

History of a Bronze Age tell and its environment

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Százhalombatta-Földvár is the most excessively researched Bronze Age tell site in Hungary. Parallel to the investigation of the settlement structure and activity patterns the changes of the landscape and the effect of human alteration is also studied. Significant changes of the landscape can be detected from the Bronze Age until the recent natural and cultural heritage protection of the area. Archaeological, soil analytical and thin section soil micromorphological methods are used to reconstruct the past 4000 years of the tell and its immediate surroundings.

Prior to the Bronze Age the area was covered by forest vegetation, so the initial settling could only be realised after deforestation (2000 BC). The result of the soil corings and the prepared soil thin sections are solid proves of this action. It also became evident that at some areas – so far it seems that at locales where house floors were laid for the very first time – even the topsoil was removed so intensively that only the B horizon of the relict forest soil can be found. This observation needs to be further tested outside the habitation area to define the horizontal extension of the forest clearance and the topsoil removal.

The northern side of the settlement is bordered by a natural erosion gully. At 2000 BC it was just a natural depression, but by 1500 BC it was deepened to serve as a fortification ditch. Around 1200 BC the ditch started to be filled in and by 1000 BC it was refilled to such an extent that its surface was utilised again. At about 600 BC (Late Iron Age) a smaller inner rampart was erected on the southern side of the ditch for inner separation. Not much is known about the Roman period of this area (200 AD) but the remnants of a watchtower indicate their presence. During the 18th century AD the area was used for grape cultivation and later for hobby gardens up until the protection of the area in the late 20th century. Since then species of the original vegetation started to grow back.

The southern half of the settlement witnessed the largest destruction that can be dated back to the 19th century. The then founded brick factory (mining the clay deposits underlying the tell) cleared away two thirds of the tell, and the former valley on the southern side of the tell, leaving a huge wound in the landscape. As it was presented landscape alteration is continuous from the first appearance of humans.