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**PRELIMINARY REPORT ABOUT THE EXCAVATION
AT NAGYKÖRÖS-FÖLDVÁR (VATYA CULTURE):
STRATIGRAPHICAL DATA AND SETTLEMENT
STRUCTURE**

In the 17th–14th century B.C. Transdanubia and the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium was occupied by the Vатья Culture. In his monograph of the Bronze Age of Hungary, István Bóna distinguished three phases (BÓNA 1975. 31ff). In the first phase the population followed

the Transdanubian traditional economy of animal and crop husbandry on their short-lived small settlements near rivers. They lived in houses above the ground with beaten clay floors. In the second and third phase arable farming became more important under the influence of

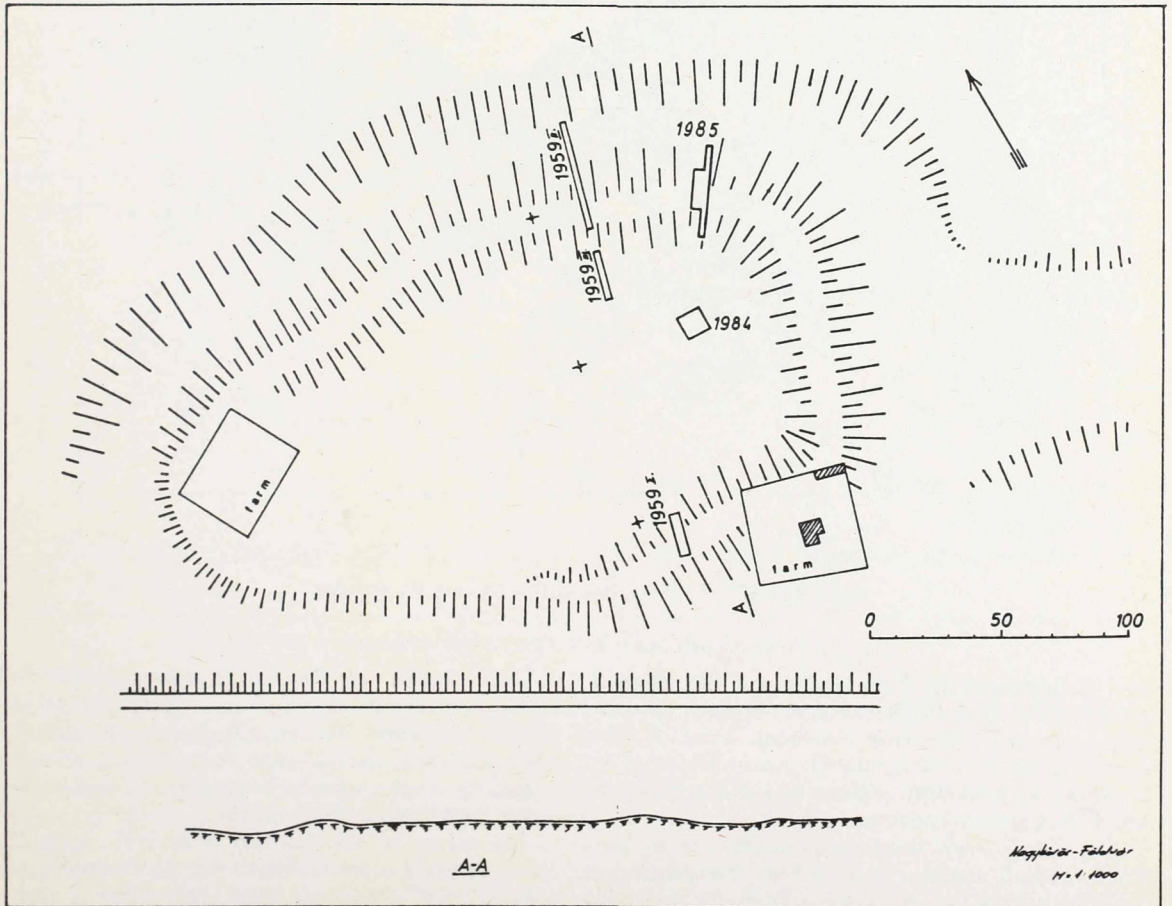


Fig. 1. Nagykőrös-Földvár (surveyed by Gy. Sándorffy, 1984)
M=1:20.

