

# THE GREAT LIMESTONE TEMPLE AT SARMIZEGETUSA REGIA. (RE)ANALYSIS OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL DATA

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**Key words:** Dacian architecture, Sarmizegetusa Regia, limestone discs, isolated foundations, wooden columns, wooden architecture, andesite short posts, iron fittings with architectural design.

**Abstract:** *The Great Limestone Temple* is one of the most important monuments in Sarmizegetusa Regia. Identified already in the first years of the field research coordinated by C. Daicoviciu, the temple was excavated during a few decades and was heavily affected by the so called “restoration” works undertaken in Grădiștea de Munte, in the 1980s. The data referring to the monument is spread in many reports, papers, book chapters, architectural blueprints and topographical surveys, and the partial results of the research, sometimes inconclusive, generated divergent views. Reorganizing all the information coming from the excavation records, including the drawings, this paper is proposing a new building sequence of the temple, taking into account all the existing data, some of it until now unpublished.

**Rezumat:** *Templul Mare de Calcar*, unul dintre cele mai importante monumente ale Sarmizegetusei Regia, a fost identificat încă din primii ani ai săpăturilor arheologice coordonate de C. Daicoviciu. Templul a fost cercetat în campanii întinse pe câteva decenii și a fost grav afectat de lucrările de „restaurare” întreprinse în anii '80 la Grădiștea de Munte. Informațiile despre acest templu sunt cuprinse în numeroase rapoarte de săpătură, articole, capitole de cărți, planuri, ridicări topografice, iar rezultatele parțiale, de multe ori neconcludente, au generat opinii divergente. Ca urmare a reorganizării informației primare, a consemnărilor din arhiva șantierului sau reprezentărilor grafice ale situațiilor arheologice, este propus un nou scenariu constructiv care include toate informațiile existente, unele dintre ele nevalorificate până în prezent.

There is one temple from the monumental complex of Grădiștea de Munte – Sarmizegetusa Regia<sup>1</sup> that has been the object of multiple campaigns of archaeological research, yielding partial results, sometimes inconclusive, and fostering divergent opinions. Such a state of research calls for a reorganization of primary information, based on the records of the archaeological site, which is, in our opinion, a crucial step towards the understanding and towards the reconfiguration of the opinions regarding this monument. In addition, such an endeavor becomes all the more necessary given the present state of the monument which has been completely transformed by the works carried out in the 1980s.

In the archaeological literature, *The Great Limestone Temple* is known under different names and this variation is indicative of the numerous historiographical viewpoints on this edifice. Thus, some of the most commonly identified terms within scholarly literature are: “temple”, “alignment no. 3”, “the old sanctuary of the 11<sup>th</sup> terrace”, “the B sanctuary”, “the A sanctuary”, “the I sanctuary”, “the great limestone sanctuary from the age of Burebista”, etc.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The characteristics of the sanctuary from Grădiștea de Munte – Sarmizegetusa Regia prompted the historians to regard it as one of the most important sacred areas of the Dacian world. The systematic excavations conducted on site led to the identification of no less than seven places of worship, of a ceremonial road, of a monumental altar and of a series of complex water catchment and drainage systems. Although some of the edifices were discovered at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the excavations are far from being complete, due to the major findings regarding the components of the sanctuary, revealed during recent campaigns. It is important to note that the on-going excavations initiated on the 9th terrace in 2017 yielded a new place of worship with a monumental architecture and a few segments of a path paved with limestone, andesite and sandstone slabs. For a more general description of the sacred area of Sarmizegetusa Regia, see Daicoviciu, Daicoviciu 1962, pp. 31-35; Daicoviciu 1972, pp. 203-273; Crișan 1986, pp. 170-214; Glodariu, Iaroslavschi, Rusu 1988, pp. 105-125; Rusu-Pescaru 2005; Gheorghiu 2005, pp. 202-207; Stefan 2005, pp. 17-69.

<sup>2</sup> The authors and the contexts associated with these denominations will be detailed in the following pages.