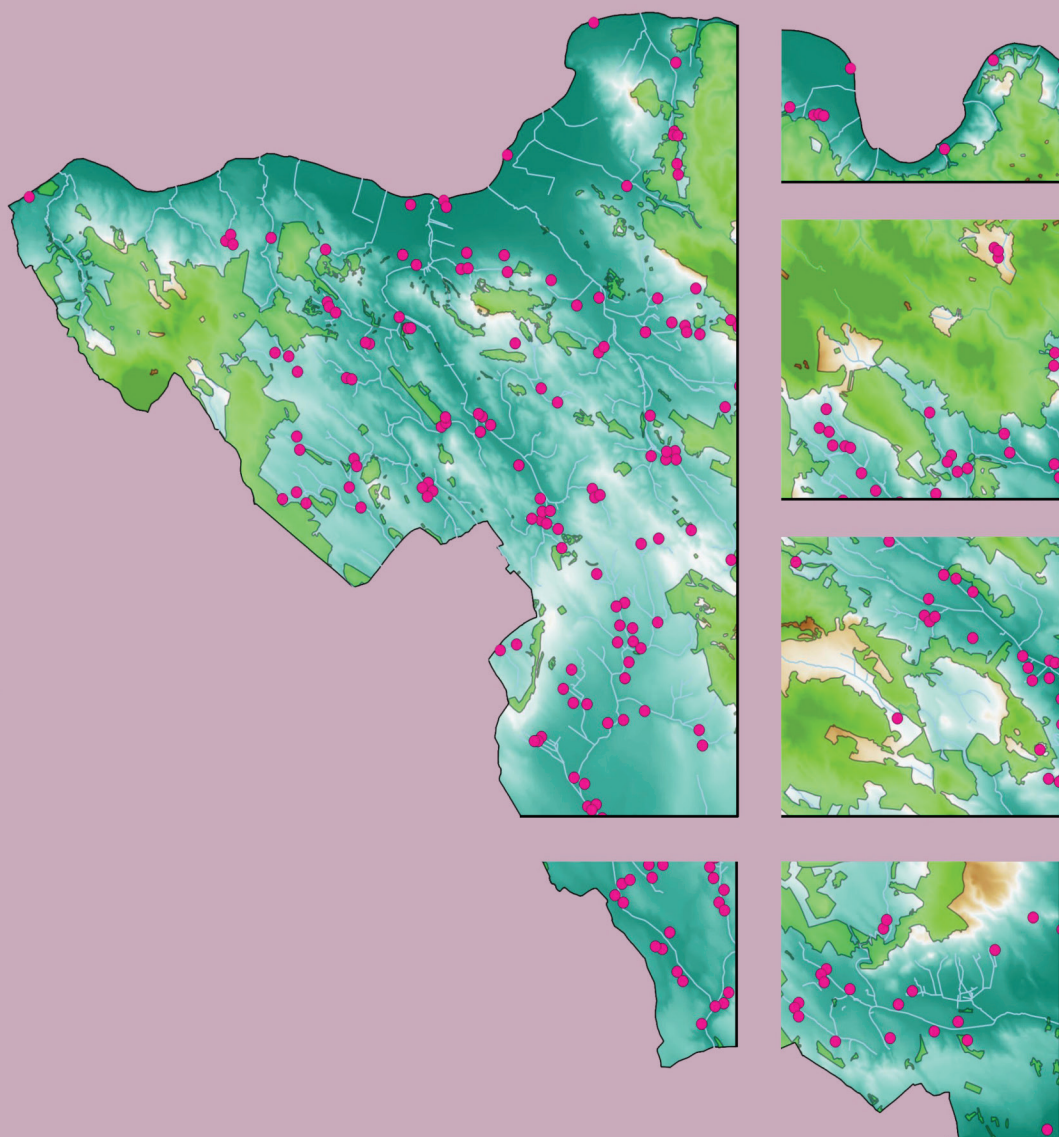


# DISSERTATIONES ARCHAEOLOGICAE

ex Instituto Archaeologico Universitatis de Rolando Eötvös nominatae



Ser. 3. No. 5. | 2017

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# Short report on the excavations in the Castle of Sátoraljaújhely in 2017

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## **Abstract**

*The planned archaeological research of the Castle of Sátoraljaújhely continued for six weeks in 2017. In this season, similarly to the previous seasons, the main research area was in the northern part of Castle Hill. The work was carried out in three sites at the same time: firstly, in and around the triangle-shaped tower at the tip of the northern plateau; secondly, from the tower to the south on the outer and inner sides of the former eastern castle wall; and finally, in and around the area of the building adjoining the western castle wall. Our main goal was to clear as large part of the inner courtyard as possible in order to examine the stratigraphy above the ground level.*

