Roman Military Artwork as Propaganda on the Danubian Frontier
A Reevaluation of the Tropaeum Traiani

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Abstract

Roman Military Artwork as Propaganda on the Danubian Frontier
A Reevaluation of the *Tropaeum Traiani*

A thesis presented to the Graduate Program in Ancient Greek and Roman Studies

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The Romans constructed the *Tropaeum Traiani* – or Trophy of Trajan – in the province of Moesia Inferior c. 109 CE following the First and Second Dacian War at the beginning of the second century CE. Since the earliest archaeological excavations and research of the *Tropaeum Traiani* in the nineteenth century, classical scholars have debated the original design and function of the monument; included in the many architectural intricacies of the trophy was a fifty-four metope arrangement displayed in a circular narrative. The thesis provided hereafter expands upon the preexisting theories proposed about the *Tropaeum Traiani* to achieve several conclusions. First, a discussion of the *Tropaeum Traiani* requires a detailed examination of the metopes; this research paper examine the previous analysis of the metopes and provides an additional interpretation to individually debated scenes, as well as the narrative arrangement as a whole. Second, this research paper surveys the physical geographical position of the *Tropaeum Traiani* within Dobrudja to illustrate the calculated and intentional measures taken by the Roman designers to ensure maximum visibility for both Roman and native audiences.
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Introduction

The practice of erecting *tropaea* – memorials to commemorate military campaigns – originated with the ancient Greeks and initially consisted of a lopped tree-trunk adorned with the arms and armor of the defeated. The ancient Greeks constructed the earliest military trophies on or close to the site of battle and dedicated the structure to a deity and inscribed the names of both the victors and the vanquished. The ancient Greeks, furthermore, intended the military trophies to be temporary structures, made of wood and not maintained or repaired. The Romans later adopted the practice, initially bringing the spoils back to Rome where they commonly adorned private homes and public spaces. Domitius Ahenobarbus and Fabius Maximus reportedly erected the first Roman military *tropaeum* in a conquered territory following the Gallic campaign in 121 BCE.¹ Some subsequent Roman military commanders and emperors, such as Sulla,² Pompey,³ Julius Caesar, Augustus,⁴ and Trajan,⁵ implemented the custom thereafter. The Roman provincial *tropaea* later took on increasingly elaborate and permanent forms; epigraphic and artistic representations embellished later military trophies, which further added to their cultural

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⁵ Unfortunately, no literary references have survived that mention the *Tropaeum Traiani*. The archaeological evidence discovered, thus far, has provided contemporary scholarship with a wealth of Roman provincial military artwork.
importance. The Romans likewise repeated images of trophies on coinage that commemorated military campaigns. The *Tropaeum Traiani* – or Trophy of Trajan – was the final military *tropaeum* constructed prior to the Christian period and is the central focus of this research paper.

Following the First and Second Dacian War at the beginning of the second century CE, the Emperor Trajan commissioned the construction of monuments both in Italy and in the provinces to commemorate the Roman diplomatic and military engagements. While the Column of Trajan and the Great Trajanic Frieze have offered the most iconic imagery from the Dacian Wars, the *Tropaeum Traiani* has provided further insight into the conflicts, yet has been largely overlooked in contemporary scholarship. In Moesia Inferior c. 109 CE, the Romans constructed the *Tropaeum Traiani*, which adhered to the typological design of ancient trophies – a lopped tree-trunk adorned with the arms and armor of warfare. In addition, however, the trophy sits atop a large circular drum that contained fifty-four metopes that depicted Roman diplomatic and military engagements with the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German tribes of the eastern Danubian frontier, of which forty-nine have survived in varying degrees of preservation. The intended audience for the *Tropaeum Traiani* were the rebellious native tribes along the frontier, rather than the Roman citizenry and other supporters in peninsular Italy and elsewhere, and therefore, by comparison, has provided starkly different narratives to the Dacian campaigns than either of the aforementioned Trajanic monuments.

The original monumental design of the *Tropaeum Traiani*, as well as the narrative arrangement of the metopes, has remained uncertain since the rudimentary excavations in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While William Bentinck mentioned the *Tropaeum Traiani* prior to the mid-nineteenth century, four Prussian officers hired by the Ottoman Empire – Friedrich Leopold Fischer, Carol Wincke-Olbendorf, Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, and
Heinrich Muhlbach – performed the first excavation at the monument in 1837. The Prussian archaeological team attempted to reach the center of the Tropaeum Traiani by excavating a tunnel beneath the monument; the initial excavation discovered no substantial material culture, however.\(^6\) Grigore Tocilescu, O. Benford, and G. Niemann later researched the Tropaeum Traiani between 1882 – 1895; this team of scholars provided the first analysis of the monumental structure and associated metopes.\(^7\) In addition, successive scholars later investigated the Tropaeum Traiani, which included George Murnu in 1909, Paul Nicorescu between 1935 – 1945, as well as Gheorghe Stefan and Ioan Barnea in 1945. The archaeological records from the earliest excavations are limited, however. In the 1960s, the Romanian Academy further examined the site of Adamclisi, which became the basis for most contemporary scholarship.\(^8\) With the lack of adequate archaeological records, the details of the monument have remained speculative among classical scholars.

While some academics have claimed the Tropaeum Traiani was the battlefield equivalent of the Column of Trajan and, as such, represented scenes from both of the Trajanic Dacian campaigns,\(^9\) others, however, have attested the monument solely illustrated images from the First Dacian War. This paper expands upon the preexisting knowledge of the Tropaeum Traiani and ultimately attempts to achieve several conclusions. First, a discussion of the Tropaeum Traiani requires a detailed examination of the metopes. This research paper, therefore, examines the previous analysis of the metopes and provides an additional interpretation to individually debated

\(^6\) Vasile Barbu, Cristian Schuster, Grigore G. Tocilescu, Istoria Arheologiei Romanesti (Targoviste, Romania: Fortress, 2005).

\(^7\) O. Benndorf, G. Niemann, and Gr. G. Tocilescu, Das Monument von Adamklissi (Wien, Germany: A. Hoelder, 1895).


scenes, as well as the narrative arrangement as a whole. Secondly, this research paper surveys the physical geographical position of the *Tropaeum Traiani* within Dobrudja to illustrate the calculated and intentional measures taken by the Roman designers to ensure maximum visibility for both Roman and native audiences.
Chapter One
The Mausoleum and the Altar at Adamclisi

The Tropaeum Traiani was one of three monuments associated with the deceased constructed at Adamclisi. A large mausoleum, approximately thirty-eight meters in diameter, rests upon a sacrificial pit that contained ox bones. The mausoleum at Adamclisi was similar to the one described by Suetonius in De Vita Caesarum, which the Roman army built in honor of Nero Claudius Drusus, the younger brother of the Emperor Tiberius. In 1971, an archaeological excavation attempted to determine whether the Romans constructed the mausoleum for a military commander during either the Domitianic or Trajanic campaigns against the Dacians; unfortunately, the limited material culture recovered has been unable to resolve the issue. The archaeological records from earlier excavations are scarce and the exact date of the mausoleum has remained uncertain. A more recently proposed argument suggested that the Emperor Domitian dedicated the mausoleum monument after a victory against the Dacians in 89 CE. The craftsmanship and the limestone are similar in both the scant archaeological remains from the mausoleum and the altar.