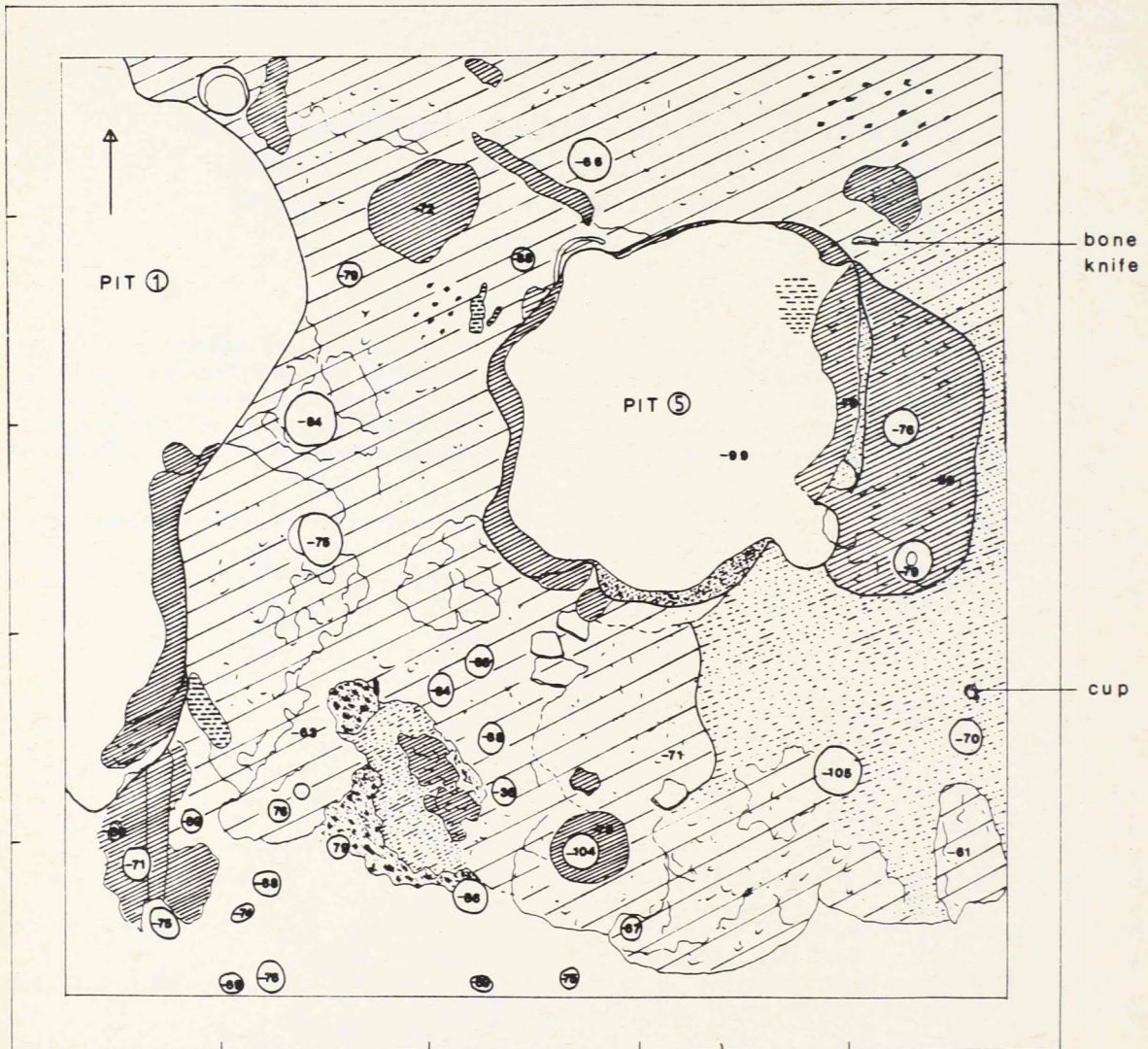


Fig. 2. Nagykorös-Földvár, 1984, section I/A, level III. M=1:20.

the Tell Cultures of the Tisza Region and they adopted crop-rotation. There appeared multi-layered tell-settlements on well defensible elevations. Later on, the migrations triggered off by the Tumulus Culture led to the fortification of their settlements and the establishment of new fortified settlements.

Even though there are no mountains on the territory of the culture, certain areas of the Transdanubian highlands offered excellent possibilities for fortification, while the small sandy elevations in the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium are less suitable for erecting fortifications.

Gyula Nováki was the first to register the fortified hilltop settlements of the Vátya Culture (NOVÁKI 1963,1–93). These were usually located on high flat loess plateaus, enclosed by an earth rampart probably topped by timber palisade. People lived in mud walled, timber framed houses.

The survey of the fortified settlements is insufficient; according to the published data the Transdanubian ones (in Fejér county) are larger, 150–200 m in diameter, while the fortified settlements of the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium are hardly over 100 m in diameter – except Nagykorös. In Transdanubia the entire settlement was

