

# DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae



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# Report on the excavation at Páli-Dombok in 2015

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## **Abstract**

*Recently discovered traces of a settlement dated to the Epipaleolithic-Mesolithic period in Páli-Dombok site would shed new light on the questions of human contacts between the inner territories of the Carpathian Basin and Central Europe. The circumstances of the exploration and the excavation method were both subjects of previous papers, therefore here we would like to focus only on the field works conducted in 2015.*

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Comprehensive papers about Hungarian Palaeolithic and Mesolithic have only taken into account uncertain and stray finds from Western Transdanubia.<sup>1</sup> However, it cannot be explained with geographical reasons that the southern part of the Little Hungarian Plain (Kisalföld) would have been uninhabited before the Neolithic period. The Rába river coming from the Eastern Alps is just as remarkable as the Váh river, which originates from the Western Carpathians and joins the Danube on the opposite side. More than two hundred Palaeolithic and Mesolithic sites are known from the valley of the Váh,<sup>2</sup> while only one stray find was discovered at Sorokpolány from the Hungarian section of the Rába.<sup>3</sup> According to this general picture, the region seemed deserted during these millenia, although it could have played a crucial role allowing human contacts between the inner territories of the Carpathian Basin and Central Europe during both the Pleistocene and the Holocene.<sup>4</sup> The discovery of the traces of a settlement at Páli-Dombok from the Epipalaeolithic–Mesolithic age in 2014 would shed new light on these questions. The circumstances of the exploration and the excavation method were both subjects of previous papers,<sup>5</sup> so here we would like to focus only on the field works conducted in 2015.

1 VÉRTES 1965, 223–227; DOBOSI 1975, 70–72; 2005, 65–69.

2 KAMINSKÁ 2014; ŽAÁR 2015.

3 DOBOSI 2005, 69, Fig. 3.

4 CONARD – BOLUS 2003; KOZŁOWSKI 2004; SVOBODA 2007; BÁNFFY – OROSS 2010; KACZANOWSKA – KOZŁOWSKI 2014.

5 MESTER ET AL. 2014; 2015.

The aim of the excavation from 16th March to 3rd April was to get as complete a picture about this settlement phenomenon as possible, because expansive quarrying activity threatened the site with destruction in a short time (Fig. 1). Therefore we extended the test section in southern and western directions several times, meanwhile the density of the finds did not decrease a bit (Fig. 2). At the end of the excavation the size of the section reached 15 square metres, but we were still not able to firmly define the margins of the human occupation (Fig. 3). However, we can state that we explored its bigger part, because in sondage S1, located at the southwestern corner of the test section, only a few finds occurred. Sondage S2, situated in a four metres distance eastwards from the test section, showed no archaeological material. It was clearly visible on the eastern profile of the test section and on that of sondage S1, that the later ground horizon continued in a slope southwards (Fig. 4–5). Therefore we can suppose that the prehistoric occupation was situated on an elevation in the flood basin (Fig. 6). Several charcoal pieces have been found among the chipped stones in the upper part of the layer, but according to our archaeological observation it cannot be decided whether they are directly from human activity or they were transported here by water flows. The former possibility cannot be excluded, although no clear evidence of a hearth was recorded. Based on the very first pieces, which were discovered ten metres east from here, several occupation spots may have existed, so the hearth could have been outside of our trench. A suspected firing spot was located inside the trench at the edge of squares 1 and 5. The diameter of the phenomena was 70 centimetres and it was indicated by a modest pigmentation and a suspected heat shock of the inherent sand grains. This spot was exactly next to the most dense part of the artefact scatter in the trench. This is not surprising, when taking into account other open-air site examples where the one-time human activity was situated close to a hearth.<sup>6</sup>

Altogether 3346 chipped stones, 63 pieces of charcoal, 67 pebbles, and 3 animal teeth were found and documented during the excavation (Fig. 7–8). The latter ones were laying horizontally at squares 6 and 14. Despite their very poor conservation, they could be specified as remains of a small-sized *Bovida* (Fig. 9–10).<sup>7</sup> The pebbles found in the level of artefacts were collected for further analysis. Study of the knapped stone material is in progress, as well as the sedimentological analysis of samples taken from the stratigraphic profile, and OSL dating is also planned.

