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Roman Victory Symbolism at Sarmizegetusa Regia: ideology and pragmatism

The author examines several reliefs and Latin inscriptions found in the structure of the precinct wall of the so-called „great citadel” from Grădiștea Muncelului (Sarmizegetusa Regia), Hunedoara County. He discusses the contradictory mentioning of their exact place of discovery in the Romanian archaeological literature, trying to establish the correct information. The inscriptions are recording the name of three Roman legions. The other stone blocks have carved on one side the image of paired Capricorns having a globe between their fore-pads. The association of this image with the symbol of Legion 1st Adiutrix is rejected. The image is considered a heraldic one being related with the army, the House of the Emperor and military divinities as, Victoria, or Pax. The image is appreciated to be a propagandistic pattern used by the army to celebrate the Emperor’s victory.

The author is also supporting the hypothesis of the existence in the neighbourhood of Sarmizegetusa Regia of a Victory monument, using as main evidence the inscription for Victoria Augusta put by a governor of Upper Dacia in AD 156/157 and one for Apollo Augustus dedicated by the consular of the three Dacias in AD 175, at Sub Cunune at a few kilometres from the former Sarmizegetusa.

Finally he challenges the chronology of the end of Sarmizegetusa and the old historical reconstruction of the „great Dacian citadel”, considering it a Roman fort. He explains the symbolic role of a fort on top of the former „power centres” of the defeated populations, using examples from the history of Rome.