In addition, in the late nineteenth century classical archaeologists discovered an altar at Adamclisi – approximately twelve meters squared and six meters in height; the monument,

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therefore, was roughly the same size as the *Ara Pacis Augustae* in Rome.\textsuperscript{14} Similar to the *mausoleum*, the past century of scholarship is unable to identify the exact date of construction, but the general consensus suggests either the Emperor Domitian or the Emperor Trajan erected the monument during either of the respective Dacians campaigns. The altar, unfortunately, has survived in an extremely fragmented state and besides a few pieces of the cornice and sculpted frieze, classical archaeologists uncovered only a limited amount of epigraphic evidence; they discovered a piece of the dedicatory inscription, as well as several dozen names and abbreviated origins of the Roman legionaries, headquarters staff, and auxiliaries all arranged in columns.\textsuperscript{15} The architects of altar at Adamclisi placed the dedicatory inscription upon the eastern façade of the altar, which read:

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“… [tri]B POT
… MEMORIAM FORTIS [simorum
… qui …] PRO REP MORTE OCCUBU[erunt…
…c]OL [po]MP DOMICIL NEAPOL ITALIAE PRA…”\textsuperscript{16}
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The inscription once recorded the name of the emperor who dedicated the altar under his auspices, but unfortunately this information has been lost.\textsuperscript{17} The dedication also identified the soldiers and auxiliaries as the “*fortissimi viri qui pro republica morte occubuerunt.*”\textsuperscript{18} The designers of the altar organized the Roman soldiers and auxiliaries by rank and unit; the citizen-soldiers, however, held the place of honor beneath the name of the emperor and the dedication,

\textsuperscript{14} The altar at Adamclisi was placed upon a sixteen-meter square foundation with a series of steps. Conrad Cichorius, *Die römischen Denkmäler in der Dobrudscha: Ein Erklärungsversuch* (Berlin: Weidmann, 1904), 19; Turner, “War Losses and Worldview: Re-Viewing the Roman Funerary Altar at Adamclisi,” 279.

\textsuperscript{15} Turner, “War Losses and Worldview: Re-Viewing the Roman Funerary Altar at Adamclisi,” 277.


\textsuperscript{17} Turner, “War Losses and Worldview: Re-Viewing the Roman Funerary Altar at Adamclisi,” 280.

while the auxiliary troops were positioned upon the side of the monument.\textsuperscript{19} The altar at Adamclisi was originally capable of displaying an estimated 3,800 names;\textsuperscript{20} without substantially more materials from the monument, however, this claim is not able to be substantiated. If the proposal was correct, then as little as five to ten percent of the original monument has survived.\textsuperscript{21} The altar at Adamclisi, nevertheless, commemorated and individualized the Roman soldiers and auxiliaries who died for the Roman Empire; the listing of troops upon the monument is likewise repeated in contemporary war monuments, such as the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington D.C.

As mentioned, the loss of the imperial titulature has prevented classical scholars from obtaining a date for the altar at Adamclisi. The details provided for a Roman officer in the dedicatory inscription, however, have allowed speculation. The inscription has survived in a fragmented state that only the place of origin, the domicile, and part of the official title are discernible. The epigraphic evidence established the origin of the \textit{praefectus} as Pompeii, but at the time of his death his official residence was Neapolis, which suggests that this Roman officer must have survived the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in August 79 CE and, in the aftermath of the destruction, was considered to be an inhabitant elsewhere along the Bay of Naples.\textsuperscript{22}

The Emperor Domitian campaigned against the tribal groups along the Danube frontier between 85 CE and 89 CE and suffered many defeats during this time period. As recorded by Cassius Dio and later Jordanes, in 85 CE the Dacians defeated the governor of Moesia Inferior, Oppius Sabinus; in the following year – 86 CE – the Dacians killed a praetorian prefect,

\begin{itemize}
\item Turner, “War Losses and Worldview: Re-Viewing the Roman Funerary Altar at Adamclisi,” 281.
\item Turner, “War Losses and Worldview: Re-Viewing the Roman Funerary Altar at Adamclisi,” 279.
\end{itemize}
Cornelius Fuscus, and utterly destroyed his Roman legion.\textsuperscript{23} The Romans suffered another serious defeat in 92 CE when the Sarmatians crossed the Danube River.\textsuperscript{24} Are the \textit{mausoleum} and altar at Adamclisi, therefore, in any way related to the defeats suffered during the reign of the Emperor Domitian? The close proximity of the altar to the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani}, however, cannot be ignored and may provide evidence for dating the monument to the reign of the Emperor Trajan. In \textit{Historia Romana}, Cassius Dio described an altar similar to the one discovered at Adamclisi, which the Emperor Trajan constructed after a severe loss during the First Dacian War in 101 CE at the Battle of Tapae. In addition, Cassius Dio mentioned the annual sacrifice held at the altar at Tapae in honor of the fallen Roman soldiers and auxiliaries.

\begin{quote}
“When Trajan in his campaign against the Dacians had drawn near Tapae, where the barbarians were encamped … he engaged the foe, and saw many wounded on his own side and killed many of the enemy … In honor of the soldiers who had died in the battle he ordered an altar to be erected and funeral rites to be performed annually.”
\end{quote}

The site of Tapae remains unknown, however. In the accounts provided by Jordanes, Tapae was one of only two entry-points into Dacia, a territory encompassed within the Carpathian Mountains;\textsuperscript{26} contemporary scholarship suggests that the location may be near the Bistra Valley in northwest Romania near the former Dacian capital of Sarmizegetusa.\textsuperscript{27} The distance between the Banat region in the southern Carpathian Mountains and the site of Adamclisi is great and the probability that the altar mentioned by Cassius Dio is the same one under consideration seems unlikely.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[25]{Cassius Dio, \textit{Roman History}, trans. Earnest Cary, LXVIII.8.1 – 2.}
\footnotetext[26]{Jordanes, “Getica,” In \textit{The Gothic History}, trans. by Charles Christopher Mierow, 12.74}
\footnotetext[27]{Turner, “War Losses and Worldview: Re-Viewing the Roman Funerary Altar at Adamclisi,” 284.}
\end{footnotes}
The points from the *mausoleum*, the altar, and the *Tropaeum Traiani* at Adamclisi created an irregularly-shaped triangle. The Romans situated the *mausoleum* approximately 270 meters west of the altar and they located the altar roughly 250 meters northeast of the *Tropaeum Traiani*. The *mausoleum* and the *Tropaeum Traiani* were arranged slightly off-center of the same north-south line at a distance of less than 130 meters.\(^{28}\) For a detailed plan of the memorial area, please see Appendix I. I. A. Richmond has suggested the *mausoleum* and the altar were positions at either end of a parade ground for ceremonies to honor the deceased Roman soldiers and auxiliaries, as mentioned by Cassius Dio at the altar at Tapae;\(^{29}\) the *Tropaeum Traiani* would have towered over this proposed processional ground.

