



## [Foundation of Dacica \(CIL III, 1443\) \[1\]](#)

**Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.):** Dedication.

**Original Location/Place:** Old Forum of Colonia Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa

**Actual Location (Collection/Museum):** Muzeul Sarmizegetusa (Gradiste, Varhely, Romania), inventory number 32753

**Date:** 106 CE to 117 CE

**Physical Characteristics:** Several fragments seen at the beginning of 16<sup>th</sup> century by Mezerzius and now lost. Two upper fragments found in 1990 during the excavations in the *forum vetus*.

**Material:** Marble (?)

**Measurements:** Height: 43 cm

Width: 30 cm

Depth: 10 cm

Letter height: Fragment 1: 1 - 9 cm; Fragment 2: 2 - 7 cm

**Language:** Latin

**Category:** Roman

**Publications:** *CIL* III, 1443

EDH: [HD012405](#) [2]

**Commentary:** This inscription was first recorded from the ruins of ancient Sarmizegetusa by Mezerzius at the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century; although the stone from which he recorded the inscription no longer survives, three versions of the text have come down to us, to which readings from two fragments, discovered in excavations in the 1990s, have since been added (for the history of the inscription and the new fragments, see Piso, *Le forum vetus*, p. 214-217). The inscription appears to commemorate the establishment of a Roman colony, the *colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica*, in the new Roman province of Dacia; the epithet 'Sarmizegetusa' – the name of the political and military centre of the Dacians before Rome's conquest – was soon added to the name of the colony, in a clear reference to the new colony's dominant status in the region.

The fragmentary nature of the text and its survival only in manuscript form has generated much discussion amongst epigraphers and historians of Dacia alike. Arguments have focused on the full name of the colony, and the date of its foundation, as well as what exactly the full text of the inscription originally said (see e.g. *CIL* III, 1443; Gostar, "Colonia Condita Dacica," p. 311-313; Piso and Diaconescu, "Testo Epigrafico," p. 125-135). As Mezerzius did not record any details regarding the shape or the edges of the stone, there remained some questions as to the extent of the full text and how it might be reconstructed (Lepper and Frere, *Column of Trajan*, p. 308). However, following the discovery of two new fragments of the text in the 'old forum' of the colony in the 1990s, Hans Julius Wolff was able to propose a new reading, which is presented here (for full discussion of that reading, see Wolff, "Miscellanea Dacica," p. 102-109). Wolff's reading demonstrated that as well as the names *Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica*, the colony also received the epithet *Sarmizegetusa*, from the very beginning of its existence. This was notable because 'Sarmizegetusa Regia' was the name of a much older settlement, approximately 30km away from the Roman colony in the heart of the Orashtie Mountains; archaeological work has identified it as part military stronghold, part religious centre, and the political capital of Dacia from as early as 82 BCE and the reign of the Dacian king Burebista (Lepper and Frere, *Column of Trajan*, p. 305). For Rome to have applied the same name to their colony, but to have established it in a location different from that of the old capital was a clear statement of political dominance, as well as the superior status that the colony held as the new capital of Dacia.

The inscription states that the colony was founded on the authority (*auspiciis*) of the emperor Trajan; his titlature includes *Dacicus*, which has been used to indicate the date of the colony's foundation as between 106 CE (following the end of the Second Dacian War) and his death in 117 CE. The archaeological evidence suggests that the earliest incarnation of the colony was indeed a legionary fortress, occupied by the legion IIII Flavia Felix, which may support an earlier date for its foundation (Lepper and Frere, *Column of Trajan*, p. 305). For the archaeology of the site, see MacKendrick, *Dacian Stones Speak*, chap. 5). The fact that the new fragments were recovered from the *forum vetus* (old Forum) of the colony may also suggest that the inscription was set up early in the colony's history; the forum was the key administrative feature of a Roman town and likely the first area to have been



constructed. Hans Julius Wolff favoured a later date for the colony's foundation, perhaps between 110-112 CE; he argued that although the *Victoria Dacica* was celebrated on coin legends from 111 CE, it was not until 112 CE that it was proclaimed as a *provincia* on coinage, which must have indicated the lengthy process of settling the territory following its conquest. The difficult organisational problems faced by Rome is presumed by Wolff to have held back the formal establishment of the colony and the settling of Roman veterans within it (Wolff, "Miscellanea Dacica," p. 109).