In the spring of 2015 the site was destroyed, so it is not possible to carry on the field works in the same zone. However, there is a chance that the quarrying activity reveals another occupation spot in a different location.

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<sup>6</sup> PIGEOT 1987; SCHMIDER 1992; BODU 1996.

<sup>7</sup> We would like to express our gratitude to Péter Csippán for the preliminary analysis of the bone remains.

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*Fig. 1.* View of the test section and the two sondages from southwest.



*Fig. 2.* View of the test section from northeast.



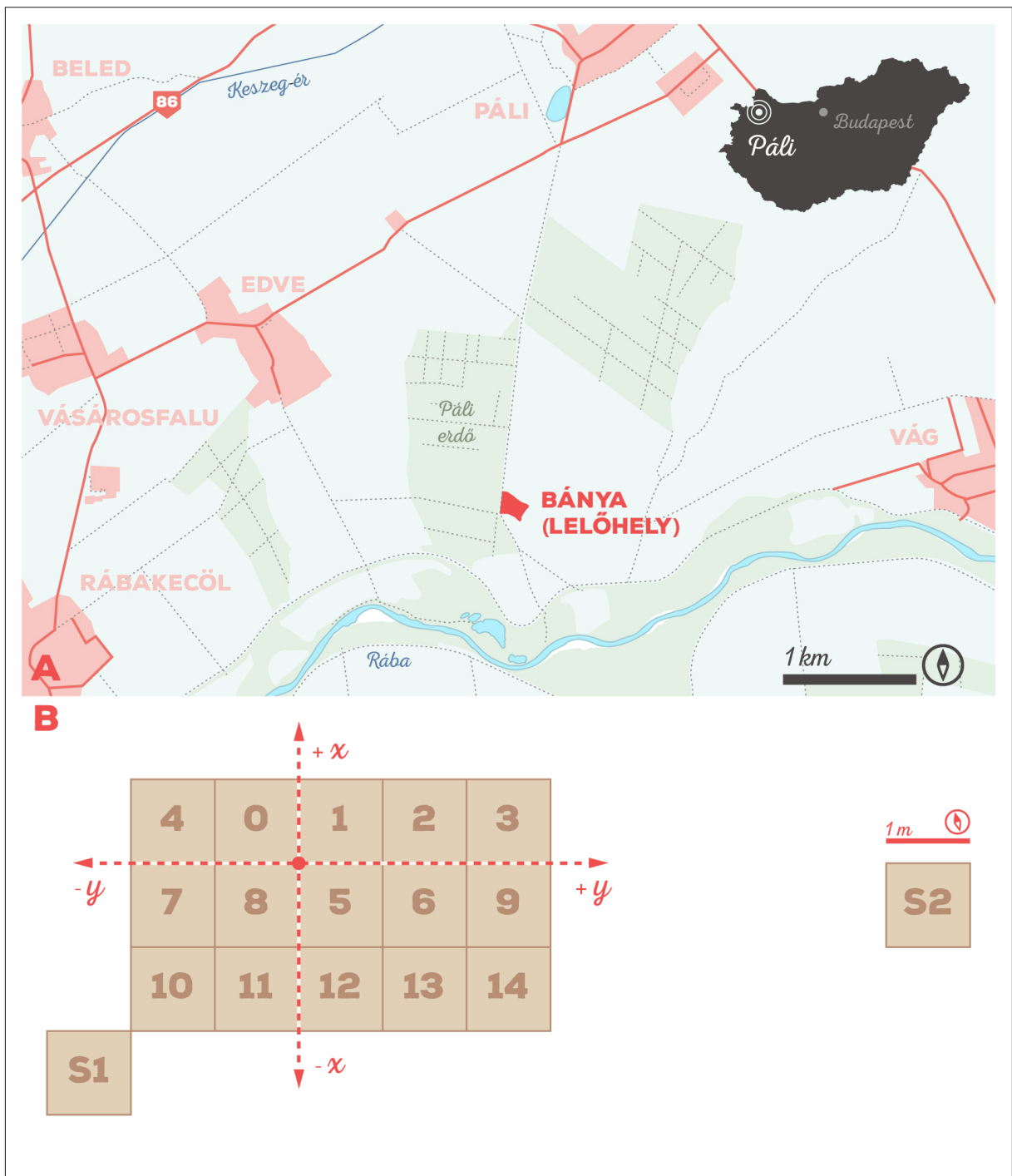


Fig. 3. A: Location of the village Páli and the site. B: Situation of the test section and the sondages (design by Attila Király, MESTER ET AL. 2015).