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\(^{29}\) Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 31.
Chapter Two
The Tropaeum Traiani

The Tropaeum Traiani would have loomed over the rolling hills of Dobrudja – approximately sixty-five kilometers southwest of ancient Tomis (modern Constanța, Romania) and eighteen kilometers south of the Danube River.\textsuperscript{30} When originally constructed, the Tropaeum Traiani measured thirty meters in diameter and stood approximately forty meters in height – from the ground to the iconic trophy atop the monument. Paul MacKendrick claimed the Tropaeum Traiani was approximately the same height as the Column of Trajan.\textsuperscript{31} The iconographic trophy has survived in a fragmented state, but currently accounts for a height of approximately nine or ten meters; the headpiece and the spears, however, remain undiscovered.\textsuperscript{32} The architects of the Tropaeum Traiani encased the exterior of the monument in limestone masonry, while they constructed the interior of the drum from concrete and a central core of encased dressed stone; this central core dispersed the weight of the iconic lopped tree-trunk and trophy downward.\textsuperscript{33}

In the original form, the Tropaeum Traiani would have drawn the gaze of the audience upward from the base level, through a narrative series of decorated metopes, and finally to the trophy on top. The architects of the Tropaeum Traiani placed the drum of the monument upon a platform of seven steps;\textsuperscript{34} some other contemporary scholarship, however, has claimed the

\textsuperscript{30} MacKendrick, \textit{The Dacian Stones Speak}, 95.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid, 95, 97.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{34} Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 31.
platform consisted of nine steps.\textsuperscript{35} A series of six courses of ashlar blocks composed the lower half of the drum – each approximately 0.60 meters in width.\textsuperscript{36} Friezes and metopes separated by pilasters, which encircled the perimeter of the monument, elaborately adorned the upper half of the drum. On the lower course of the decorations, the artists depicted a frieze of acanthus scrolls; these garlands were represented in a circular pattern and, according to the description provided by I. A. Richmond, “harbor[ed] little birds but terminate[ed] in wild wolf-heads with snapping jaws.”\textsuperscript{37} The so-called “wild wolf-heads” in the lower frieze are certainly better identified as the Dacian draco – a dragon-like figure with the head of a wolf that contained multiple tongues. As evidenced on the Column of Trajan, enemy troops used to wield standards that had the Dacian draco affixed to the top. The wolf-head figurine on the standard was often hollow and the Dacians attached a cylindrical piece of fabric to the rear; when in motion, the piece of fabric would move in the wind, which thus provided an animated appearance.\textsuperscript{38} On the Tropaeum Traiani, however, the artists depicted the Dacian draco bound in the center of the controlled acanthus festoons – a subliminal message to suggest the subjugation of the Dacian people; the Column of Trajan similarly repeated this iconic message on its pediment, which depicted Dacian draco standards discarded among the other accoutrements of warfare.

Further above the acanthus scrolls, the architects of the Tropaeum Traiani inlaid a narrative of sculptured metopes enclosed between pilasters. The pilasters were alternately decorated with fluting or spiral wreaths “and are crowned with simple capitals of palm-fronds enriched with ovolo.”\textsuperscript{39} The narrative of the metopes depicted three main themes, also repeated

\textsuperscript{35} MacKendrick, \textit{The Dacian Stones Speak}, 95.  
\textsuperscript{36} Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 32.  
\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{39} Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 32.
on the Column of Trajan – combat between the Roman army and the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German forces, the role of the Emperor Trajan while on campaign, and lastly the capture and assortment of prisoners. This paper provides a discussion of the surviving metopes in greater detail further below. The architects placed a second frieze adorned with “palmettes springing alternatively from top and bottom” above the narrative arrangement.\(^40\) A decorative parapet with geometric motifs, lion waterspouts, and twenty-six crenellations, each of which displayed the figure of a captured adversary bound to a tree in the background, finally capped the drum.\(^41\)

In both the metope arrangement and the decorated crenellations, the artisans provided intricate details to the images of the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German troops so that the audience was better able to discern each tribal group. The artists illustrated the Dacians, the prominent fighting force in the First and Second Dacian War, with a belted tunic and trousers and had “hair flowing or cropped with a pudding-basin cut.”\(^42\) On the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani}, the Sarmatians wear a knee-length coat fastened in the front and trousers, while their hair is long and unkempt.\(^43\) The Germans likewise sport a shorter tunic and cloak and were undoubtedly recognizable with the Suebian hair knot.\(^44\) In many of the sculpted metopes and crenellations, the Suebian hair knot was a weak point and, therefore, has fallen off; the break in the stone is still clearly discernible, however. The illustrations of the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German forces on the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani} are similar to the tribal groups of Dobrudja attested in ancient literature, and therefore, are mostly likely the \textit{Getae, Roxolani,} and \textit{Bastarnae} tribes, respectively.\(^45\) In \textit{Historia Romana}, however, Cassius Dio referred to the German forces as the \textit{Buri} tribe.\(^46\) The identification of the

\(^{40}\) Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 32.
\(^{41}\) MacKendrick, \textit{The Dacian Stones Speak}, 95.
\(^{42}\) Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 33.
\(^{43}\) Ibid.
\(^{44}\) Ibid.
\(^{45}\) Ibid.
German soldiers as *Bastarnae* is more appropriate given geographical region under consideration. The *Bastarnae* occupied the territories between the northeastern Carpathian Mountains and the Scythian Plains; the *Buri* inhabited the region northwestern of the Carpathian Mountains, a distance much further from Dobrudja and Dacia.

From the parapet, a conical roof – covered with U-shaped tiles – rose to the base of a two-story hexagonal pedestal, upon which the designers of the *Tropaeum Traiani* incised two identical dedicatory inscriptions. The dedicatory inscriptions have survived fragmented, but nonetheless the epigraphic evidence has provided scholars with further insight into the *Tropaeum Traiani*. The dedication read:

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“MARTI ULTORI
IMP CAESAR DIVI
NERVAE F NERVA
TRAIANUS AUG GERM
DACICUS PONT MAX
TRIB POTEST XIII
IMP VI COS V P P
…… …… ITU
…… …… SU
…… …… E”
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From the contents of the inscription, the *Tropaeum Traiani* was dedicated to Mars Ultor – Mars the Avenger – in the thirteenth year of the Emperor Trajan’s tribunician power – c. 108 CE – 109 CE. The dedication to Mars Ultor has led some academics to the conclusion that the Emperor Trajan erected the monument to honor the fallen Roman soldiers in the prior Dacian conflict during the reign of the Emperor Domitian; others, however, have attested that Mars Ultor was the patron deity of the Roman army and the monument has nothing particular to do with the Domitianic Dacian War. The dedication to Mars Ultor, however, may additionally be

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interpreted as a threat of vengeance upon the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German people of Dobrudja. Following over a century of turmoil with the native tribes across the Danubian frontier – either directly or indirectly – the Emperor Trajan was able to subdue the northeastern threat. The epigraphic dedication provided on the hexagonal pedestal, therefore, was a permanent reminder to the tribal groups across the Danube River of the unforgiving nature of the Roman Empire. Finally, from the hexagonal pedestal rose the iconic trophy – a lopped tree-trunk adorned with the accoutrements of war; on the Tropaeum Traiani the trophy depicted two shields, each with the image of a Gorgon in the center, a breastplate adorned with an eagle and a cavalryman, a sword – presumably a gladius, and a multiple-lappet skirt.