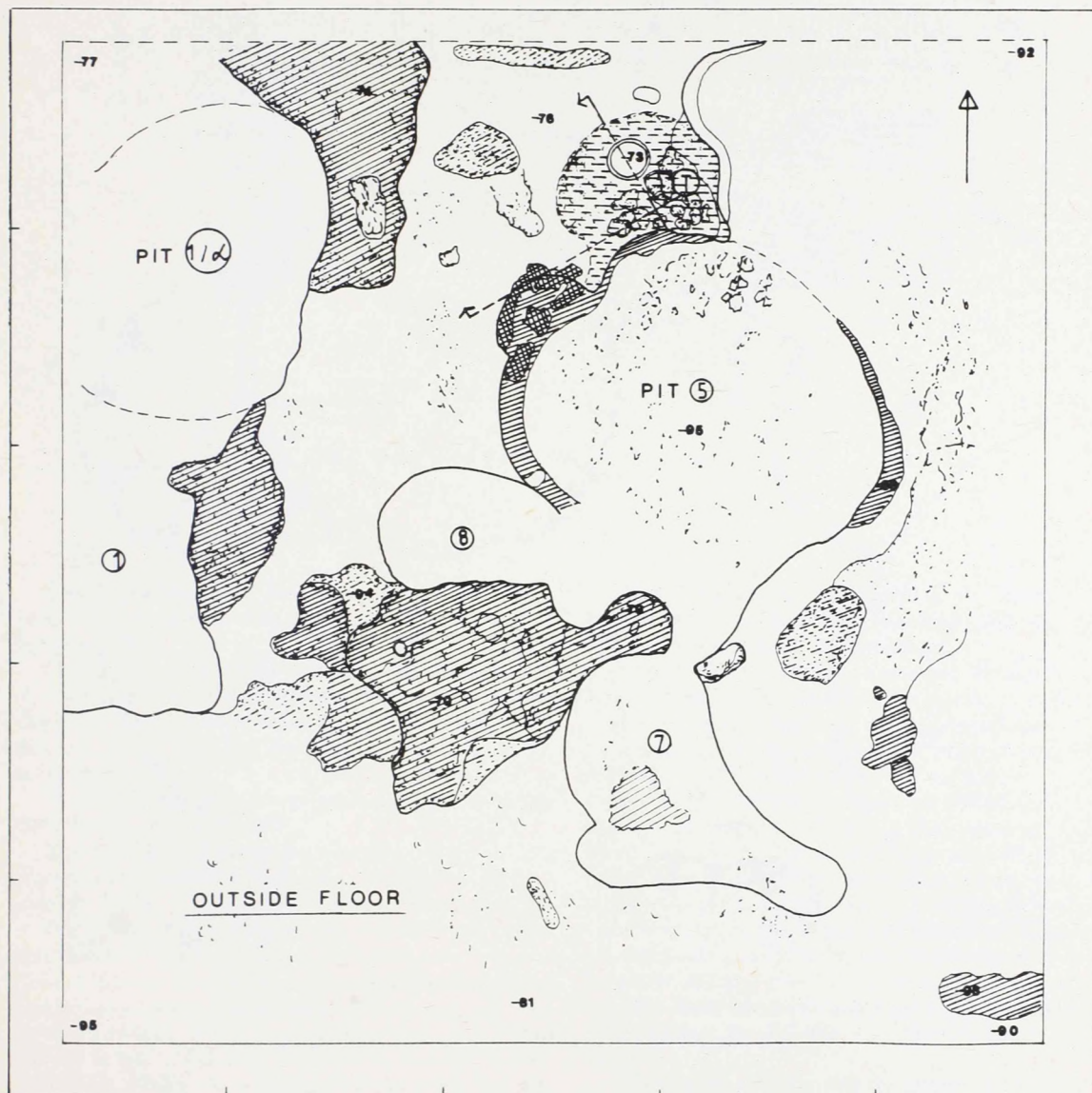


Fig. 3. Nagykőrös-Földvár, 1984. section I/A, level IV. M=1:20.

surrounded by a ditch and bank and divided into 2–3 parts. In the Danube-Tisza Interfluve – except Nagykőrös – only a smaller part, the „citadel” was defended and the surrounding larger area was open, presumably inhabited by the commoners (BÓNA-NOVÁKI 1982, 90.22.fn.).

Only 7 of the 28 fortified settlements with bank and ditch were cut through (BÓNA 1975, 77–78; KOVÁCS 1982, 285, 287; BÓNA-NOVÁKI 1982, 83ff): Baracs, Dunaújváros-Kosziderpadlás, Kajászó, Pákozds, Vál-Pogányvár, Alpár, Nagykőrös. Detailed published results

are known only from Alpár (BÓNA-NOVÁKI 1982, 83–84 ff).

In the following the results of the control excavation are presented, which was carried out in 1984 and 1985 at Nagykőrös-Földvár (Pest county), on one of the easternmost earthworks of the Vatya Culture. The geographical situation and the fact that it widely differs from the „classical Vatya earthworks” make it reasonable to report on the results of the excavation without the analysis of the archaeological finds. It is hoped to