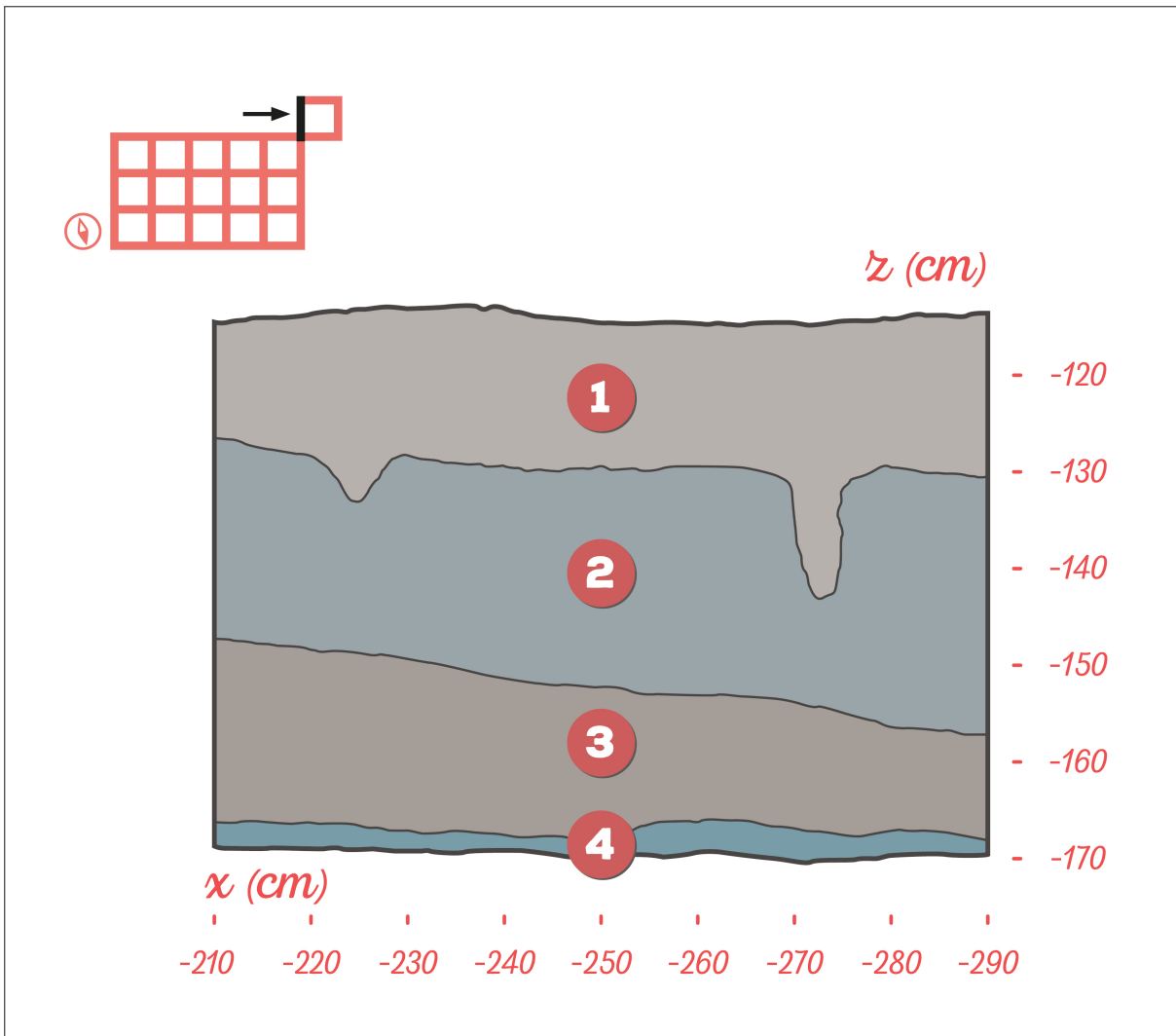
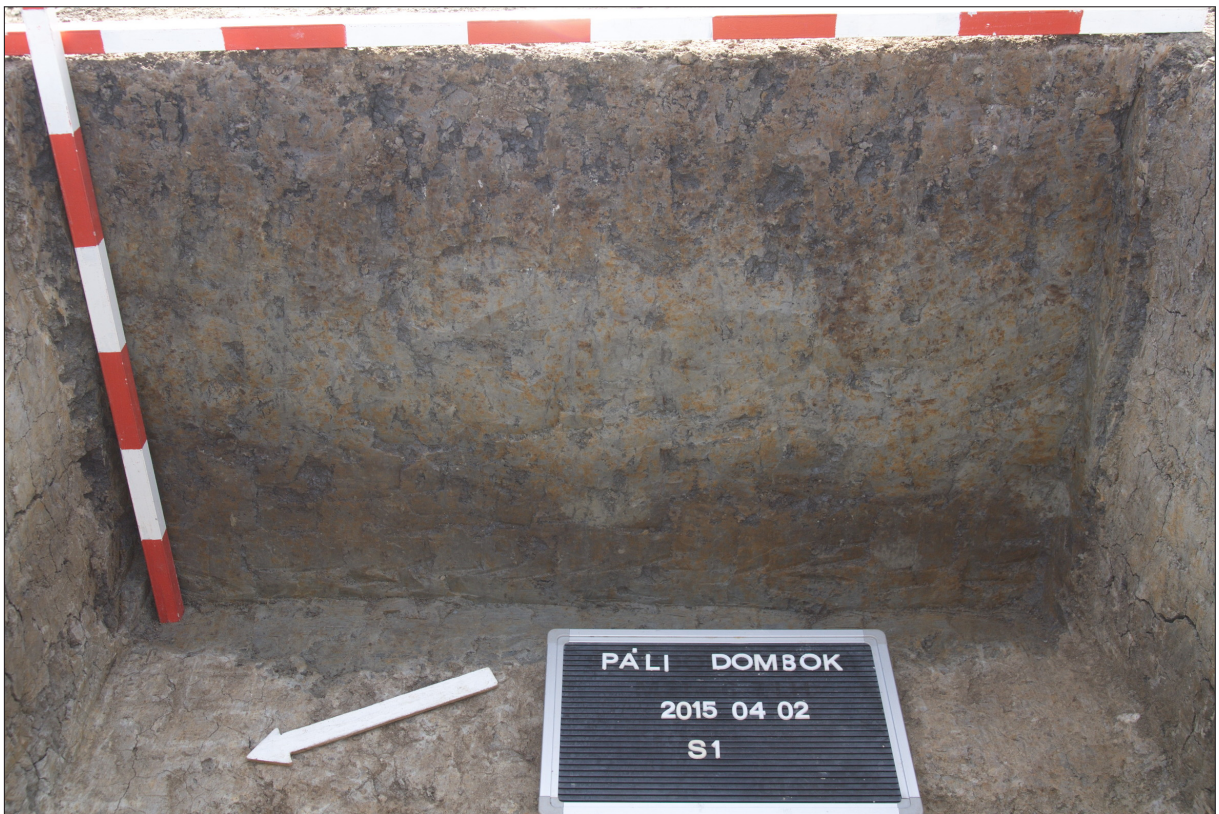


Fig. 4. Drawing of the eastern profile of S1 (Attila Király; MESTER et al. 2015).