While the height of the Tropaeum Traiani draws the view of the audience upward, the narrative arrangement of the metopes on the drum would have further affected the horizontal examination of the monument as well. As briefly mentioned above, an investigation of the metopes is requisite to understand fully the message conveyed through the Tropaeum Traiani. I. A. Richmond, who provided a series of lectures at the Society of Antiquaries of London on 17th November 1960, and also thereafter at the British School at Rome on the 25th January 1962, inspired the narrative arrangement discussed henceforth. The metope numbers provided are in lower case Roman numerals and follow the inverse order many academics adopted after the 1960s. The subsequent metope arrangement, however, differs slightly from previous proposals. In addition, the following discussion provides further analysis to individually debated metopes when applicable.

50 M. C. Bishop & J. C. N. Coulston, Roman Military Equipment from the Punic Wars to the Fall of Rome (Batsford: London, 1993); Ian A. Richmond, Trajan’s Army on Trajan’s Column (London: The British School at Rome, 1982); Mihai Sâmpetru, Tropaeum Traiani II: Monumentele Romane (Bucharest: Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1984); Rossi, Trajan’s Column and the Dacian Wars, trans. by J. M. C. Toynbee.
The position of the fallen metopes from the *Tropaeum Traiani* have suggested that the narrative began from the north and proceeded counterclockwise – or westward – around the drum of the monument. The Column of Trajan and the Column of Marcus Aurelius are other examples of Roman artwork that assumed the circular narrative, and in both of these examples, the narrative sequence unfolds counterclockwise as well. From the beginning of the narrative, the forceful aggression of the Roman military was clearly illustrated. The first three metopes depicted two cavalrymen at a full gallop (*i, ii*), led by a pair of mounted standard-bearers with *vexilla* (*iii*). The artists illustrated the cavalrymen here in *lorica hamata* – represented by drill holes – without helmets, and each carried a sword, a *hasta*, and a hexagonal shield. In metopes *i* and *ii*, the shafts of the *hastae* are clearly visible in the right hand of the cavalrymen, while the spear-points are still discernible in the front of each horse. The artists, additionally, presented the cavalrymen riding upon a saddlecloth and without the use stirrups, as was customary in the Roman military during the second century CE.\(^51\) The artistic typology of the first couple of metopes is similar to cavalry tombstones of the first and second centuries CE.\(^52\) The preservation of metope *iii* is poor, unfortunately, but the figures of two mounted standard-bearers in *lorica hamata* are still discernible.

In the following metopes, the Roman cavalry – still depicted in *lorica hamata* and with the standard equipment, but now shown with helmets – engaged the Dacians and their allied forces. In one scene, the artists illustrated a Roman cavalryman thrusting a *hasta* toward a standing, although unrecognizable, opponent (*iv*); while in another scene a cavalryman spears a

\(^{51}\) Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 33.

\(^{52}\) The tombstone of the auxiliary cavalryman Tiberius Claudius Maximus was one such example. In addition to similar iconography, however, the epigraphic inscription from the tombstone of Tiberius Claudius Maximus suggested that he was the cavalryman responsible for delivering the severed head of Decebalus to the Emperor Trajan.
German Bastarnian adversary, who had turned in retreat, as the Roman equestrian trampled another dead or dying Bastarnian warrior beneath the horse and a Scythian soldier lay deceased in the background (v). The initial cavalry engagement concluded in two metopes, the first of which showed a Roman cavalryman in *lorica squamata* triumphantly brandishing the severed head of an opponent as the corpse fell lifeless under the rearing horse (vii). In the final scene, a Roman officer on horseback – represented in *lorica squamata*, a double lappet skirt of *pteruges*, and a cloak – rode down a bearded Dacian chieftain, who was easily recognizable in a conical cap, tunic, and trousers (vi).

From the initial cavalry engagement, metopes *iv* and *vi* are worth further discussion. Michael P. Speidel previously asserted that the *Tropaeum Traiani* commemorated both the First and Second Dacian War, and further claimed that metope *iv* illustrated the suicide of Decebalus.53 The manhunt and subsequent death of Decebalus was an iconic scene from the Trajanic Dacian campaigns, and literature and artwork later recorded the event. In *Historia Romana*, Cassius Dio documented the suicide of Decebalus:

> “Decebalus, when his capital and all his territory had been occupied and he was himself in danger of being captured, committed suicide, and his head was brought to Rome. In this way Dacia became subject to the Romans, and Trajan founded cities there.”54

In metope *iv*, the artists depicted a Roman cavalryman riding toward a Dacian adversary equipped with the armor and weaponry as previously described. M. P. Speidel concluded that the figure of the Dacian warrior, represented bearded and standing with his shield on the ground and his left hand atop the rim, was Decebalus. While some scholars have accepted the figure of the Dacian soldier to be a commoner, others have suggested that the figure was a Dacian nobleman –

53 Speidel, “The Suicide of Decebalus on the Tropaeum of Adamklissi,” 76, 78.  
adorned with the “tight-fitting cap in the shape of a half globe”\textsuperscript{55} – who committed suicide in order to avoid capture. According to this interpretation, the initial cavalry engagement represented in metopes \textit{i}, \textit{ii}, \textit{iii}, \textit{v}, \textit{vii}, and \textit{xxx} illustrated a manhunt, which culminated in the suicide of Decebalus in metope \textit{iv}.\textsuperscript{56} The explanation offered that the Dacian figure was a nobleman may be correct. The imagery shown in metope \textit{iv}, however, does not match the previously accepted descriptions of the suicide of Decebalus from either literature or other Trajanic artwork. The preservation of metope \textit{iv}, furthermore, is poor and the proposal that the scene represented the suicide of Decebalus cannot be concluded with any certainty.

If, then, the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani} illustrated the suicide of Decebalus, the imagery in metope \textit{vi} provided the audience with a more archetypal scene of the event. As briefly described above, in metope \textit{vi} a Roman cavalry officer – adorned in \textit{lorica squamata}, a double lappet skirt of \textit{pteruges}, and a cloak – rode down a Dacian chieftain, whose conical cap was clearly visible. The Dacian chieftain does not appear to commit suicide in the manner often associated with Decebalus, but rather falls in front of the stampeding horse as the Roman cavalry officer overtakes him. The image illustrated on metope \textit{vi} is nearly identically repeated in scene CXLV on the Column of Trajan – the suicide of Decebalus – as well as Trajanic coinage that celebrated the Roman victory in the Dacian campaigns.\textsuperscript{57} The resemblances provided in each of the separate media did not indicate that metope \textit{vi} represented the suicide of Decebalus, but rather that the scene was stylistically similar – perhaps intentionally. As the metope arrangement on the

