



Community Engagement & Taphonomic Investigation in Békés 103

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Introduction

Understanding the historical land use and taphonomy of an archaeological site is a necessity for an excavation, as is engaging with the community whose land is being excavated. In the case of the BAKOTA project's ongoing research, multiple landowners and a long and varied history of land use parcel the site into archaeological deposits with varied degrees of disturbance. Engaging the community members in the area and acquiring historical imagery has proven to be essential to gain insight into the taphonomy of the site and the features and disturbances in key areas. Oral history has helped us understand the historical imagery and the preservation record and why the preservation record varies drastically across the Békés 103 site.

Interviews



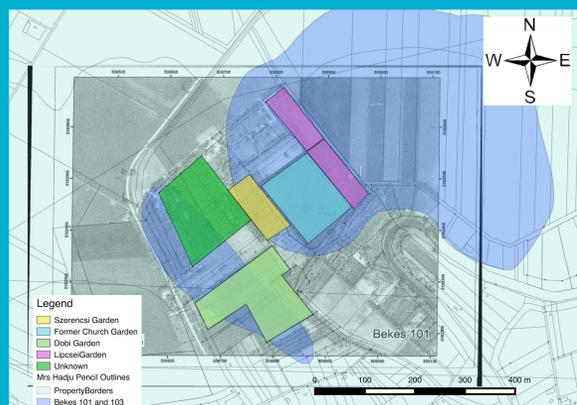
(Figure 1) The excavation site Békés 103 is divided into three areas, A, B, and C, with Békés 101 neighboring to the southwest. The research done for this poster primarily concerns Areas B and C of Békés 103.

Geophysical survey and excavation have indicated the presence and location of features and disturbances at the site that oral history can help explain. Several informants with long histories in the region provided first-hand accounts of the type of land use in the area in the past few decades. These informants served as primary sources to help us learn what was cultivated on the land, for how long, who owned what plots and when, and in general how the land has changed in the recent past. Interviews were conducted with three current landowners as well as the Lutheran Church Dean who served as the former Church vineyard groundskeeper when it belonged to the church.



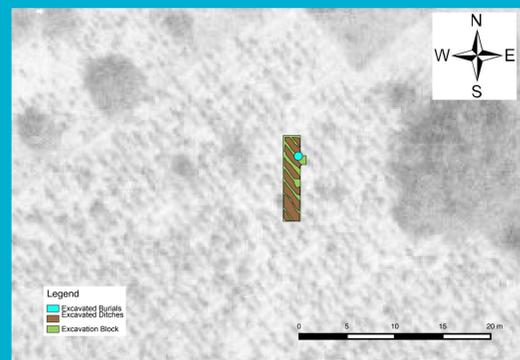
Mr. Pocsaji, the former groundskeeper, gave information about the history of the land he worked and the types of methods and tools used on the land. (Fig. 2) One of the current landowners Mrs. Hajdú outlined the different property boundaries on a map with pencil to the best of her recollection which was then scanned, georeferenced and compared with a property shapefile from a past field season. (Fig. 3) The land north of the road was formerly collectivized land that was purchased by the current owners the Szekercsés family in 1995.

(Figure 2) Over the course of several interview sessions we gained important insight into the land use from locals like Mr. Pocsaji.

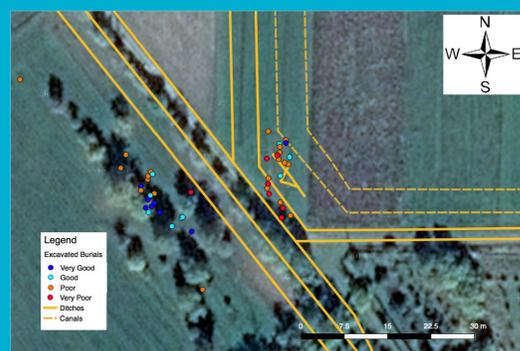


(Figure 3) Mrs. Hajdú's rough outlines were scanned and overlaid over property lines to help delineate between different property boundaries.

Overlay of Datasets



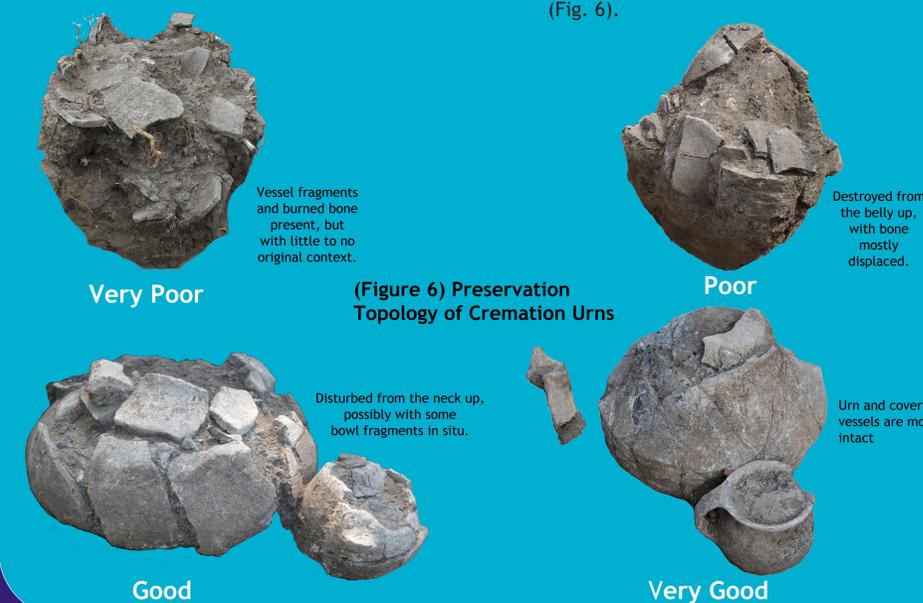
(Figure 4) Aerial photos from the 1960's show what could be the vineyard lines which line up with ditches that were excavated during the last field season. Fentrol (2016). 1962_0967_9651_modified.tif [TIF]. Fentrol.hu. (Date accessed: July 2015).