Trajan had authorised the establishment of the colony, but the actual building and organisation of it fell to the governor of the province, who is also named in the inscription as Decimus Terentius Scaurianus, one of the military generals who had supported Trajan's campaigns during the Second Dacian War and who served as governor of the new province from 106-110 CE – again indicating an early date for the colony's name and the inscription's composition (for Scaurianus, see Piso, *Fasti provinciae Daciae*, p. 3-10). Indeed, the reference to Scaurianus led Ian Piso and Alexandru Diaconescu to conclude that rather than recording the actual foundation of the colony, the inscription was in fact intended to celebrate the euergetism of the governor, who had perhaps contributed funds towards the building of an important structure in the forum area; they proposed that the inscription commemorated a construction that was erected in honour of the colony's founder, Trajan, whose authority (*auspiciis*) had permitted the building work to take place (Piso and Diaconescu, *Le Forum Vetus*, p. 127-128).

Irrespective of the date at which the colony was founded, the process of conversion from military site to Roman colony, which included fixed features such as *duumviri* at the head of the town council, the centuration of all the land and the presence only of Roman citizens, appears to have been relatively swift; a number of inscriptions have been excavated which attest to the regular magistracies and priesthoods of a typical Roman town, led by a municipal elite who represented the political and social systems of Rome. A temple for the imperial cult, the *aedes Augustalium* has been identified, as well as an amphitheatre outside the city walls which also contained a number of shrines and cult centres to Roman gods (Bennett, *Trajan*, p. 168-9). It was, in essence, a typical example of Roman imperialist behaviour; a new territory had been conquered – albeit following a series of long and difficult campaigns – and the permanent presence of the conqueror had been ensured through the establishment of a colony of military veterans whose strength and organisation should have been threat enough to prevent against future incursions. Just as Aullus Gellius had stated, Roman colonies "were small copies of Rome", and the *colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica* was no different (*Attic Nights* 16.13). However, the addition of the epithet 'Sarmizegetusa' to the colony's name is interesting, particularly as it was not founded on the site of the settlement that originally bore that title; Rome had claimed the name as its own and attached it to a new urban centre that was undeniably Roman in its plan and political administration. The emphasis was clear; Sarmizegetusa was no longer a Dacian stronghold and military capital, but a Roman town whose political, social and administrative status superseded any previous claims to the contrary. Comparisons might be drawn here with the renaming of Jerusalem as the *colonia Aelia Capitolina*; following the suppression of the Bar Kokhba revolt, Hadrian ordered that the old city be rebuilt following a Roman city plan, and renamed it according to the name of his gens, *Aelia*, with the addition of *Capitolina* in reference to the main cultic centre in Rome. Although in the case of Jerusalem/Aelia Capitolina the same site was reused for the foundation of the colony, the result was the same as in Sarmizegetusa; their new names erased the previous identity of both cities, and emphasised the dominance of Rome's presence in the region.

Keywords in the original language:

- [auspicium](#) [3]
- [Traianus](#) [4]
- [Dacica](#) [5]
- [colonia](#) [6]
- [legatus](#) [7]
- [Decimus](#) [8]

Thematic keywords:

- [Dacia](#) [9]
- [Trajan](#) [10]
- [Sarmizegetusa](#) [11]



- [colony](#) [12]
- [veterans](#) [13]
- [legion](#) [14]
- [Roman colony](#) [15]
- [Roman conquests](#) [16]
- [Roman victory](#) [17]
- [municipalisation](#) [18]

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**Other sources connected with this document:** Inscription

## [Renaming of Jerusalem as Colonia Aelia Capitolina \(CIIP 1.2, 728\) \[28\]](#)

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