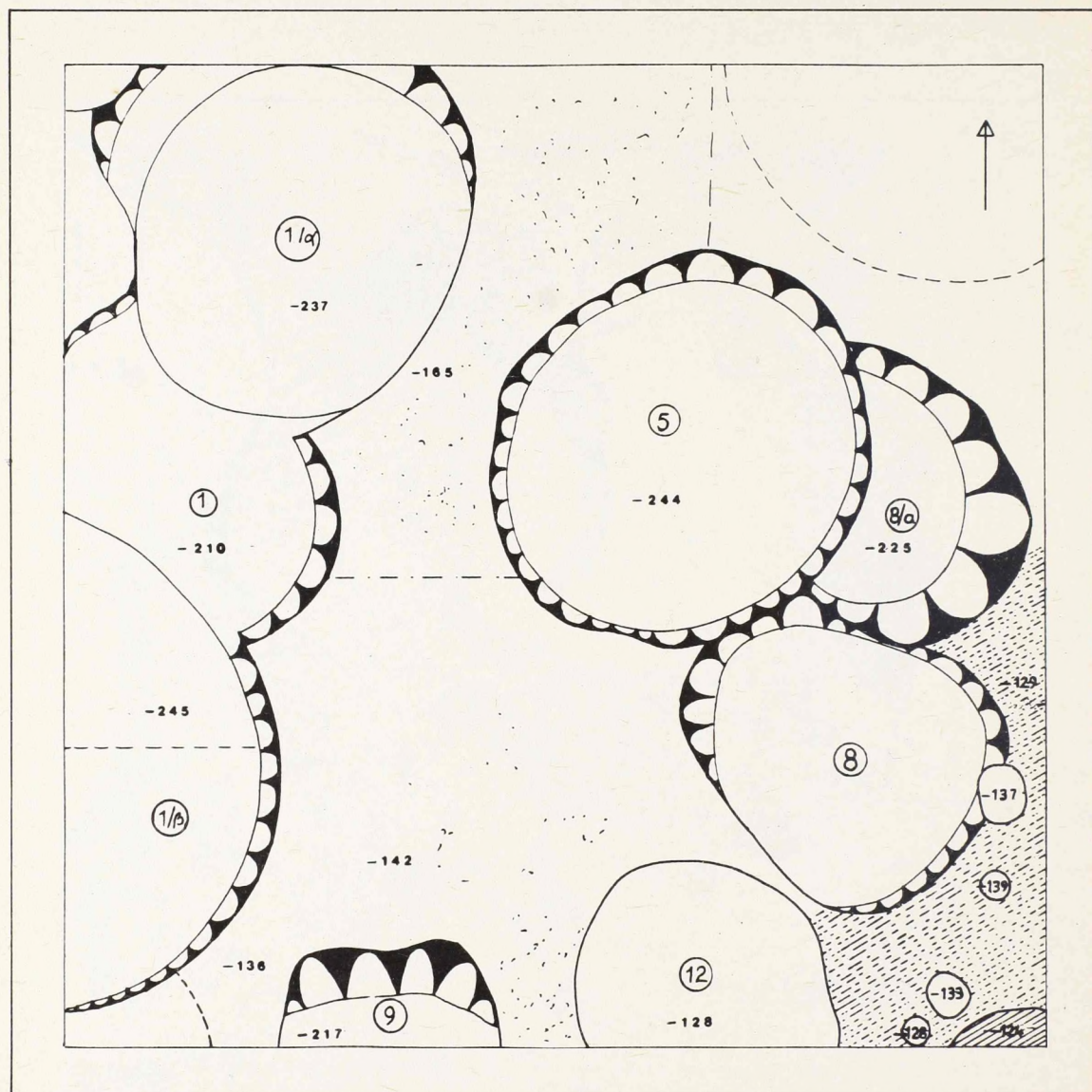


Fig. 4. Nagykőrös-Földvár, 1984, section I/A, level VI. M=1:20.

contribute with this paper to the comparative study of the Vátya tell-settlements.

The oval settlement – fortified by a bank and ditch – lies on the left bank of the Körös stream, it covers 2,83 hectare. The fortification surrounds the entire settlement, there are no traces of internal division (Fig. 1). The earth rampart is strongly eroded, traces of the ditch can be seen only on the northeast and south sides. The site has been known since the end of the last century (WAGNER 1878, 365–368; BALANYI 1973, 13–35), however the first authentic field work was carried out in 1959, when the rampart was cut through by two trial trenches, while the internal structure of the settle-

ment was investigated with a third trial trench (CSALOG 1960, 27; BÓNA-NOVÁKI 1982, 85–87, Abb. 23,24).

There are no elevations in this area suitable for defence. The Bronze Age community chose a sandy hill along the small stream for its settlement. They dug the ditch into the water-side muddy soil and built the rampart of this earth.

In 1984 a 5x5 m trial trench was opened inside the settlement, in its eastern part. Our aim was to control the settlement levels. Six bronze age levels could be observed, but it would not be stated with confidence that these are independent settlement levels (Fig. 2,3,4,5).

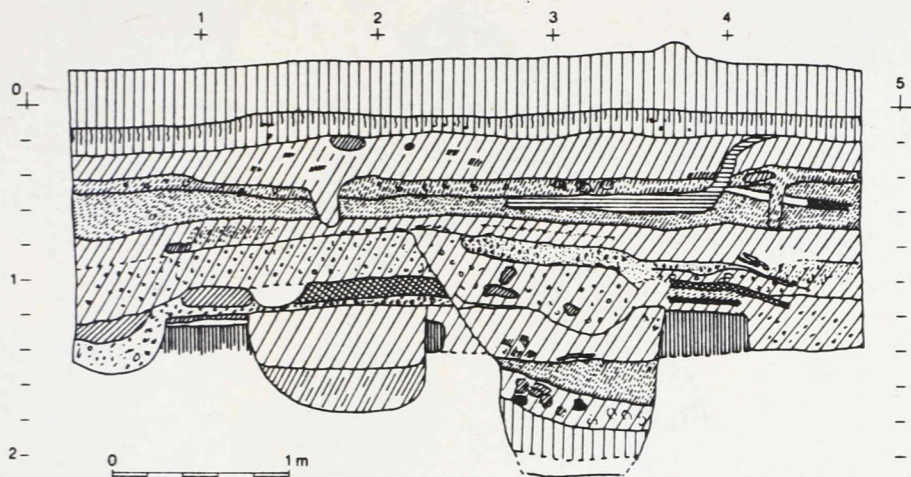


Fig. 5. Nagykörös-Földvár. 1984. section I/A, southern profil.
M= 1:20.

House remains were found in the second level, parts of the mud-wall of an approximately quadrangular house (Fig. 6).

11 pits were excavated – pits are very characteristic of the Vatya Culture and settlements –, 4 of them were dug from the uppermost layer. In pit 5 the skeleton of a dog was found, probably the burial of a pet within the settlement.

The bronze age humus was reached at a depth of 160 cm (Fig. 4).

The smallness of the excavated area does not permit reaching considerable conclusions. The finds uniformly date to the IIIrd period of the Vatya Culture (Fig. 7).

No traces of destruction were found in the uppermost level.

In 1985 our aim was to cut through the rampart and investigate the settlement close to the rampart. The northern section of the rampart was cut through with a 36x1,5 m trial trench near the trench III of 1959 excavation in a NE-SW direction and we proceeded downwards with spits. Beside this trial trench a large area of 60 m² was opened and excavated according to levels.

The earth rampart was strongly eroded, its shape is indicated by the natural morphological features. It consisted of compact grey clay extending towards the settlement – it does not indicate the original form of the rampart and covers earlier settlement layers. Some later pits and post holes cut into this layer, perhaps associable with the rampart. I would suggest that there may have been a layer extending over the rampart.