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The planned archaeological research of the Castle of Sátoraljaújhely continued between the 31<sup>st</sup> of July and the 08<sup>th</sup> of September in 2017 under the supervision of István Ringer.<sup>1</sup> Students from the Department of the Hungarian Medieval and Early Modern Archaeology of Eötvös Loránd University were able to join the excavation led by Dóra Hegyi archaeologist.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly to the previous seasons, the main research area was in the northern part of Castle Hill.<sup>3</sup> The work was carried out in three sites at the same time: firstly, in and around the triangle-shaped tower at the tip of the northern plateau; secondly, from the tower to the south on the outer and inner sides of the former eastern castle wall; and finally, in and around the area of the building adjoining the western castle wall. Our main goal was to clear as large part of the inner courtyard as possible in order to examine the stratigraphy above the ground level (*Fig. 1–2*).

## **The triangle-shaped tower on the northern peak of the Castle Hill (3<sup>rd</sup> site)**

### ***The southeast corner of the tower and its surroundings***

The discovery of the area in front of the tower's front wall, as well as the interior of the building were due to excavation work between 2015 and 2016. During the last year the thickness

1 We are grateful for István Ringer, who has given us the opportunity to participate in the excavation of the castle for three years.

2 The participants were: Anna Anderko, Réka Dudás, Ágnes Font, Mónika Gácsi, Olivér Gillich, Fruzsina Hege, Ádám Horváth, Bianka Horváth, Mátyás Jánosi, Márk Kékesi, Gergő Kostyál, Virág Kristóf, Anna Kulcsár, Eszter Magyar, Zsófia Majer, Borbála Maros, Máté Mészáros, Mercédesz Mohácsi, Veronika Németh, Máté Papp, Zsolt Papp, Orsolya Popovics, Krisztina Ruppert, Csaba Sághegyi, Borbála Schliszka, Franciska Simon, Lili Sólyom, Ákos Szabados, Márton Szabó, Renáta Szabó, Mónika Szanko, Gergely Szoboszlay, Gergely Takács, Adél Ternovác, Márton Tóth, László Vígh, Gergő Vincze. Special thanks to Enikő Kovács, Zsófia Náday, Teodóra Polyák, Balázs Tóth archaeologists, László Homonna, the colleague of the Kazinczy Ferenc Museum who also took part in the excavation. Some volunteers joined to our work too: Attila Ádám and András Kovalcsik metal detectorists, Zsolt Csintalan, Attila Mészáros, Zsolt Szabadka and Zoltán Sziraki.

3 HEGYI 2015; HEGYI – NÁDAI 2016.



*Fig. 1.* The main sites of the excavation (The red lines show the cross-section of the 10<sup>th</sup> illustration).



*Fig. 2.* Aerial photography of the castle at the beginning of the excavation in 2017.

of the eastern wall, and a significant part of the outer surface of it were ascertained. We had found that the tower was erected on the northward-sloping rock surface. In 2017 we excavated the whole outer face of the eastern wall, which, however, was in exceptionally poor condition, and only the middle section had its original wall surface still intact. Everywhere else it's been uprooted and destroyed, and the core of the wall is all that's visible.

The southeastern corner of the tower is the only one that remains. Here, we successfully discovered two ashlar, which were supposed to buttress up the corner of the building. At this site, it seemed that there is a heavily demolished east-western wall which was identified as a buttress used to support the merging of the tower's southeast corner and the connecting eastern castle wall. Only one row of stone has remained from the inner side of the castle wall, above the rock surface. Its outer face isn't there anymore, and only the core of the wall itself is visible with the mentioned buttress, which are approximately 1 meter lower than the inside face of the castle wall and the ground level of the castle's courtyard in front of the tower's entrance. In this part it can be observed that the rock surface of the mountain is not only northward sloping, but eastward and westward too (*Fig. 3*).



*Fig. 3.* The buttress used to support the merging of the tower's southeast corner and the connecting eastern castle wall.

