

# LIFE BY THE IMPERIAL ROAD

## Roman Settlement Excavation and Survey

### ROMAN PROVINCIAL LANDSCAPE STRATEGIES

Rapolt, Transylvania, Romania

May 29 – July 2, 2016

During the Roman colonial occupation, southern Transylvania shows a very dynamic and intensive synthesis of Roman provincial life, where a multitude of processes of colonization and creolization take place side by side. Prior to the Roman conquest of 102AD, it was also the most densely populated region of the Dacian Kingdoms.

Our project seeks to explore the integration of all the structural provincial elements present along the main Roman axes of communication and transport. Our research area is in the immediate proximity of both the imperial road and the Mures River, the extremely important gold deposits of the Carpathian Gold Mountains, and the political and military centers of *Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana* and *Apulum*. We will continue the excavation of the well preserved structures, including a *villa rustica*, identified during our 2013-2016 field seasons.



Our 2016 excavations will aim at understanding the importance and impact of the proximity of the main axis of movement, communication and commerce on the Roman provincial rural life, and its evolution through time. This extraordinary environment with its associated monuments and material culture, combined with spectacular surrounding natural landscapes and beautiful Transylvanian churches and castles, guarantees all students and volunteers with a highly rewarding archaeological and cultural experience.

Duration: 5 weeks (2 weeks minimum)

Costs: US\$1575 for 5 weeks (\$450/week for shorter stays).

It includes:

- Excavation registration, taxes, fees lectures and most gear
- Housed as guests of Romanian families in a beautiful traditional Transylvanian village
- Full room and board – Monday-Friday

### TO APPLY:

For information and application procedure:

[www.archaeotek-archaeology.org](http://www.archaeotek-archaeology.org)

Contact us:

[archaeology@archaeotek.org](mailto:archaeology@archaeotek.org)



# ROMAN PROVINCIAL LANDSCAPE STRATEGIES ON THE EDGE OF THE EMPIRE : DAILY LIVES BY THE ROMAN IMPERIAL ROADS

RAPOLTU MARE, HUNEDOARA COUNTY  
TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA  
MAY 29 - JULY 2, 2016

For more information and application procedure:

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## Excavation Context



By the beginning of the first century AD, the Roman Empire reached its zenith. The conquest of Dacia was the last great expansion of Rome. Since the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, under the great king Burebista, the Dacians start to get involved in Roman politics. Domitian's failure to annex Dacia and subsequent Roman military defeats at the hands of the Dacians made the Danube frontier a target of essential importance for the Empire. It took Trajan, one of Rome's greatest military minds, two wars (102 AD and 106AD) to subjugate and colonize the mighty Dacians, or as Herodotus described them, "the bravest and fairest of all the Thracians". The Dacians were the only (and last) entity left in Europe to pose a real threat to Rome... culturally, economically, politically and military. The synthesis between Dacia and Rome, from the conquest in 102/106 until the Aurelian retreat in 271/275, sustained the Roman Empire for another two centuries. Dacians are the people most immortalized in Roman imperial statuary. The Transylvanian gold has kept Roman economy out of bankruptcy at the same time as the Dacian auxiliaries have manned the Imperial armies to the point of having an emperor of Dacian origin, Maximinus Thrax.

Our research area is situated between the richest gold deposits in Europe, the Dacian Kingdom's political and religious capital and its fortified satellites in the Carpathian Mountains, and *Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana*, the Roman capital of the Dacian provinces and the first Roman city North of the Danube, southwestern Transylvania was a highly integrated military, political, and economic region. During the Roman colonial occupation, 102-271AD, our target area around Simeria and Rapolt

shows a very dynamic and intensive synthesis of Roman provincial life, where a multitude of processes of colonization and creolization take place side by side.



Bordering to the south the Gold Mountains with their extraordinarily well preserved Roman mining town of *Alburnus Maior* (Rosia Montana), the importance of this area is further enhanced by the immediate proximity of the most navigable waterway in Transylvania, the Mures River, and one of the imperial roads from *Sarmizegetusa* to *Apulum* (Alba Iulia), capital of *Dacia Apulensis*. The region was intensely populated by a great variety of settlements, ranging from small towns (*municipia*) to villages (*vici*), to small river harbors and road way stations (*manisones* and *cauponae*). Another feature that contributed to the variety of Roman provincial life in the region is the multitude of mineral and thermal springs in the area. As a result, the Roman landscape has seen an explosion of baths, such as those at *Aquae* (Calan) and *Germisara* (Geoagiu Bai), and of *villae rusticae*.