The ditch was cut through only on a 4 meter wide section (Fig. 8). It was filled up with black muddy earth. It was dug deeply into the yellow subsoil and cut through settlement levels.

Four levels can be distinguished, the lowest is the bronze age humus level. The bank and ditch were built at the end of the life of the settlement.

Parts of three houses were revealed. Houses 2 and 3 were in level III and stood nearly parallel to each other (Fig. 9.). House 2 had two rooms, a small part of the foundation ditch of a dividing wall with two post holes came to light. The orientation of the house – perpendicular to this dividing wall, – was NW-SE. The direction of the imprints of mats – discovered on a layer which directly covered level III – is also NW-SE, some imprints (as small grooves) were perpendicular to it. The ruins immediately below level II were red, so the house must have burnt down, the mat plasterings of the ceiling fell in the floor. On the south-western part of the house the dividing wall came to an end, the way through was here from one room to the other. The entrance may have been on the SW side, mud plasterings can be seen here too.

Towards the dividing wall the extension of the house floor is 3,70 m, it is about the width of the house. The outer walls of the house were destroyed by pits on each side, but outside the survived floors the external level was found. Consequently the width of the house was about four meter.

Because of the high number of pits, which ruin the levels and layer, it is impossible to uncover complete house floors on a Vatya tell-settlement, thus it is rather difficult to reconstruct the internal structure of a settlement.

In 1985 15 pits were uncovered, their fill varied clay, sandy or grey mixed earth. The yielded few finds: sherds, animal bones; the function of these pits is not clear.

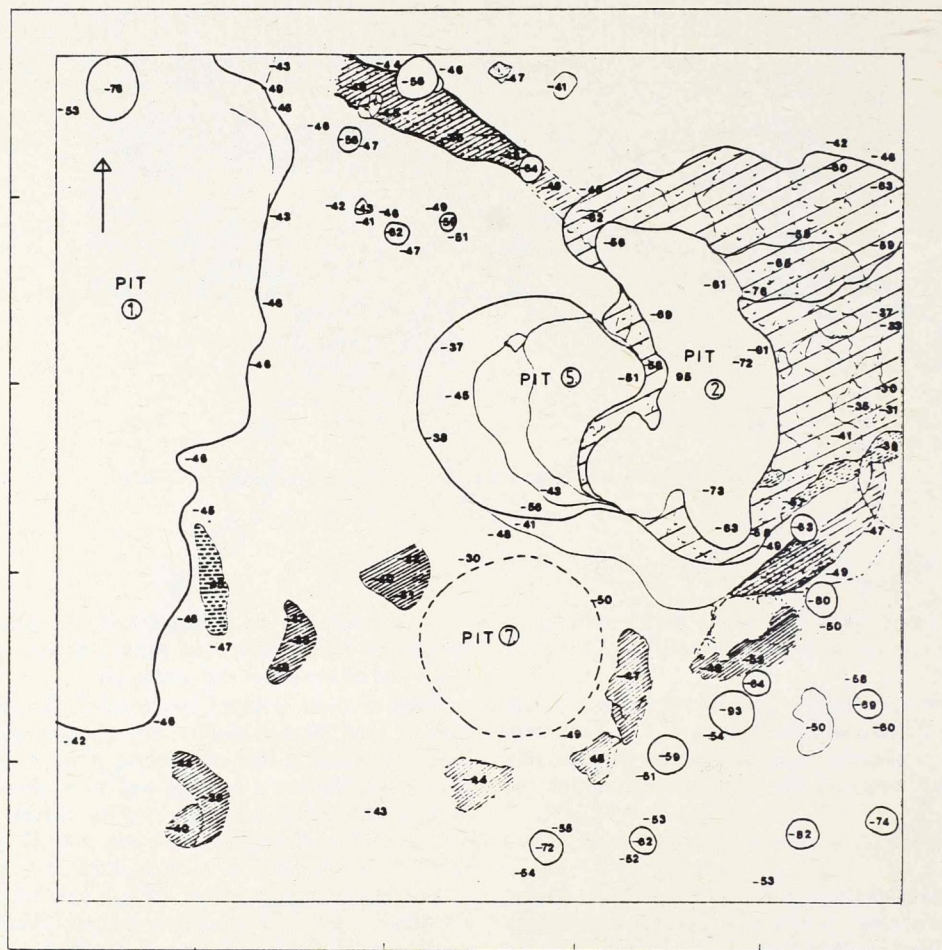


Fig. 6. Nagykőrös-Földvár, 1984. section I/A, level II, house 1.
M=1:20.

Our excavation does not confirm the 1959 observations. The rampart covered not one earlier settlement level but four contemporaneous (Vatya III) levels. The layer over the rampart has been destroyed through ploughing by now. This is indicated by the numerous sherds on the surface.

According to the finds – which are „classical” Vatya types but have not been analysed yet in detail – the settlement was established at the beginning of phase III of the Vatya Culture, the bank and ditch were built at the very end of phase III. Our field survey proves that the settlement extended beyond the rampart, even though sherds are not so numerous as within the rampart; this area was probably densely inhabited.

Owing to its large dimensions the settlement differs from other earthworks in the Danube-Tisza Interfluvium.

It appears to have been a village rather than a typical fortified settlement with a population engaged in farming and animal husbandry. The animal bones – goat, pig, dog, sheep, cattle – are characteristic of the animal husbandry of the period.