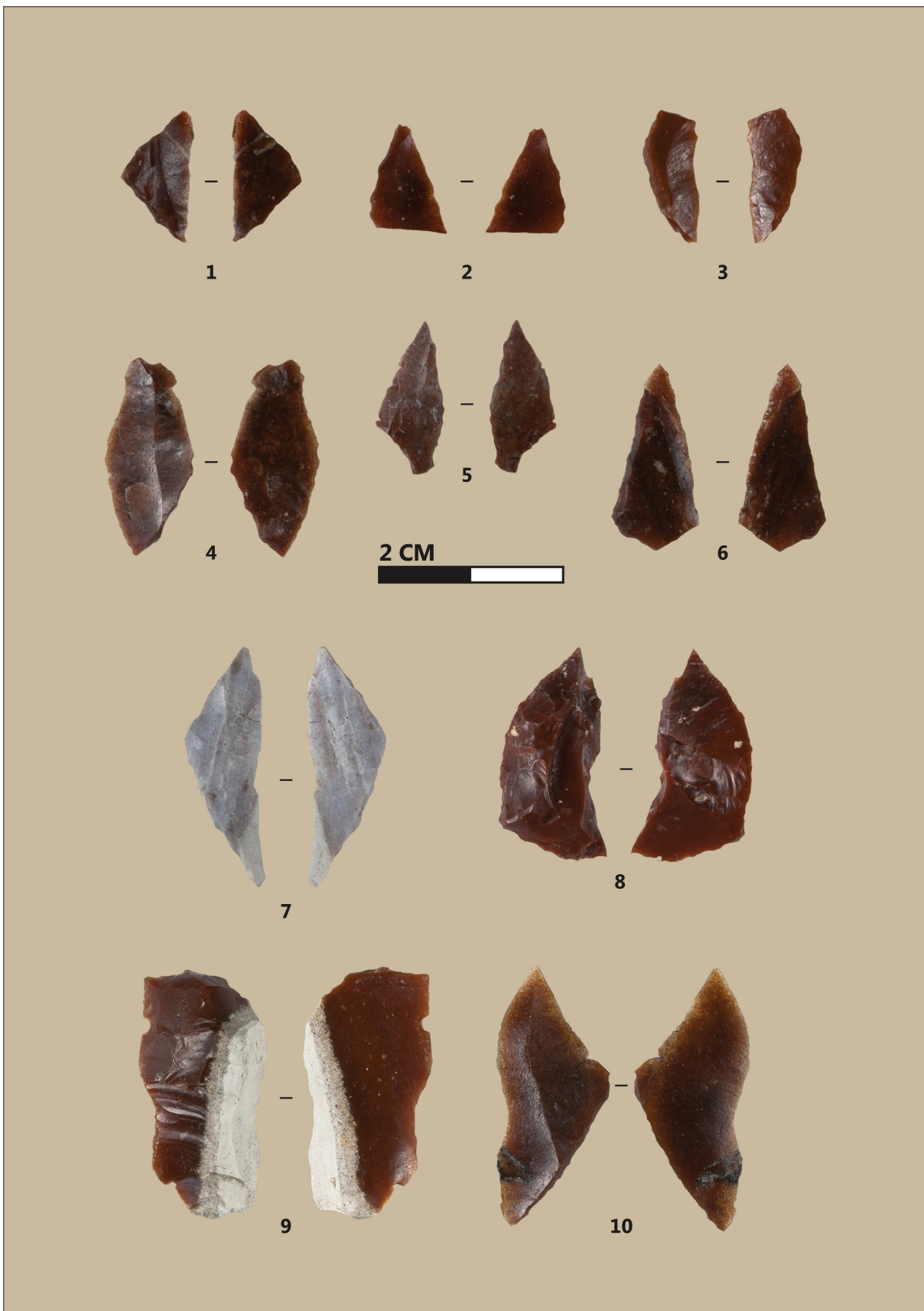


*Fig. 5.* Photo of the eastern profile of S1.