(Figure 5) Canal and ditch lines running through the fields in Area B go right through the burials, which indicate a higher level of disruption in this area.

Based on the oral histories and aerial maps we see that the discrepancies in soil disturbance in the land once owned by the Church can be attributed to the fact that one currently unified field actually belonged to different parties. According to Mr Pocsaji the vineyard was plowed at least one meter deep, which could have contributed to the level of soil disruption, and excavation of Block 43 during the most recent field season uncovered what could be vineyard lines. (Fig.4). These lines were spaced about a meter apart for the purpose of growing wine grapes, which were strung along wooden planks put into the soil to anchor the vines. According to Mr. Pocsaji, the land north of the road in Area B has been worked continuously since the Turkish occupation, approximately between 1541 and 1699, and more recently it was subject to the intensive, industrialized farming methods by an agricultural cooperative (*termelőszövetkezet*) typical of the region during the Communist era.

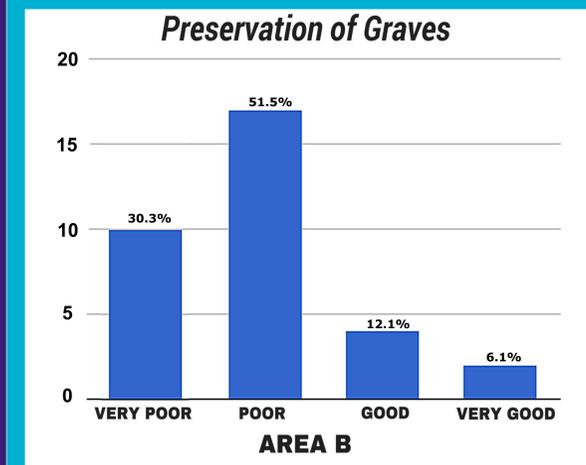
Out of the 68 burials, out of which 61 are definitively demonstrated to be cremation urns, 30 are in Area B north of the road and the rest have been found in Area C, where the majority of the burials were in the field next to the road, except for Human Burial 62, which was found in the old vineyard location. (Fig. 5). The preservation topology of the urns show they are in various states of preservation, ranging from very poor, which are effectively shattered, to very good which are almost completely intact (Fig. 6).



References

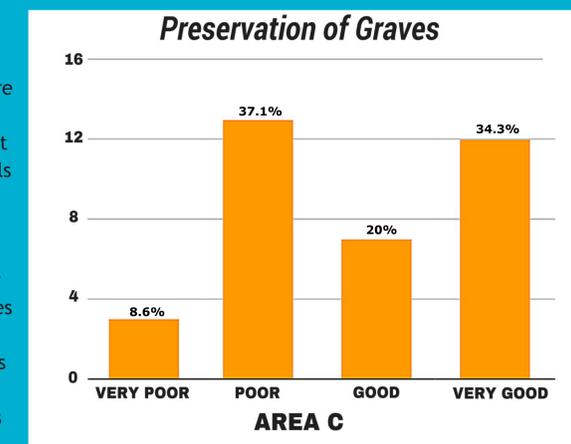
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Analysis of Preservation



(Figure 7) Burial frequency of burials found in Area B north of the road (n=33).

Sorting the number of cremation urns by Area B and C and by state of preservation, we start to see a clear pattern. In Area B, the preservation of the majority of the urns is predominantly poor or very poor. (Fig.7) This could be attributed to the extensive land use since the 1950's in the northern fields, where paprika and tomatoes were primarily cultivated according to oral testimonies.



(Figure 8) Burial Frequency of burials found in Area C south of the road (n=35).

Just as important is the fact that there are irrigation canals and ditches indicated by a map from 1965 that cut through and around a cluster of burials in Area B, especially in Block 28. This is in contrast to Area C south of the road, where land use has not been as intensive as per the data collected by the oral histories of the area, and does not have the type of topographic disruption as north of the road. This is reflected in the higher number of burials that are found in better states of preservation. (Fig. 8)

Conclusion & Future Research

This process and research methodology has proven beneficial in two ways. Onto itself it has provided a way to engage the community about the project. Moreover, by conducting research of this type it has helped give insight into the taphonomy of the site that would have been difficult or impossible by mere observation. In turn, the various features and changes in the land then have helped to explain why there is such a contrast in the preservation of the burials found in Areas B and C respectively and lead into further questions. In Area B there is more information to be uncovered about the past agricultural cooperative and their specific farming methods that could help further explain the state of the burials. The same could be said about the type of land use in certain areas of Area C outside the Church property, specifically the garden just north of that section that belongs to the Lipscei family, which warrants an interview for a future field season. All this will result in being able to be more judicious in deciding where to excavate next.

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