There were no traces of a local bronze industry. Life on the settlement ceased at the end of phase III of the culture, it was not inhabited in the late Vatya phase, the so called Vatya-Koszider period. The inhabitants abandoned their homes, there were no traces of violent destruction or fire. In our opinion when people left the settlement they took their valuables with them – animals, grain, household vessels, leather. The finds are poor – most of the pottery comes from thick walled pots, few are decorated. Some import sherds (e.g. encrusted

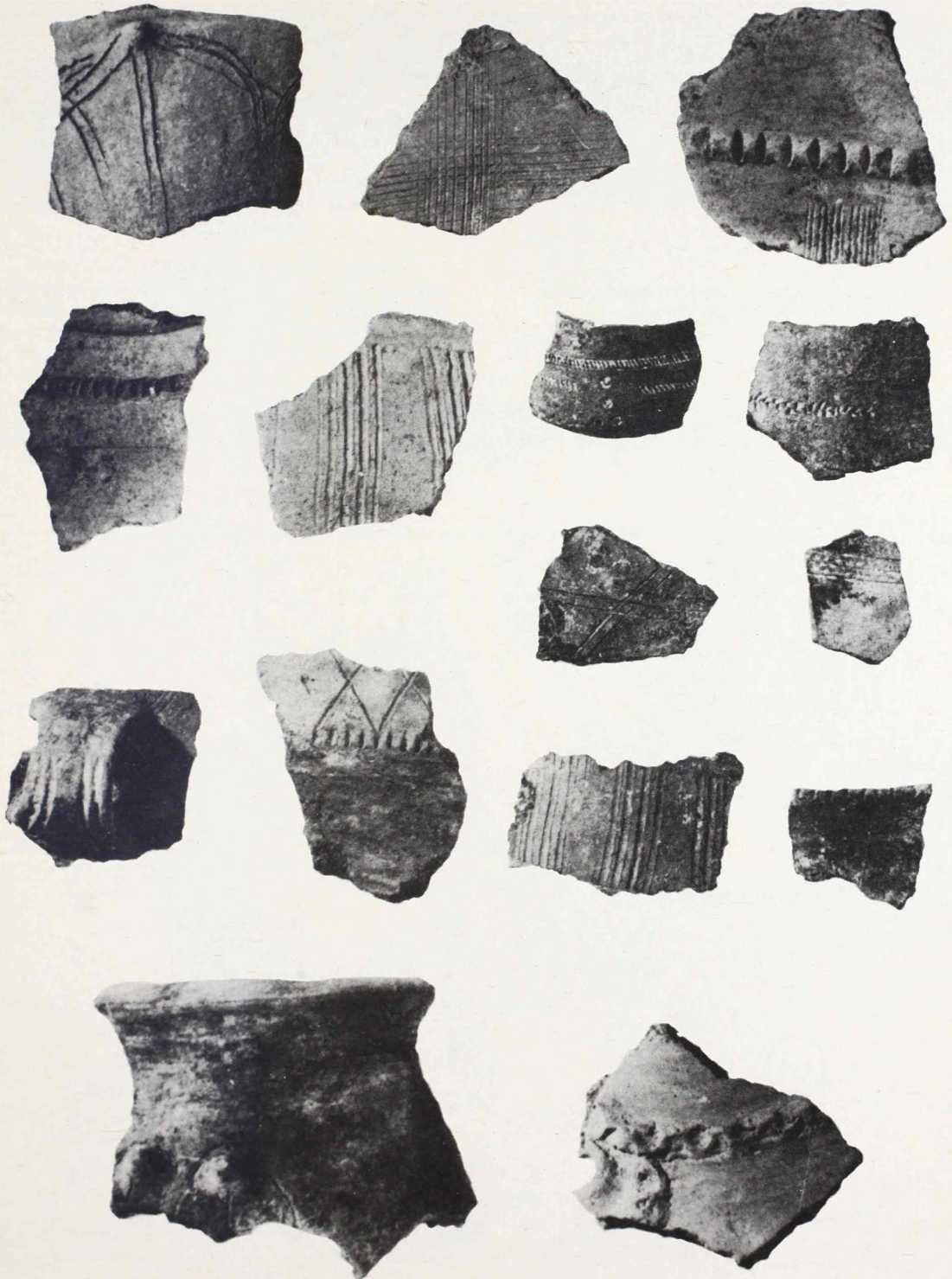


Fig. 7. Nagykörös-Földvár, 1984, finds from the excavation:
1-5: sherds from pit 1; 6-8: sherds from level III; 7-9: sherds
from level V.

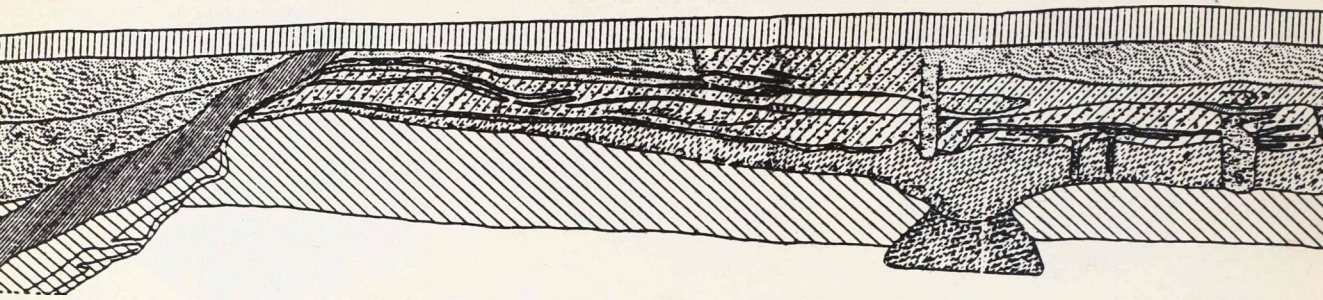


Fig. 8. Nagykörös-Földvár, 1985, part of the eastern profile of the trench with the ditch. M=1:20.

