

Background: In spring 2017 Mitch and I (almost 26 and firmly 59 years old) enjoyed a trip together to Romania. The business purpose of our trip was to interview several out-sourcing candidates which Mitch had identified, who were living in or near the cities of Braşov and Cluj-Napoca. (Romania's technology schools were becoming well known worldwide as a lustrous, nascent source for software engineers. We were eager to interview and make offers to several candidates.)

While planning this trip, Mitch was just finishing a 179 episode podcast of the History of the Roman Empire, Because Romania was the easternmost edge of the Roman Empire, Mitch recommended we visit some of the ruins he'd heard and read about. So, between our flight's arrival and rental-car pick-up in Bucharest (Bucharesti), and our first business visits in Braşov and Cluj-Napoca, we drove extra miles (12 hours driving on hilly country roads through gypsy villages) to visit two ancient sites:

Sarmizegetusa Regia The capital and the most important military, religious and political center of the Dacians before the wars with the Roman Empire. Erected on top of a 1200 m high mountain, the fortress, comprising six citadels, was the core of a strategic defensive system in the Orăştie Mountains, in present-day Romania; and

Colonia Ulpia Traiana Augusta Dacica Sarmizegetusa The capital and the largest city of Roman Dacia, later named Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa after the former Dacian capital, located some 40 km away. Built on the ground of a camp of the Fifth Macedonian Legion, the city was settled by veterans of the Dacian wars.

The Battle of Sarmizegetusa was a siege of Sarmizegetusa, the capital of Dacia fought (in A.D. 101–102; 105-106) between the army of the Roman Emperor Trajan, and the Dacians led by King Decebalus. The only known record of the Battle of Sarmizegetusa is Trajan's Column (Columna Traiani) This is a triumphal column in Rome, completed in AD 113, that has inspired numerous victory columns, ancient & modern, which commemorates emperor Trajan's victory in the Dacian Wars.

The images from this adventure with Mitch have stayed with me—a cherished memory.

From Romania to the Philippines, and many places in between, my foundation from BYU has helped equip me with the skills and knowledge to serve, employ, and testify to people around the world. It has also deepened a cherished spiritual lens through which I view the potential of all of God's children. Through that lens, I see how people from many cultures can choose to shed false precepts and traditions and follow Christ's example. I see how they can accept His invitation to learn to become like Him.

Sarmizegetusa

(Standing among the crumbling relics of the hilltop capital of a once-powerful civilization puts worldly triumphs into perspective.)

PROLOGUE:

Rome's sole col'mn to Trajan's 'cclaim
(a lonely record of the siege which
Choked full breath and would-be fame of
Decebalus' mountain reign) is
All we know of last days' life and
Death in Sarmizegetusa.

Dust of relics, sands of time, whisper-
'loud long-cold tomes: a 'bolished
Monarch's ancient tor and civic
Helm - amidst a lost mortality;
Amidst the last Masada
Deaths at Sarmizegetusa.

Now, twin thousand years near-pass'd,
We, curious (a peek inside),
Find this "Roman eastern path" 'nroute through
Romaña's lustrous, nascent-gains.
Forgotten, spent, masked nature-
Graves for Sarmizegetusa.

'pon Hunedoara province, past
Cottage white-wash'd stones, one road-wraps
Up from bantam burgs: Orăştie
Buceum, Costeşti. Latin all
Named. Tongued post-Bellum. Wring'd since
Death of Sarmizegetusa.

Assurgent to a carriage-laze.
Steps: bring balance of journey's quest.
Over vaults, antiques displayed, raw
Paths: keep froz'n memories of souls.
Wand'ring: wraiths with sunbeams flirting.
Ghosts through Sarmizegetusa.

Atop twelve-hundred meters' crest
Murus dacicus' spare remains
Gird andesite temple shrines; whilst
Stonehenge's eastern cousin lies
Near May'n-like chronology...
Crumbling Sarmizegetusa.

SARMIZEGETUSA

Her pantheon of pagan play'rs
Lost all struggl's with foreign foes, since
Pleistoros' battle cry is mute;
Derzelas - void vitality.
Madness haunts Zalmoxis' poise;
Sabazios' sky has fallen;
Di'nysus' vines bear rapid fruit;
Thrace's Hermes' gone. Bendis clasps
Her barren womb, once-fertile hills
Now wasted. Gebeleizis
Storms on earless stones framing muted
Tombs of Sarmizegetusa.

Now tombs... tho' once an haven - full of life!

Once granting refuge, fruit and grain;

Alive - with purposed souls whose hearts

Once sang as choirs - o'r

A city named by fervent pæan - Vibrant and alive! Once

Voiced with hope: 'Citadel built of

Palisades on a mountain peak'

(of Zermi Tongue and Zeget); 'City of the

Warm river' (cognate with

Sanskrit gharma 'warm' and Sarjana-

'Flow' and Bactrian harez- in harezāna 'id.'), zeget

'flow' (cognate with Sanskrit sarj- in sarjana).

The city being named after the

Nearby river Sargetia;

'Palace Illuminating the world of

Life' (Sanskrit jagat - world of life;'go', jīgat- mobility)

Precedes usa 'enlightening;

Burning; illuminating').

Primitive palaver.

This language - proudly voiced. Chiseled

Down as Sarmizegetusa.

Burning - where once-willing slake flow'd.

Burning! - (Whence come worldly travails

Burning this?)... ..

Down streams heaven's fertile

Tears. Up from ashes' flow brims

New breath! Fresh, soothing, rescuing.

Buoyant and saving. Exuding

Life and pulse and mind and soul...

Mending palaios offenses.

Healing hardened Dacian hearts;

Relieving Roman pride. Seeding

Hope for Sarmizegetusa.

EPILOGUE:

Hope - Aloft this mountain-view where
Strifes of man are witnessed... by
Him whose plan gives mortal breath and
Grants all choice to follow... His Son... with
Open hearts and willing hands
Embracing Sarmizegetusa.

Cultures carved cold, rutted roads where
Critics' scoffs assailed. Time's lasting cure
Quells madden'd voice: Tune soft tones from where
Truth's light burns brightest. Whence
Rad'ant, pure, perfect love's - warming,
Melting Sarmizegetusa.

White-wash'd masks befit sore scars,
'Neath calloused layered-years; where under
Hubris' fierce strong latch are shackled spirits'
Precious gifts. Held fast. Bound they were.
Held taut... 'til God's light "breaks"...
Endowing Sarmizegetusa.

Twice millennial years are pass'd (still
Heaven's clocks are patient). Dammed,
Stagnant soldiers counting hours as
B'graven, oubliette'd, falxmen.
Prisoners left embalmed portend
Paroling Sarmizegetusa.

Time's blunt swords pound vain pursuits -
Plume dust from fervid blows. Once bathed,
Cull 'comes The Potter's clay, decaying
Nevermore. Love's willing-order'd
Moistn'd grain years for Heaven's structure.
Freeing Sarmizegetusa.

Acclaim and Truth are seldom met.
Life's meekest: full esteem'd. Her
Humble reach - on bended knee. His
Broken heart - hush'd service giv'n. Joy's
Contrite spirit - the Son atoning...
Saving Sarmizegetus