\textsuperscript{55} Speidel, “The Suicide of Decebalus on the Tropaeum of Adamklissi,” 75 – 76.
\textsuperscript{56} Michael P. Speidel included metope \textit{xxx} among the initial cavalry engagement, but rather metope \textit{xxx} should be included in the final phases of the infantry engagement, as evidenced by the presence of a Roman legionary; Speidel, “The Suicide of Decebalus on the Tropaeum of Adamklissi,” 77 – 78.
\textsuperscript{57} RIC 534; A \textit{sestertius} minted in Rome in 107 CE. On the obverse, a laureate bust of the Emperor Trajan with epigraphic evidence to further identify the bust – \textit{IMP CAES NERVAE TRAIANO AVG GER DAC P M TR P COS V P P}. On the reverse, the Emperor Trajan thrust a \textit{hasta} at the fallen Dacian in front of the horse with further epigraphic evidence to connote the support from the senate and people of Rome – \textit{SPQR OPTIMO PRINCIPI / SC}; Daniele Leoni, \textit{The Coins of Rome: Trajan}, trans. by Suella Darkins (Verona, Italy: Dielle Editore, 2009), 38.
*Tropaeum Traiani* solely represented events from the First Dacian War, metope vi does not show the suicide of Decebalus, but rather the iconographic personification of Roman victory over the Dacian people. M. P. Speidel preemptively contested the imagery in metope vi and claimed the figure of the Roman cavalry officer was instead an equestrian statue upon a pedestal.\(^{58}\) As evidenced from other scenes on the *Tropaeum Traiani*, the artists struggled with correct proportions within the restricted frame of each metope, and the elevated ground on which the Roman cavalry officer rests does not indicate a statue foundation.

Following the preliminary cavalry engagement, the narrative of the metopes shifted and in the next several scenes the artists depicted the Emperor Trajan addressing members of the indigenous population. On the *Tropaeum Traiani* the Emperor Trajan – recognizable by the Greek-style cuirass of molded metal, with an elaborate quadruple lappet skirt of *pteruges*, and the *paludamentum* of an emperor – engages the Dacians in conversation, attended by two guards (\(x\)).\(^{59}\) The condition of metope \(x\), unfortunately, is very poor and the mood of the Emperor Trajan remains uncertain; I. A. Richmond claimed the gesture of the emperor does not appear to be welcoming, however.\(^{60}\) Similar to the Column of Trajan, the *Tropaeum Traiani* was most likely originally painted and the scarlet or crimson color of the *paludamentum* would have identified the Emperor Trajan more easily among the other figures on the monument. In the late nineteenth century, the Romanian archaeologist Grigore Tocilescu suggested the audience to whom the Emperor Trajan spoke were Dacian noncombatants, which not only included men, but also women and children.\(^{61}\) To the left of metope \(x\), the architects may have positioned a scene that contains a group of Dacian males – both boys and men – in an oxcart with their attention affixed

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\(^{58}\) Speidel, “The Suicide of Decebalus on the Tropaeum of Adamklissi,” 78.

\(^{59}\) Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 34.

\(^{60}\) Ibid.

\(^{61}\) O. Benndorf, *et. al.*, *Das Monument von Adamklissi*; Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 34.
on the Emperor Trajan (ix). Later scholars augmented the Dacian audience to include two additional metopes.  

In one scene, the artists illustrated a Dacian man and woman; the male figure glanced at the female as he grasped her wrist tightly, while the female figure gazed toward the Emperor Trajan (xlviii). In the other metope, the artists depicted two Dacian women; the female figure on the left looked toward the other figure, who lifted aloft an infant into her arms (xliv). The architects of the Tropaeum Traiani may have positioned the latter two metopes to the right of metope x, thus framing the image of the Emperor Trajan among the Dacian audience, who listen attentively to the address. The scene as a whole effectively stopped the continuous narrative of the cavalry engagement and may represent an unsuccessful offer of surrender.  

After the announcement of the Emperor Trajan, the narrative theme changed, once again, and in the next series of metopes the main invasion of the Roman army was set into motion. The artists represented the beginning of the Roman invasion force in four metopes. In the first pair, three cornicines – represented in lorica hamata, a multiple-lappet leather skirt of pteruges, and armed with pugiones – blow into cornua as each sounded the commencement of battle (xi, xli). In the subsequent metopes, three standard-bearers accompany three Roman infantrymen; the figures are all helmeted and dressed in either lorica hamata or lorica squamata (xii, xiii). In metopes xii and xiii, the standard-bearers carried a legionary eagle and two maniple-standards, a combination also utilized on the Column of Trajan, but repeated here on the Tropaeum Traiani.  

The Roman soldiers were equipped with gladii, pilae, and large oval shields and illustrated in a preparatory stance for combat. In addition, the Roman soldiers wore manica laminata and grieves throughout the narrative arrangement. The Column of Trajan does not attest the use

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62 I. A. Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 34.
63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
manica laminata, but the inclusion of such armor protected against the Dacian falx. Prior to the onset of battle, the invasion force concluded in two identical metopoes that each displayed three Roman soldiers in lorica hamata and armed with large oval shields and unsheathed gladii directed toward the opposition forces (xiv, xv). The condition of metope xv is extremely poor, but the likeness in comparison to metope xiv has provided a clearer understanding of the two metopoes together.

The physical engagement between the Roman army and the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German opponents opened in five metopoes, which depicted scenes of single hand-to-hand combat between one Roman soldier and one native adversary (xviii, xix, xxi, xxix, xxxii). As illustrated in the earlier metopoes, the Roman soldiers and auxiliaries still donned both lorica hamata or lorica squamata with pila, gladii, and rectangular or ovular shields, respectively. Due to the use of two separate armor styles, the combat may have involved more than a single Roman unit; the identification of at least two distinctive helmet and shield types further supports this notion.65 In metope xxi, a Roman legionary soldier, who may be a Praetorian Guardsman, carries a rectangular shield upon which the thunderbolt-and-lightning imagery can be identified. On the Column of Trajan, crescent or star motifs sometimes accompany the shields with the zig-zag thunderbolt-and-lightning patterns;66 this imagery is unseen in metope xxi, but is witnessed during the prisoner parade and discussed further below. Roman art commonly utilized the thunderbolt-and-lightning motifs as the official sign of divine Jupiter and connected with the supreme authority of the emperor.67 Furthermore, in metope xxix, another Roman legionary soldier carried a shield that depicts that lateral wing-shaped insignia extending from the umbo. If

65 Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 34.
66 Rossi, Trajan’s Column and the Dacian Wars, trans. by J. M. C. Toynbee, 126.
67 Ibid, 110.
the preservation of metopes \textit{xxi} and \textit{xxix} were better, comparisons of the metopes with the \textit{signa} previously identified on the shields on the Column of Trajan could be made.