1. humus, 2. upper grey, 3. grey, 4. yellow, 5. mixed yellow, 6. charcoal, 7. prehistoric humus, 8. animal walking, 9. mixed brown, 10. red burnt, 11. red burnt clay plastering, 12. orange burnt, 13. brown, 14. ashes, 15. smut, 16. wood, 17. yellow sand, 18. tamped black, or filling of a pit

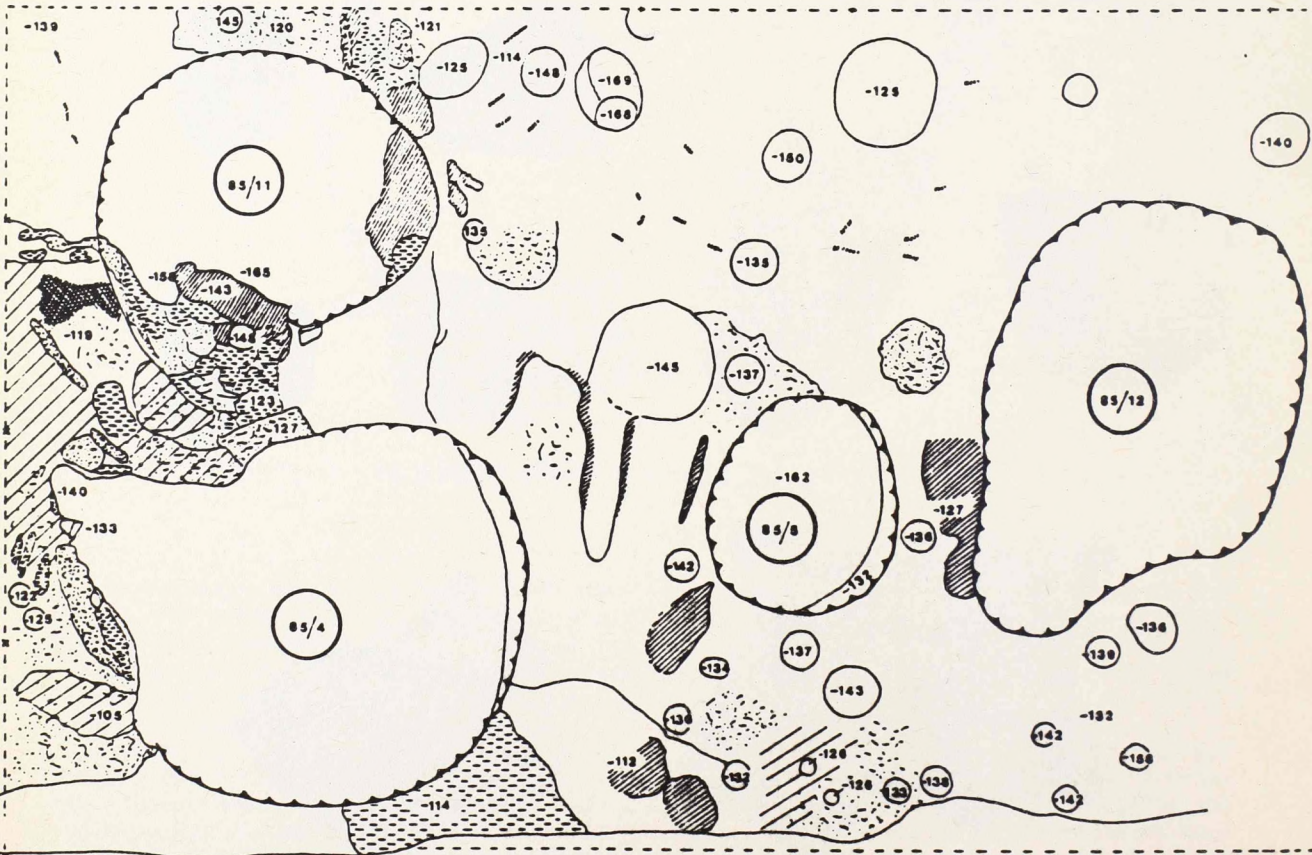
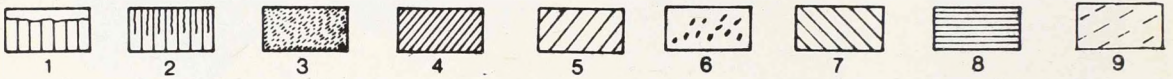
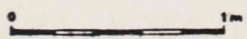
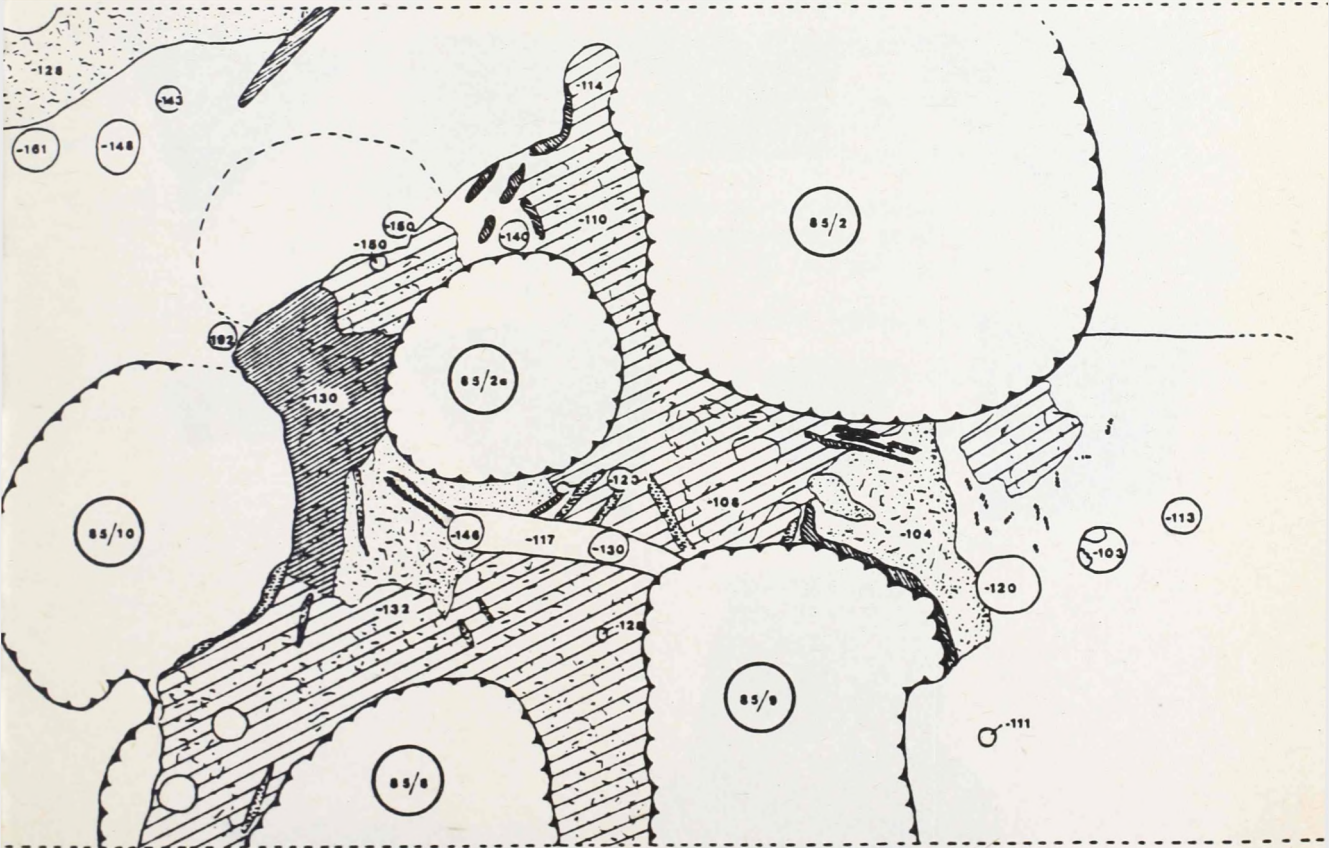
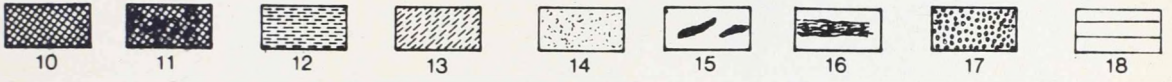
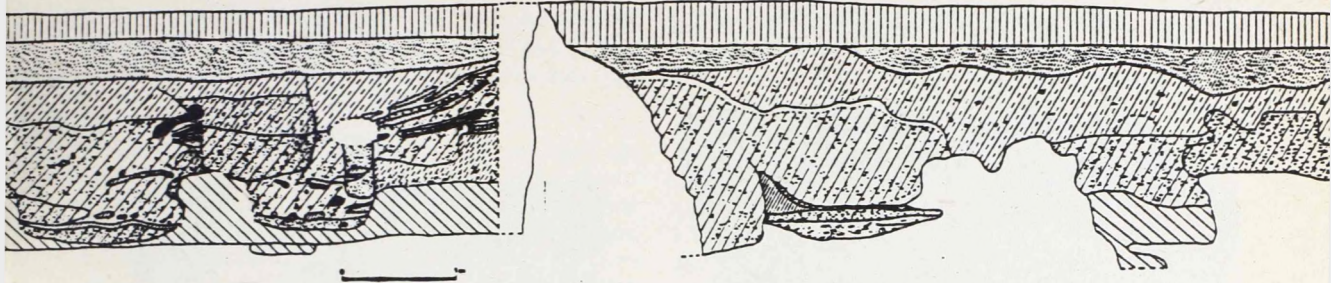


Fig. 9. Nagykörös-Földvár, 1985, level III, house 2 and 3. M=1:20



pottery) can be distinguished. No Tumulus Culture sherds came to light from the settlement and its surroundings, thus this population did not settle here (fig. 10.).

Summing up, the differences of this earthwork are listed here, – as compared to other Vatya fortified settlements: large extension (2,83 ha), the lack of internal fortification, a low rampart, lack of bronze artefacts and moulds, the pottery is simple and unvaried, rough household pottery predominates with few thin-walled Vatya sherds, which are mostly import vessels.

The finds and settlement structure indicate that there was no aristocratic layer in this settlement whose presence can be confirmed on other settlements, where the tribal aristocracy separated itself from the commoners with well-defended „citadels”.

This village community whose economy and settlement system resembled the unfortified rural settlements of the Danube–Tisza Interfluvium (SZÉNÁSZKY 1977, 18–46) – was forced by the historical events to defend the settlement. We can perhaps assume that this fortified settlement was the local centre of the other agrarian communities in this area.

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