

# IDENTITY AND WEALTH OF THE FRONTIER ROMAN VILLA EXCAVATION TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA July 3 - August, 6, 2016

The mechanisms of Roman occupation of Dacia are very complex and poorly understood. With the defeat and “suicide” of the last Dacian King, Decebalus, in 106, the structures of the local social system collapsed in parts or in whole. The realities in the field are quite more subtle: the local population was still present, controlling if not the resources proper, the various technical aspects of harvesting them; the new Roman population was a very diverse aggregate of ethnic; and finally, the Dacian Province presented de facto a frontier environment, constantly under pressure from foreign incursions.

This liminal environment generated very dynamic vectors of creolization and associated practices of identity construction. The Roman “civilizing” social constructs, based on an urbanized way of life implementing processes of alienation through technical and technological dependencies, was constantly threatened by external and internal pressures. The very rapid process of urbanization of the Dacian Provinces forced a lot of dynamic negotiation and practical creolization in the definition, construction and display of social identity and status.

This particular excavation will attempt to address these aspects of identity perception, presentation and representation. Our test excavations have unearthed a rich environment, with 2 story buildings, painted walls, potential colonnades, several buildings outside the villa complex itself and a plethora of artifacts. In 2016, we will start the systematic excavation of the villa’s main building.

**DURATION:** 5 weeks (2 weeks minimum)

**COST:** US\$1585 (\$450/week for short stays)

**IT INCLUDES:**

- Project registration fee, taxes, and most gear
- Housing in double/triple occupancy rooms as guests of Romanian families in a beautiful traditional Transylvanian village
- Full room and board, Monday-Friday



**FOR MORE INFORMATION:** [www.archaeotek-archaeology.org](http://www.archaeotek-archaeology.org)

**CONTACT US:** [archaeology@archaeotek.org](mailto:archaeology@archaeotek.org)

# IDENTITY AND WEALTH ON THE ROMAN FRONTIER

## ROMAN PROVINCIAL VILLA EXCAVATION

**RAPOLTU MARE, HUNEDOARA COUNTY  
TRANSYLVANIA, ROMANIA  
JUNE 3 - AUGUST 6, 2016**

For more information and application procedure:

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

### Excavation Context



The Roman conquest of Dacia, the last Imperial expansion in Europe, began in 87AD with the relatively disastrous campaigns led by Domitian and ended with Trajan's Dacian Wars of 101/2 and 106AD. The plethora of wealth and resources the Roman Empire harnessed in Dacia (especially in Transylvania) contributed significantly to the "solvability" of the imperial economy until the Aurelian Retreat of 270AD, the funding of the construction of Trajan's Forum in Rome being a very concrete illustration of the potential of the new province.



The mechanisms of Roman occupation of Dacia are very complex and not well understood. The Dacian aristocracy and upper classes were in continuous contact with the Roman world well prior to the final fall of the Dacian Kingdoms. These interactions took many forms, ranging from raids and limited warfare, to intensive and extensive trade, to use of Roman techniques, technologies and craftsmen.



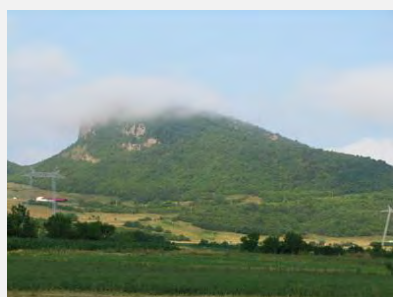
With the defeat and "suicide" of the last Dacian King, Decebalus, in 106, the structures of the local social system collapsed in parts or in whole. The new Roman presence generated a dynamic and continuous process of creolization in the new province, redefining the concepts and practices of identity, wealth and class representation along Roman traditions, in theory.

However, the realities in the field are quite more subtle. First of all, the local population was still present, controlling if not the resources proper, the various technical aspects of harvesting them. Second, the new Roman population was a very diverse aggregate of ethnic groups from across the Empire, the heavy Syrian presence in Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana and the many auxiliary garrisons along the various Transylvanian limes



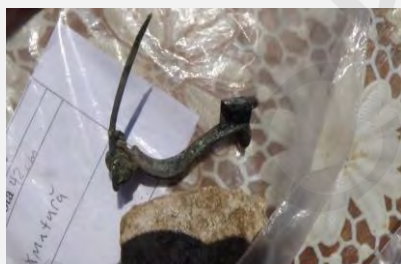
illustrating emphatically this aspect. Third, the Dacian Province presented de facto a frontier environment, constantly under pressure from foreign incursions from Germanic tribes from the north and west and the free Dacians and the Sarmatians/Scythian riders from the east.

This liminal environment generated very dynamic vectors of creolization and associated practices of identity construction. The Roman “civilizing” social constructs, based on an urbanized way of life implementing processes of alienation through technical and technological dependencies, was constantly threatened by external and internal pressures. The very rapid process of urbanization of the Dacian Provinces forced a lot of dynamic negotiation and practical creolization in the definition, construction and display of social identity and status.



## Project Description

This particular excavation will attempt to address these aspects of identity perception, presentation and representation. Our site is situated half way between Sarmizegetusa Ulpia Traiana and Apulum, the two most important cities of the Dacian Provinces, very close to the largest gold deposits in Europe in the Apuseni Mountains, and on the main Imperial road in Dacia. Our ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey from 2015 has revealed a rural villa of “palatial” size, unique in the Dacian Provinces, covering ca. 1.2ha of built space. Our test excavations have unearthed a rich environment, with 2 story buildings, painted walls, potential colonnades, several buildings outside the villa complex itself and a plethora of artifacts. In 2016, we will start the systematic excavation of the villa’s main building



Combined with a series of lectures covering Daco-Roman history and archaeology, material culture analysis, geophysical and geochemical survey techniques, and associated hands-on laboratory and field training, this extraordinary environment and its associated monuments, with spectacular surrounding natural landscapes and beautiful Transylvanian churches and castles, guarantees all students and volunteers with an incredible archaeological and cultural experience.

## Objectives

1. To excavate the main building of the Roman villa
2. To determine the material markers of identity expression
3. To establish the relationship between the Roman sites, the communication axes and surrounding landscape
4. 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
5. To continue a detailed GPR survey on the buildings already identified



## 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 ground penetrating radar 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, GPR survey.

**Laboratory:**, flotation, artifact processing, photography.

**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 Hallstadt 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. Introduction to ground penetrating radar

## Research Team

1. Scientific Director: Dr. Gica Baestean (Expert Archaeologist, Dacian and Roman Civilization Museum, Deva, Romania)
2. Project Director: 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)

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