*Fig. 6.* Photo of the eastern profile of test section.





*Fig. 7.* Chipped stones from Páli-Dombok. 1, 7. triangle; 2–6, 10. backed points; 8. truncated flake; 9. truncated blade (Attila Király; MESTER et al. 2015).

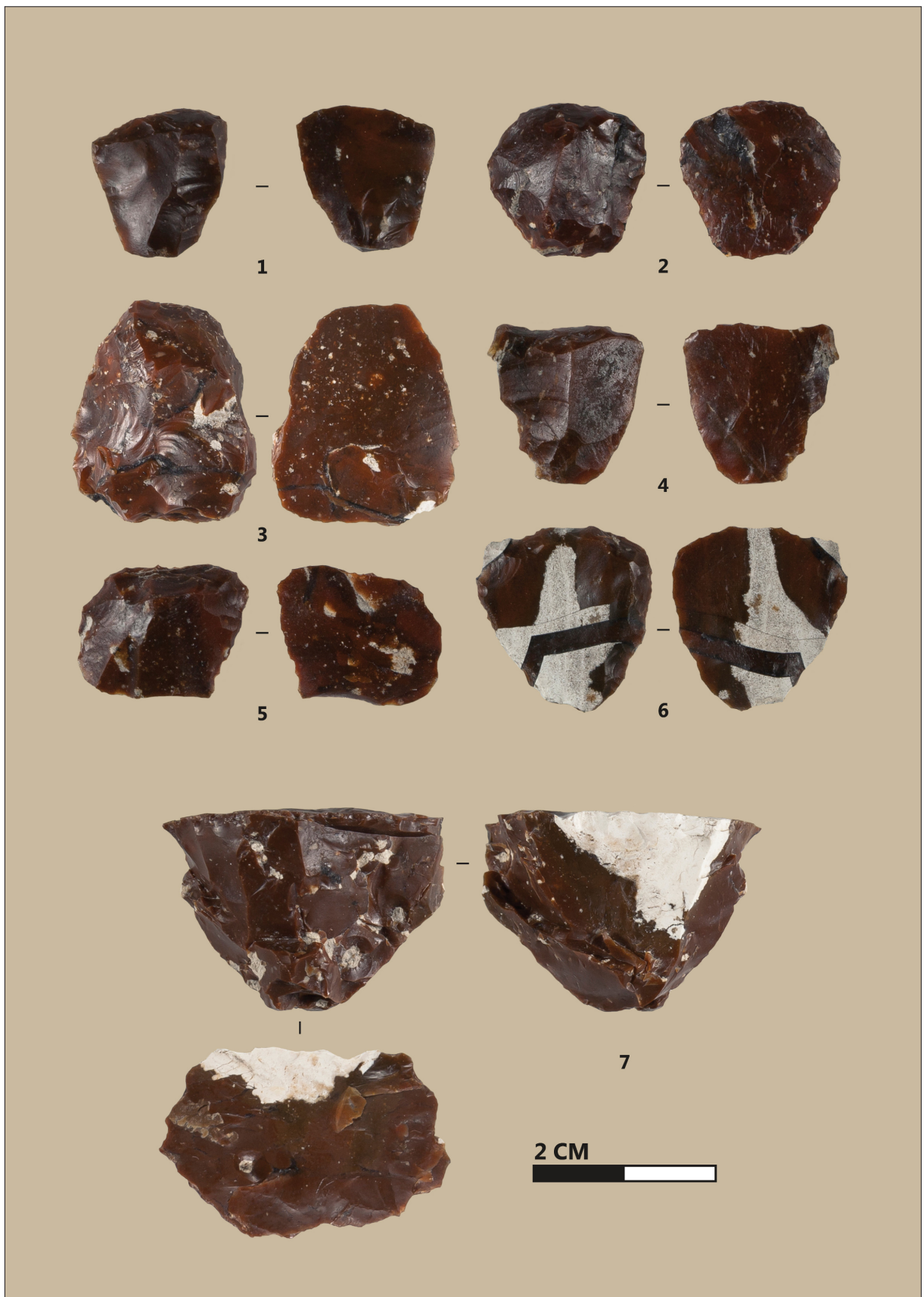