The conflict between the Roman army and the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German forces quickly escalated and the successive metopes each illustrated three figures – one Roman soldier and two native adversaries (\textit{xvi, xvii, xx, xxii}). In the triple-figured metopes, the artists continuously portrayed the Roman soldiers as victorious over their opponent; each scene always depicted one of the native combatants dead or dying in the lower right corner as the Roman soldier fought persistently to secure the battleground. The confrontation culminated in a couple of four-figured metopes. In one scene, the artists represented a Roman soldier – shown in \textit{lorica hamata} and armed with a \textit{pilum}, \textit{gladius}, and large oval shield – surrounded by two Dacian warriors, who each attempted to defeat their opponent with a \textit{falx}; the fourth figure was an unrecognizable native rival already dead or dying in the upper left corner (\textit{xxxiv}). In the other metope, a Roman soldier killed a Sarmatian warrior, who grasped a spear as he fell to the ground, while a dead or dying Dacian and Bastarnian soldier occupied the foreground (\textit{xxiii}). I. A. Richmond previously claimed that metope \textit{xxxiv} illustrated the hardships endured by the Roman army and that the conflict was not without Roman loss as well.\footnote{I. A. Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 36.} The imagery provided in metope \textit{xxxiv}, however, does not indicate the death of the Roman soldier, but rather his unrelenting determination to defeat a multitude of opponents. The designers situated the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani} along the border between Moesia Inferior and Dacia, the monument was a testament to Roman authority and military prowess and, as such, did not illustrate the loss of Roman soldiers. The Column of Trajan illustrated a similar message to the Roman audience in Italy. Scene XLI of the Column of Trajan depicted the only representation of a dead or dying
Roman soldier; contemporary scholars, therefore, have deemed this section the ‘Battle of the Bandages.’ \(^6^9\)

In the subsequent metopes, the artists replaced the crescendo of battle as the Roman army clearly overtook the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German forces. In one scene, the dead or dying native warriors were sprawled and mangled across the battlefield; the figure on the left of the image was even depicted headless – a testament to the brutality of warfare \((xxiv)\). In another scene, a Roman soldier in lorica hamata is able to capture a mounted chieftain as he attempts to flee the corpse-strewn field on horseback \((xxx)\). Some scholars have placed metope \(xxx\) among the initial cavalry engagement at the beginning of the narrative. The illustration of the Roman soldier, however, suggests that metope \(xxx\) more accurately belongs to the conclusion of the infantry battle. As the local combatants retreated from the fray, some fighters utilize guerrilla-style tactics in an attempt to defend against the Roman army. In the final metope of combat, an archer has taken to the trees, but a Roman soldier in lorica hamata and armed with a pilum nonetheless attacks him; a deceased adversary lies in the foreground with a gladius shown embedded in his head \((xxxi)\). The artists, once again, depicted the Emperor Trajan on the Tropaeum Traiani, who is easily recognizable by the Hellenistic-style muscle cuirass with the presence of the imperial eagle and quadruple-lappets skirt of pteruges; here, the emperor is depicted in a wooded area leaning against a tree trunk with his right hand and two guardsmen attend him, as he watches the battle conclude \((xxxii)\). As attested by one classical scholar, metope \(xxxii\) belonged to the earlier series, as these scenes illustrate a forested region; \(^7^0\) no other metopes on the Tropaeum Traiani provide details of the landscape.


\(^7^0\) Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 36.
For the past century, academics have greatly debated the scene portrayed in metope xxxii; more specifically, however, they posed inquiries about the two guardsmen who attend the Emperor Trajan as he observed the conclusion of the battle. In the past, classical scholars have suggested the guards are legionaries, dismounted cavalry, auxiliaries, and even Praetorian Guardsmen.71 Both the soldiers attending the Emperor Trajan in metope xxxii donned the *lorica hamata*, but unfortunately, the large shields each carried prevent the audience from analyzing the outfitted weaponry. If the soldiers carried *gladius* they could be identified easily as infantry; if, however, the guards carried the longer *spatha*, they may be interpreted as cavalrymen.72 As evidenced on the Column of Trajan, the Roman legionaries and Praetorian Guardsmen used convex, rectangular shields during the Dacian campaigns; the auxiliary infantry and cavalrymen often carried the flat, ovular shields. In other examples of Roman military art, though, the Praetorian infantry utilized the oval shield as well.73 The shield type portrayed in metope xxxii, however, may suggest that the guardsmen are, indeed, auxiliary or dismounted cavalry units. Furthermore, as evidenced on the Column of Trajan, auxiliary troops adorned *lorica hamata* and *feminalia*, which further supports the notions that the soldiers in metope xxxii are auxiliary infantry.74 In addition, the artists portrayed the guardsmen larger than the Emperor Trajan, which was an uncommon aspect of Roman artwork. The artists responsible for the construction of the *Tropaeum Traiani* may simply have struggled with the correct proportions, which thus resulted in the disproportionate imagery provided in metope xxxii. M. P. Speidel, however, presented the soldiers as *Bataui* horsemen – or the *equites singulares Augusti* – most of whom the Roman

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72 Ibid, 479 – 480.
73 The Domitius Aheonbarbus Relief and the Cancelleria Relief A are such examples; Charles, “Trajan’s Guard at Adamklissi: Infantry or Cavalry?,” 481.
74 Ibid, 482.
army recruited in Germania Inferior.\textsuperscript{75} If the evidence of metope \textit{xxxii} is correctly interpreted to identify the guardsmen as auxiliary troops, the \textit{equites singulares Augusti} seem to be the most suitable identification for these troops.

While the battle between the Roman army and the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German troops effectively ends in metope \textit{xxxii}, the bellicose nature of the Romans continues into the next several scenes. In these metopes, the artists illustrated the Roman soldiers butchering the nomadic people among their wagons; scenes XXXIII and XXXIV on the Column of Trajan briefly repeated the series and, therefore, contemporary scholars have designated the event as the ‘Massacre at the Wagons.’ In the opening scene to the secondary combat, Roman soldiers – in \textit{lorica hamata} and armed with \textit{pila} – fight among the wagons as the scattered dead or dying native people lie across the field; the metope, unfortunately, was badly damaged when it was later repurposed as the cover to a well (\textit{xxxvi}). As the conflict continues, a Roman soldier – still shown in \textit{lorica hamata} and armed with a \textit{pilum, gladius}, and rectangular shield – slaughters an adult male armed with a \textit{falx} from atop a wagon, while a woman begs for mercy and a child flees the scene in terror (\textit{xxxv}). The Roman army ultimately spares no one, and the final scene depicts dead or dying native males and females of all ages (\textit{xxxvii}). The ‘Massacre at the Wagon’ series was also augmented to include a scene of unattended sheep and goats,\textsuperscript{76} the metope has been greatly debated among contemporary scholars and thus nicknamed ‘the Sheep that have not a Shepherd’ (\textit{viii}). The imagery provided in metope \textit{viii} does not fit well within the other identified themes on the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani}, but some classical scholars have interpreted the unrestrained livestock illustrated here to be the end result of warfare.


