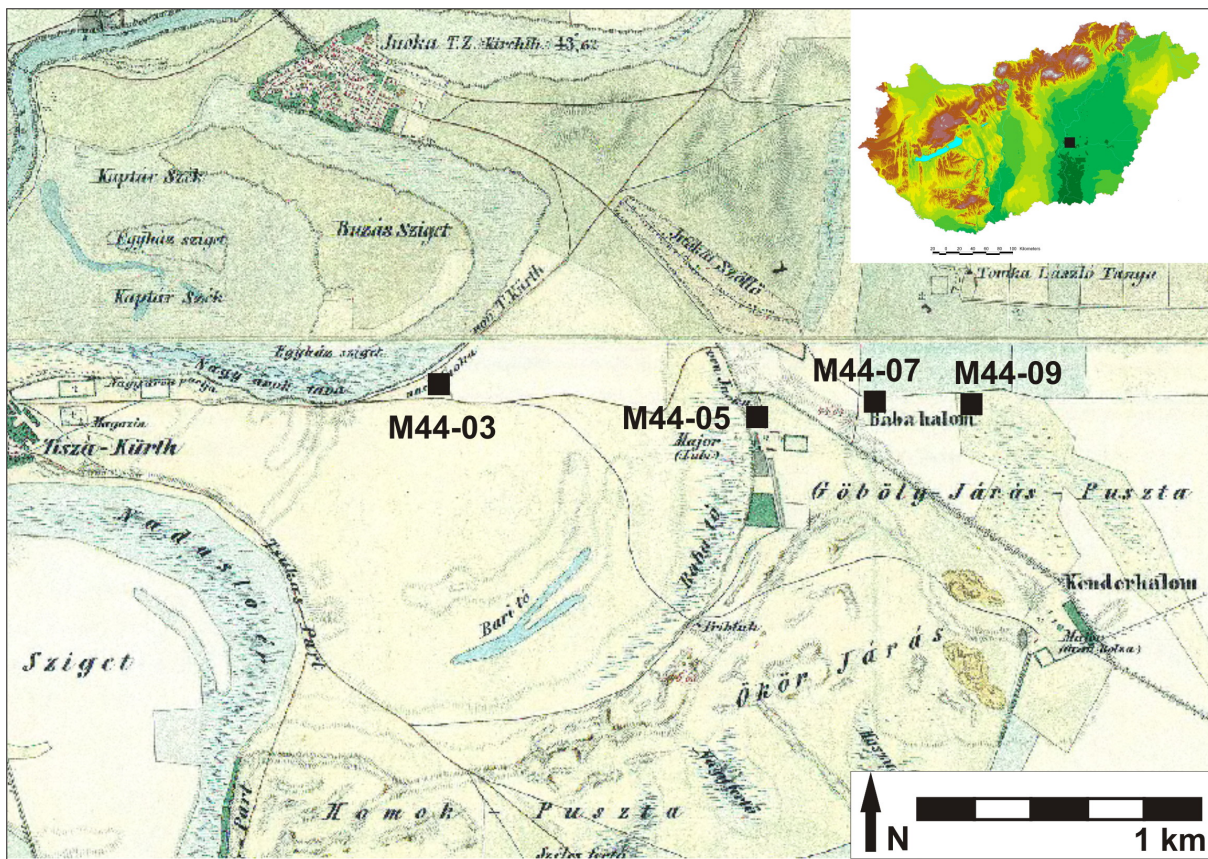


Fig. 1. The overview of the mentioned sites in the vicinity of Tiszakürt and Cserkeszlő.

M44-05 Cserkeszlő-Szőlők

This site was tested by 100–200 metres long, east-west orientated trenches. We observed a very thick layer of sand in the central and eastern parts which made it impossible to reach the subsoil at several sections. However, at the western side, on a high bank of a former watercourse (Bába-tó) we found a few west-east orientated graves of stretched skeletons without grave goods. These might be connected to the Árpadian Age or Late Medieval Age.

M44-07 Cserkeszlő-Kisasszony-Szőlő III.

We surveyed the area called Göboly-Járás-dűlő on the maps of the Second Military Survey by three surpassingly long (400–450 metres) parallel trenches orientated east-west. A mound called Bába-halom is located 100–150 metres south from this area and might be a Pit-Grave kurgan. There were no strong prominences at the examined area, the differences in altitude do not exceed a metre. The archaeological features occurred more densely at the central and western parts. The earliest occupation of the site can be dated to the Middle Neolithic. We unearthed a few Middle Neolithic pits at the western side, as well as a skeleton in contracted position which also may be dated to the same period. Some of the pits provided a fair amount of finds, based on the pottery the Middle Neolithic settlement can be dated to the classical phase (Phase II–III) of Alföld LBK. Features of the Neolithic settlement could be traced at the neighbouring M44-06 site, here we detected no pits but cultural layers mixed with finds.

Almost the whole length of the trenches was covered by features of an intensive Sarmatian settlement, which may be dated to the early Sarmatian period (2th–4th century AD). Besides the usual storage pits we observed a double or at some places triple enclosure, several semisubterranean dwellings, and a subterranean stack with burnt sides. At the same place we detected 25 graves also dated to the Sarmatian period. More than half of the graves were plundered. Among the usual finds, such as string of beads, bronze bolt fibulae, iron knives and a small pot near the feet, we revealed a bronze disc brooch with enamel, an iron spearhead, a bronze and a silver coin, which both can be dated to the second half of the 2th century AD.² Concerning the position and distribution of the observed graves we estimate a cemetery of approximately 100–150 burials.

M44-09 Cserkeszölő-Kisasszony-szőlő V.

The site M44-09 is situated approximately 300–400 metres east from the M44-07 site at a somewhat lower area. To our surprise, here we detected traces of an Early Neolithic settlement of the Körös culture. Its location is exceptional, because all Körös sites we know so far in this area are directly connected to the Tisza and Körös rivers, located always on the first high banks.³ Beside smaller rounded pits we unearthed parts of three borrow pits, their dimensions were 10–15 metres in length, and 1–1.5 metres in depth. They provided an enormous amount of finds. Based on the pottery decoration (the lack of painted ware, a high number of barbotine and impressed decoration) the settlement can be dated to the classical phase of the Körös culture.⁴ Weigh looms, clay figures, polished bone tools and ornaments lended variety to the assemblage. We also observed cultural layers in the profiles of the trenches. Apart from the Early Neolithic settlement a dispersed Sarmatian settlement could also be found at the site.

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2 Specified by Lajos Juhász.

3 BITTNER 2012.

4 OROSS – SIKLÓSI 2012, 131–140.