### ***The southwest corner of the tower and its surroundings***

This area was excavated to reveal the condition of the southwestern corner of the tower. It confirmed our earlier speculations that the corner had been totally destroyed. Although ashlar also appeared here like on the southeastern corner, none of them was in the original place, but could be observed in the ruins. We reached a depth of about 3 meters deep from the



current terrain's topsoil level at the former outer corner where we cut through thick layers consist of stones, rubble and mortar, and found a minimal amount of findings. This area unveiled a little taller than the inside of the tower's ground floor, a large, collapsed wall block, which was the former corner of the building. The southern, outer surface of the wall could be observed on it, since, basically, the entire corner fell out in westward direction. It is also the direction in which the ashlar fell, just like at the west castle wall, which used to connect to the southwest corner of the tower. The wall's fallen inner face could be observed within the southern profile of this field area wall. Between the western end of the southern wall of the tower and the collapsed tower corner the natural rock surface with the western slope, the foundation of the building, and the place of the western castle wall were all unearthened (*Fig. 4–7*).

### ***The northern, outer corner of the tower***

The next area was the location of the northern, outer corner of the tower.<sup>4</sup> Due to the devastation of the western wall and to the large-scale destruction of the outer face of the eastern wall, it was questionable whether there was anything left from the northern closure of the tower. After clearing the whole area, it has been shown that the north corner has also been completely destroyed, such as the southwest corner. However, it is certain that on the natural rock surface a large mortar foundation was made of flat stones in order to support the rising wall. This foundation is well preserved on the east side; nevertheless, it was destroyed on the west side. Only the burned rock surface and the remains of a burned beam were exposed. The idea that the western wall of the building was actually blown up can be reinforced by the fact that such a massive devastation could not have happened naturally. Furthermore, there were any findings in the stony, mortar scraps.

### ***The cross-section of the ground floor of the tower, and the examination of the earlier ground levels***

In 2016, we cleared the whole surface of the clay floor inside the tower. In 2017, we first cross-sectioned it with two ditches. Then, after their documentation, we demolished the entire interior. There we found a large amount of pottery fragments, a half millstone, a carved bone, and a fragment of a pruned beaker in the clay layer, which was 2–4 centimeters high in the south parts, but 20–30 centimeters thick in the east. Among the pottery fragments, there are a number of burnt, reduced, stone diluted, uneven surfaced, slow pottered ones, and fragments of more bottom stamp pots. From these remains a whole pot can be almost completely assembled. Besides that, we found many fragments of better quality, thin-walled, finely-sliced, slow pottery wheeled, red-painted pots (*Fig. 8–9*).

Under the clay floor, near the door of the tower, we found remains of two earlier mortar floor levels directly over the rock surface. During the examination of the floor levels, it was an important question as to whether the current door of the tower was built together with the south wall, or later than that. The second statement had already seemed to be confirmed during the scanning of the masonry of the tower's wall, but the cross-section of the clay floor has certainly verified our assumptions. The relationship between the former levels was not determined by this ground floor entrance because of the unearthened and small revealed details of them.

4 The inner corner was unearthened during the excavation in 2016.



Fig. 4. The fallen ashlars from the former southwestern corner of the triangle-shaped tower.



Fig. 5. The southwestern corner of the triangle-shaped tower during the excavation.



*Fig. 6.* The southwestern corner of the triangle-shaped tower with the inner face of the former western castle wall.



*Fig. 7.* The fallen southwestern corner of the triangle-shaped tower.

## The excavation in the courtyard in front of the tower and the surroundings of the eastern castle wall (1<sup>st</sup> site)

In front of the triangle-shaped tower's southern wall and along the connected eastern castle wall we cleared about a 10×7 meters sized area over the courtyard from layers of rubble and fill. The preliminary aim of the work was to define the floor layers and to examine the mentioned castle wall.

After removing the humus level, we found more mixed red colour, mortared, crushed stone, successive destruction levels on the top of each other, sloping in northern and eastern directions according to the geography of the hilltop. The rocky layers were divided by solid clay and charcoal bands, which were rich in finds. These bands were hard to observe during the work, but they were well presented by the profiles. In the middle of the area, we reached approximately 170 centimeters depth (*Fig. 10*). Here a back-filled ditch, perpendicular to the plateau of the hilltop, cut through the area. The ditch was probably a trench from the Second World War according to the rifle bullets and shrapnels we found.

In this site under the thick filling layers, we reached the north and eastward sloping rock surface. Over this surface we found a thin clay layer in the south-western part of the area. We have not known the relationship of these levels yet, but it is possible that the inhabitants of the castle walked on this rock surface in the middle ages. The processing of the high amount of findings from the filling layers, which is started directly after finishing the excavation, is still in progress. However, as it is previously stated, the destruction layers were filled with late-medieval and early-modern fragments. Earlier ceramics from the Arpadian age were found only in the northern part of the area.