\textsuperscript{76} Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 36.
The narrative of the *Tropaeum Traiani* changes, once more, following the scenes of combat. The Roman soldiers and officers – now in field service gear, rather than battle dress – are illustrated in an attentive stance as others triumphantly parade the captured prisoners in front of the army. In the opening scene, the artist illustrated two standard-bearers, each carrying a *vexillum*, one crowned with a bird and the other by Victory (*xlii*). The crenellation of Victory atop the *vexillum* in metope *xlii* was damaged *en route* to Bucharest and only the outstretched arm survived. In the subsequent two metopes, the Roman soldiers stand at ease in double ranks with their shields and *pila* at rest (*xxxviii, xliii*). Roman officers also accompanied the rank-and-file soldiery in the following several metopes; in these scenes the Roman officers wear undress uniform – each armed with a sheathed *gladius* – and stare intently toward the prisoner parade. In one scene, two unidentifiable Roman officers face right (*xliv*); two additional scenes of Roman officers mirrored metope *xliv* on the opposing side of the prisoner parade – each of whom faces left. In the contrasting metopes, two groups of Roman officers are distinguishable; the first pair are tribunes, as each carried a scroll (*xxxix*), while in the final set centurions flourish their vine sticks (*xxvii*). The prisoner parade concluded in one final metope that emulates the Roman soldiers in metopes *xxxviii* and *xliii*; two additional Roman legionaries – equipped in field service gear with their shields and *pila* at ease and *gladius* sheathed – face left, attentive to the scene of triumph (*xxviii*). As mentioned above, metope *xxviii* provides an exquisite illustration of the thunderbolt-and-lightning motif, which are further decorated with five-pointed stars. The *insignia* displayed on the shields, as well as the close proximity to the tribunes and centurions during the prisoner parade, may identify the two soldiers as Praetorian Guardsmen.

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77 Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 36.
78 Ibid.
79 Of the surviving forty-nine metopes, metope *xxviii* was the only scene to be transported out of Romania and is currently displayed at the Istanbul Archaeological Museum in Turkey.
The central focus of the Roman army, as mentioned, is the parade of captured prisoners, which commands three metopes. In one scene, a guardsman hustled forward a Bastarnian warrior, who was bound with chain restraints (xlvii). In another scene, however, a Roman soldier held onto two Dacian noblemen (xlvi); in the final scene, two more detainees await their turn (xlv). As witnessed with the address made by the Emperor Trajan earlier in the narrative arrangement, the prisoner parade effectively stopped the continuous movement of the metopes. The Roman infantrymen and officers flank metopes xlv, xlvi, and xlvii, respectively based on the direction in which they each face.

The narrative arrangement, as described above, fails to incorporate several metopes, which do not fit within any of the themes witnessed thus far on the Tropaeum Traiani. In a couple of nearly identical metopes, three standard-bearers – each comprised of one aquilifer and two vexilliferi – are displayed in similar attire to the figures in metopes xii and xiii; the standard-bearers donned lorica hamata and armed with pugiones. In one metope, the standard-bearers face right (xxvi), while in the other metope the figures turn their heads to the left, intent upon an object or event (xl). The two metopes under consideration do not belong to either the main invasion force, for in the beginning of that scene the standard-bearers were in tandem with the infantrymen; nor do metopes xxvi and xl fit within the scope of the prisoner parade, for in these scenes the Roman soldiers and officers are in field service gear.

While previous classical scholars have attempted to place metope xxvi and xl within the preexisting themes on the Tropaeum Traiani, other proposals that these metopes belonged to the suovetaurilia seems the most acceptable theory.\(^{80}\) Roman military campaigns were incomplete without the suovetaurilia – the sacrifice of an ox, a sheep, and a pig – and ceremonial parades,

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\(^{80}\) Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 37.
included standard-bearers and musicians, often accompanied the event. The Romans played the *tubae* – and not the *cornu* – for the processional march prior to the *suovetaurilia* and the flutes performed later for the sacrifice itself. The scenes of the *suovetaurilia* are entirely lost from the *Tropaeum Traiani*, but classical scholars have not wholly forgotten the existence of such metopes. While *en route* to Bucharest, a metope that was described as three figures playing *tubae* was lost in the Danube River (*l*). In addition, one final metope – of which only the top left corner has survived – shows a stationary crowd intent upon an object, or event, to the right (*xxv*). If the theory proposed was correct, the Emperor Trajan most certainly would have made an appearance as the dominant figure within the sacrifice. Furthermore, the presence of the *suovetaurilia* would have provided the *Tropaeum Traiani* with a never-ending narrative; the sacrifice was the beginning, as well as the end, of the metope arrangement – a message of continued success and aggression against the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German people.

As mentioned, four metopes are entirely missing from the *Tropaeum Traiani*, some of which may have belonged to the themes previously described. If, however, damage occurred to one section of the narrative arrangement – either intentionally or unintentionally – the loss of an entire theme is plausible. The absence of the *suovetaurilia*, for example, is more likely if the native people in the region or the ideologies of the later Christian period later targeted the scene as a whole. In the fourth century CE, the Romans erected a second trophy on the eastern gate of the *Civitas Tropaensium* to commemorate the victory of the Emperor Trajan over the Dacians and their allied forces at the beginning of the second century CE. While nearly impossible to

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81 Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 37.
82 Ibid.
83 Metope *xxv* was transported to Rassova, Romania, a small commune along the southern bank of the Danube River; Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 37.
prove without the discovery of the last four metopes, did the religious shift in the Roman Empire in the fourth century have a direct impact upon the sole pagan aspect of the *Tropaeum Traiani*?
Chapter Three
The Geography of Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, and Dacia

While the epigraphic and artistic evidence provided on the *Tropaeum Traiani* delivered a certain level of propagandistic effect to the local Dacian, Sarmatian, and German people in the region, the geographic positioning of the monument was equally significant in the second century CE and thereafter, and ensured maximum visibility for both the Roman and native audiences. In the areas nearby the Adamclisi monuments, archaeological excavations have discovered further evidence of Roman activity in the region: the *Civitas Tropaensium* and a series of roadworks. In addition, the topographical features of the former Roman provinces of Moesia Inferior, Moesia Superior, and Dacia restricted travel in the area, which ultimately forced a large majority of people in antiquity to pass through Dobrudja. This research paper discusses the geographic positioning of the *Tropaeum Traiani*, and the other monuments at Adamclisi, further below.

Following the First and Second Dacian War, the Emperor Trajan settled some of his veterans in a town roughly one and a half kilometers southwest of the *Tropaeum Traiani*, which contemporary scholars have termed the *Civitas Tropaensium*. From the second century CE to the sixth century CE, the Romans occupied the *Civitas Tropaensium*. Similar to the *Tropaeum Traiani*, Grigore Tocilescu between 1892 – 1909, and later George Murnu, and Paul Nicorescu, excavated and researched the Roman town. The archaeological excavations over the past century have uncovered the remains of stone, brick, and concrete structures, which span a surface of
more than one hundred hectors.\textsuperscript{84} The Romans strategically positioned the \textit{Civitas Tropaensium}, along with the Adamclisi monuments to the northeast, along a strategic crossroads in southern Dobrudja. The north-south road connected Noviodunum in the north to Zaldapa and Marcianopolis in the south;\textsuperscript{85} Noviodunum was a Roman military fortification and port constructed in the first century CE located along the lower Danube River, while Zaldapa and Marcianopolis were both towns south of the Danube River. The east-west road linked Durostorum in the heart of Moesia Inferior to Tomis and Callatis in the east along the Black Sea coastline;\textsuperscript{86} Durostorum was another Roman military fortification in the region, while Tomis and Callatis were preexisting port towns assumed into the Roman Empire prior to the Dacian Wars during the reign of the Emperor Trajan. While the \textit{Civitas Tropaensium} established as a permanent colony in the immediate vicinity for approximately four hundred years, the system of roadworks also illuminates the regular traffic that travelled through the area around Adamclisi. Following the second century CE, the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani} was a landmark at a strategic crossroads in Moesia Inferior.