## Project Description

Our project seeks to explore and understand the integration of all these structural provincial elements along the main Roman axes of communication and transport. The area of interest is situated between the modern town of Simeria and the Rapolt commune. Its value to our “provincial road side” integration study is the immediate proximity of both the imperial road and the Mures River, the extremely important gold deposits of the Carpathian Gold Mountains, and the political and military centers of *Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana* and *Apulum*. Prior to the Roman conquest of 102AD, it was also the most densely populated region of the Dacian Kingdoms.



In 2016, we will continue the excavation of the well preserved Roman structures, including a well preserved *villa rustica*, identified during our 2013-2015 survey and excavation, by the imperial road. Our excavations will aim at understanding the importance and impact of the proximity of the main axis of movement, communication and commerce on the Roman provincial rural life, and its evolution through time. This extraordinary environment with its associated monuments, settlements and material culture, combined with spectacular surrounding natural landscapes and

beautiful Transylvanian churches and castles, guarantees all students and volunteers with a highly rewarding archaeological and cultural experience.

## Objectives

1. To excavate the identified Roman structures
2. To establish the relationship between the Roman sites, the communication axes and surrounding landscape
3. To investigate the processes of Roman occupation and the aftermath of the Dacian Wars as it is illustrated by the abundance and variety of artifacts present along the Imperial communication axes
4. To investigate the relationship between the Late Iron Age settlements and the Roman sites
5. To conduct a large scale soil phosphate and surface survey to identify all instances of Roman human activity in the area and its temporal intensity



## Specialized Skills Taught

The project is designed to be an immersive and integrative archaeological experience. In addition to hands-on training with regular operation of excavation, recording and survey equipment (including geochemical processing and total station operation), a variety of lectures and guided site tours will be provided in order to broaden students' understanding of the archaeological process.

Lectures will cover a range of topics from local culture and history to archaeological materials, methods and theories, Roman social history and archaeology. Visits to other sites and museums will put our work in context and bolster students' applicable background knowledge. Additionally, our relationship with Romania's premier Daco-Roman reenactment group, Terra Dacica Aeterna offers students a glimpse of practices in experimental archaeology and an interactive experience with ancient customs, clothing, crafts, weapons and technology. We are seeking participants eager to engage actively with both the ancient context we are exploring and the immediate modern context within which we do our work.



**Skill sets taught during the project:**

**Excavation:** proper use of all excavating tools, proper excavation techniques as they are implemented in different environments for different purposes, profile management, stratigraphic column extraction for microstratigraphic analysis, sampling, artifact and sample packaging, recording, drawing.

**Survey techniques as they apply to:** GPS topographic survey, archaeological survey, soil and phosphate survey.

**Laboratory:** phosphate analysis, flotation, artifact processing, GIS mapping.

**Tentative Lecture Series**

1. Regional Overview: Culture History of Transylvania and surrounding regions from Mesolithic to late Iron Age
2. Dacian Culture, Material and History: A synopsis of the late Iron Age in Transylvania, focused on the sociopolitical, religious and military aspects of the Daco-Getic societies that dominated the region until coming into conflict with the Roman Empire.
3. The Daco-Roman Conflict: Historical explication of the Dacian-Roman interactions leading up to the Dacian Wars and the evidences for the conflict itself.
4. Roman Military 1: History of the formation of the Roman Imperial army, and basic structures
5. Roman Military 2: Equipment, tactics and history of deployment
6. Roman Provincial Life: Social dimensions of the Roman Imperial Province of Dacia, with special focus on regional rural villa lifeways.
7. History of Archaeological Theory and Practice: Overview of major intellectual, technological and other methodological developments and their champions in the field

**Guest Lectures:**

1. Dr. Alexandru Barbat, Deva Museum: The Neolithic of SE Transylvania
2. Dr. Marius Barbu, Deva Museum: Villa Construction and Excavation/Pit Depositions, Context and Excavation
3. Angelica Balos, Ministry of Culture: Guided tours of Deva Museum, Cigmau Castrum, and Hallstatt and Dacian settlement excavations at Magura Uroiului
4. A. Balos with Paul Cheptea, University of Cluj: Roman Military and Social Dress

**Technical Lectures:**

1. Principles of Archaeological Survey: Mapping and remote sensing solutions, and detailed explication of total station operation and tutorial
2. Geochemical phosphate testing: principles and spot test tutorial

## Research Team

1. Scientific Director: Dr. Gica Baestean (Expert Archaeologist, Dacian and Roman Civilization Museum, Deva, Romania)
2. Project Coordinator: Prof. Andre Gonciar (Director, Archaeological Techniques and Research Center, ArchaeoTek - Canada)
3. Field Directors: Alexander Brown (Archaeological Techniques and Research Center, ArchaeoTek - Canada), Angelica Balos (Archaeology Specialist, D.J.C.C.P.N.C.), Dr. Marius Barbu (Expert Archaeologist, Dacian and Roman Civilization Museum, Deva, Romania)

## Bibliography

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