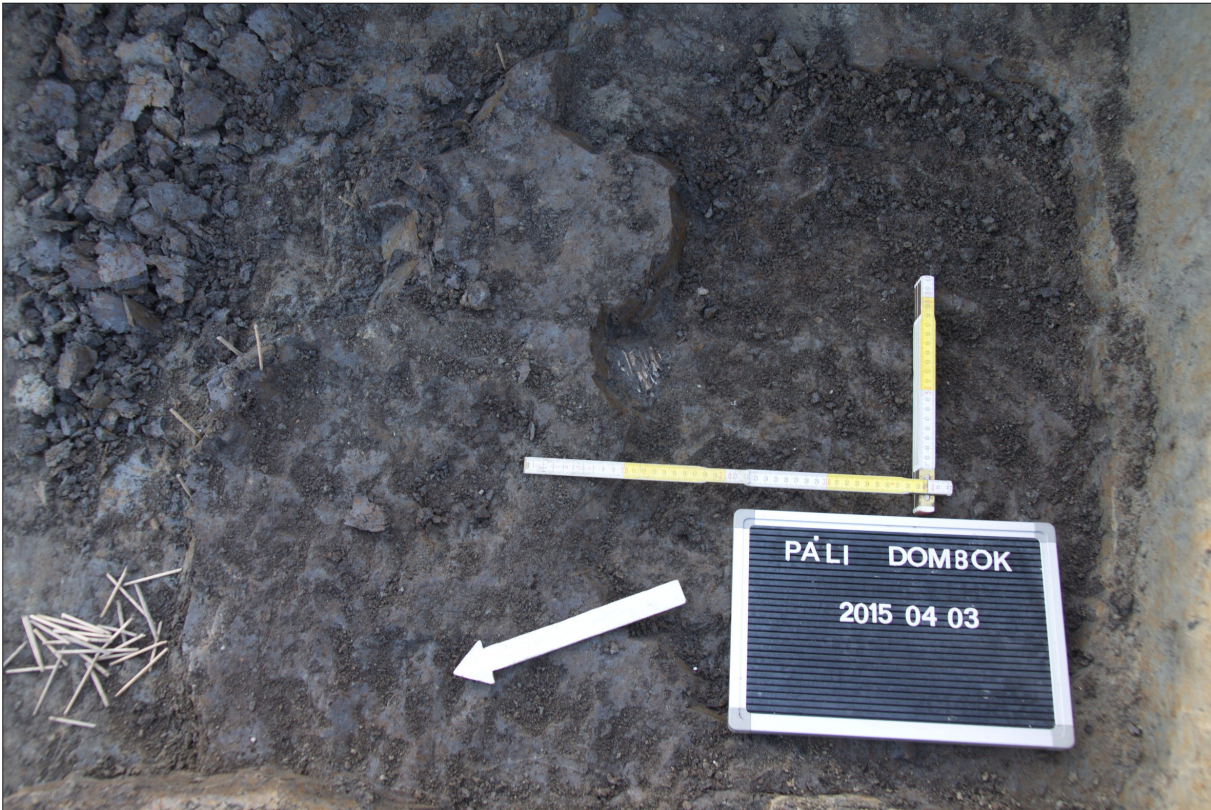


Fig. 8. Chipped stones from Páli-Dombok. 1-2, 4-6. end-scrapers; 3. truncated flake; 7. blade-core (Attila Király; MESTER et al. 2015).





*Fig. 9.* Photo of the animal remains.



*Fig. 10.* Photo of the animal remains.