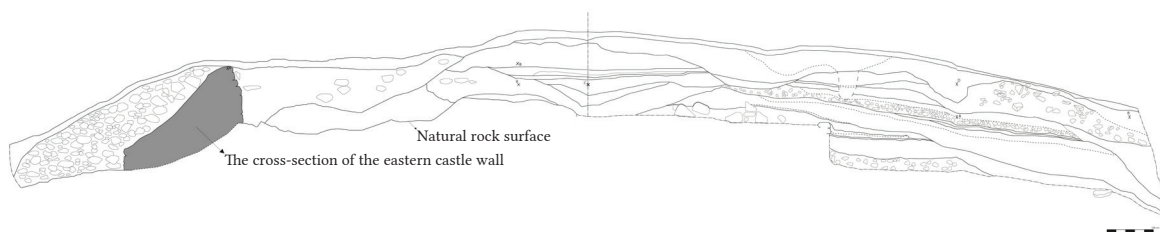


*Fig. 8.* The cross-section of the ground floor of the tower and the remains of the earlier ground floors.



*Fig. 9.* A fragment of a pot with a bottom stamp from the clay floor of the tower.

We have already found the inner face of the eastern castle wall under the current topsoil at the beginning of our work in this season. The inner face of the wall is 1 meter high, while the outer part is just 40–60 centimeters. The condition of the wall is becoming worth with reaching closer to the northern tower. (*Fig. 11*) The wall connecting to the south-eastern corner of the tower is just one stone line tall as we mentioned before. The northern part of the wall and the face of it are missing, because this section of the wall was torn out in east, in the direction of the slope of the hill. It could happen because the wall was built directly on the heavily sloping rock surface. In this northern part, over the remaining fragments of the inner part of the wall, a heavy, rocky, mortared layer stretched. From this layer, a green glazed, rosette applique ceramic pipe from white clay has been found. The size of the torn out wall is unknown because the outer side have not been excavated yet. (*Fig. 12*)



*Fig. 10.* The southern and western profiles of the 1<sup>st</sup> site with the thick layers of rubble and fill and the cross-section of the eastern castle wall.

During the excavation, we found the remains of six human bodies, and high numbers of human bones spared out in the whole area at the border of the humus and the destruction layers. The positions of the remains were identical with the position of the skeleton found in 2016 nearby. Each of them was north-south orientated. From the six skeletons only three were articulated in anatomic order, while the three others had disturbed contexts, and none of the bodies were full. The dating of the remains is questionable; however, their stratigraphy excludes their medieval origins. The missing parts of the remains of four human bodies were placed directly in the World War trench. As a result, it can be supposed that the bodies were disturbed when the trench had been dug out during the War. It can explain the origins of the remains that The First Military Survey shows a scaffold on the top of the Castle Hill. Nevertheless, this theory needs further researches. Moreover, dating the remains is even more difficult due to the lack of grave goods, jewellery or personal items around the skeletons.

***The northern area from the western building, which is connected to the western castle wall (northern part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> site)***

In 2017 we continued the excavation northward from the building, connecting to the western castle wall found during excavations in 2015–2016. There our main aim was to define the former ground level of the courtyard like in the northern 1<sup>st</sup> site. A casted mortar floor was connected to the eastern side of the building, and it was continuous northward 2 meters long until it disappeared. The purpose of this mortar layer, which could be the floor of a lightweight structured building, is unknown. The only thing known about this layer is that between the mortared floor and the natural rock surface there is a thin brown filling. There the inner face of the western wall stands 30–40 centimeters high, but further it shrinks to one stone line height. In this area the outer face of the wall is missing everywhere because it tore out to the western slope. Examining the layers of the courtyard made it supposable that the former users of the castle used the rock surface as a floor, just like in the northern parts. Similarly to the aforementioned areas, there were thick layers of destruction layers with stones on the rock surface, which contained a high number of findings, such as early-modern and late-medieval cermics, carved bone mountings, coins, copper alloy mounting, hand cannon fragments, bullets and a half bullet mould carved from stone (*Fig. 14–15*).

As the previous years, the excavation in 2017 gave a lot of new data and finds to get to know better the Castle of Sátoraljaújhely, but further researches will be needed to get the ground plan of the castle clear.

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Fig. 11. The outer face of the eastern castle wall.



Fig. 12. The 1<sup>st</sup> site at the end of the excavation.



Fig. 13. One of the graves on the courtyard of the castle in the 1<sup>st</sup> site.



Fig. 14. Aerial photography of the castle at the end of the excavation in 2017.