A larger examination from east to west of the landscape of Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, and Dacia also clearly illustrates the tactical position the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani} possessed in southern Dobrudja. Three main topographical features comprised these former Roman provinces: sea, plains, and mountains. In the eastern portion of Moesia Inferior lay the Black Sea coastline; the Black Sea effectively separated the northeastern provinces of continental Europe from the senatorial provinces of Bithynia and Pontus and the imperial province of Cappadocia to the southeast, as well as the Bosporus client kingdom to the northeast. The Black Sea coastline was

\textsuperscript{84} Adriana Panaite, Romeo Cîrjan, & Carol Căpiță, \textit{Moesica et Christiana: Studies in Honour of Professor Alexandru Barnea} (Brăila, Romania: Muzeul Brăilei “Carol I” - Editura Istros, 2016), 165.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Ibid.
active with colonists and merchants as early as the seventh century BCE;\textsuperscript{87} migrants and traders made further use of the Danube River to travel from the coastline inland. The Danube River provided the main route from which ideas and commerce were transported into and out of Moesia Superior, Moesia Inferior, and Dacia.\textsuperscript{88} The region around the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani} controlled the eastward flow of the Danube River prior to the double bend.\textsuperscript{89} As previously mentioned, the Romans constructed the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani} approximately eighteen kilometers south of the Danube River; using the 1977 reconstruction of the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani} at Adamclisi future line-of-sight research can illustrate the distance from which the monument was visible with the naked eye. While the 1977 reconstruction was merely a proposed design by Radu Florescu, the contemporary monument allows scholars to measure the distance at which an individual in antiquity could see the \textit{Tropaeum Traiani}.

The rolling hills of Dobrudja lay directly west of the Black Sea coastline and provided a natural land bridge – ranging from forty to fifty kilometers wide – that stretched from north to south;\textsuperscript{90} this geographical feature has become known as the Dobrudja Gateway. The Danube River and the Black Sea coastline delineated the contours of the Roman province of Moesia Inferior and held a strategic position in the northeastern territories of the Roman Empire. The Dobrudja Gateway was the primary point of entry and egress from the western Scythian Plains and eastern Germania into the Roman provinces of Thrace, Macedonia, and Achaia, as well as those of Asia Minor. In antiquity, the Dobrudja Gateway provided a tactical position to monitor not only the traffic along the Black Sea coast, but also the north-south movement of individuals and armies. For the people travelling either north-south within the Dobrudja Gateway, or east-

\textsuperscript{87} MacKendrick, \textit{The Dacian Stones Speak}, 4.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 29.
\textsuperscript{90} MacKendrick, \textit{The Dacian Stones Speak}, 4; Richmond, “Adamklissi,” 29.
west along the Danube River, the *Tropaeum Traiani* held a significant point from which to be viewed. The Roman audience would have looked upon the monument with pride, while others in the areas subjugated under Roman rule were reminded of the authority and supremacy of the Roman Empire.

The geographical terrain further inland was less conducive for long-distance movement. The Wallachian steppe lies directly west of the Dobrudja Gateway and the Danube River, and while flat, was also strewn with marshy valleys that made the region unwelcome to travel in antiquity.  

The foothills of Muntenia and Moldavia, which lie within the Wallachian steppe, remained relatively free from Roman influence in the second century CE, which suggests that travel into the region was limited during the Dacian Wars and thereafter. In comparison, however, the area of Oltenia, located in the southern foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, but further west of the Wallachian plains, flourished under Roman occupation.

The Carpathian Mountains lay directly north of Oltenia in the modern area of Transylvania. In antiquity, the Carpathian Mountains provided the Dacians with various strongholds, which included their capital, Sarmizegetusa. The mountainous terrain in the western portion of Dacia was difficult to traverse and prolonged the Roman campaign the longest during the Trajanic Dacian Wars, but nonetheless, between 105 CE – 106 CE, the Roman army captured and destroyed numerous Dacian mountain fortifications, which included Sarmizegetusa.

Following the Second Dacian War, the Romans incorporated the territories of Dacia into a new Roman province and they constructed a new capital, *Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa*, forty kilometers away from the former Dacian capital. The Roman colonies and municipalities within

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93 Ibid.
the Carpathian Mountains flourished until the province of Dacia was relinquished in 271 CE during the reign of the Emperor Aurelian. ⁹⁴

Conclusion

The archaeological excavations performed at Adamclisi in the late nineteenth and twenties centuries have provided classical scholars with more questions than answers. The mausoleum, the altar, and the Tropaeum Traiani are very unique examples of Roman provincial artwork rarely exhibited elsewhere in the Roman world. The inquiries posed may never be answered with certainty, but contemporary academic should invest research to understand better that site of Adamclisi. In the Roman world, the area certainly held a calculated positioning within the greater region. The Adamclisi monuments, in addition to the Civitas Tropaensium, provided drastically opposing propagandistic messages along the Moesian-Danube frontier. The mausoleum and the alter, on the one hand, reminded the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German tribal groups of the vastness of the Roman Empire and the resources accessible to them; these monuments, on the other hand, attested the potential Roman cost of warfare. Prior to the reign of the Emperor Trajan, the Romans suffered many defeats and hardships along the Moesian-Danube frontier. Similarly, the Tropaeum Traiani boasted the imperialistic and militaristic prowess of Rome, while also serving to illustrate a clear message to the tribal groups native to the region. The fifty-four metope arrangement that originally decorated the Tropaeum Traiani depicted the unrelenting nature of the Roman army to defeat any adversarial group, and if necessary, to die for the state. The epigraphic and artistic evidence discovered from each of the Adamclisi monuments, in addition to the carefully selected geographical position, ensured the
propagandistic message was disseminated to as many people as possible, both Roman and native alike.

While the earliest archaeologist excavated the Admaclisi monuments haphazardly, enough evidence exists to postulate conclusions. The present evidence suggests that the Romans constructed the altar at Adamclisi during the reign of the Emperor Domitian, and may perhaps commemorate he defeat suffered by the Praetorian prefect, Cornelius Fuscus, and his legions in 86 CE. The *Tropaeum Traiani*, however, was a later construction during the reign of the Emperor Trajan. The surviving narrative arrangement presented on the monument does not appear to indicate scenes from both the Trajanic Dacian campaigns like the Column of Trajan in Rome, but rather memorializes a single event within the First Dacian War, potentially the Battle of Adamclisi, during which the Roman army combated the Dacian, Sarmatian, and German forces who inhabited the territories of Dobrudja in the second century CE. The artists specifically designed the figures in the metopes arrangement to illustrate tribal groups of Dobrudja.
Bibliography

“Adamclisi Archaeological Museum.” Museums and Collections in Romania.


