



[Dedicatory Inscription from the Tropaeum Traiani](#) [1]

Typology (Honorific / Funerary / etc.): Votive

Original Location/Place: Adamklissi, Romania

Actual Location (Collection/Museum): Muzeul Adamclisi - Adamclisi (Adamklissi)

Date: 109 CE

Physical Characteristics: 12 partially matching fragments; the below dimensions refer to one of the two largest fragments; reconstructed measurements: approx. 400 x 285 cm. Words are separated by *hederae*. Believed to be one of two identical inscriptions that were placed on the hexagonal base of the 'trophy' of the *Tropaeum Traiani*. A further fragment, containing some letters from lines 6-9 has also been identified (*CIL* III, 13733).

Measurements: Height: 104 cm

Width: 103 cm

Depth: 38 cm

Letter height: 35-24 cm

Language: Latin

Category: Roman

Publications: *CIL* III, 12467

[HD042859](#) [2]

(*CIL* III, 13733; *IDRE* II, 00334; AE 1891, 00125; AE 1896, 00020; AE 1965, 00276; AE 1972, 00521a,b; AE 1996, 01355a,b; Florescu, *Das Siegesdenkmal von Adamklissi Tropaeum Traiani* (Bukarest - Bonn 1965) p. 61-67)

Commentary: Twelve fragments from what are believed to be two identical votive inscriptions from the *Tropaeum Traiani* have survived from the site at Adamklissi. It records the dedication of the triumphal military monument, in 109 CE, to Mars Ultor (Mars the 'Avenger'), and is an important record of Trajan's vengeful approach to the Dacian campaigns, and how their resolution was presented to both a local and Roman audience.

Although the end of the text is incomplete due to the fragmentary nature of both inscriptions, it appears to claim that the monument was set up by the emperor Trajan, who along with his customary titles (*Imperator*, *Caesar*, *Nerva* and *Augustus*), is also described by the double epithets *Germanicus* and *Dacicus*; 'Germanicus' had been added to his titulature during Nerva's lifetime, perhaps when both accepted the title in 97 CE following the victory over the Suebi (Pliny, *Panegyricus* IX.3; Bennett, *Trajan*, p. 47-48. For additional readings of the missing lines, see Stefan, "Tropaeum Domitiani," p. 616). The additional title *Dacicus* was awarded following the end of the First Dacian War and his triumphant return to Rome in 102 CE, giving us a *terminus post quem* for the inscription and the monument's dedication. The description of Trajan's offices provides a more precise date; the thirteenth occasion on which he held tribunician power (*tribunicia potestate XIII*) occurred between 10th December 107 CE and 9th December 108 CE, meaning that the *Tropaeum* must have been built and dedicated by that date.

The *Tropaeum* was, then, dedicated in the aftermath of the Second Dacian campaign, which took place in 105-106 CE; although a fragile peace had been established in 102 CE, which saw the Dacians confined to a mountainous region following their defeat at the Battle of Tapae, and a treaty agreed to in which Decebalus, the Dacian king, promised not to procure arms, by 105 CE the Dacian king had taken advantage of the military and technological reinforcements made by the Romans and was in the process of refortifying his kingdom (Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 68.10.3; Bennett, *Trajan*, p. 95-98). Trajan responded by declaring Decebalus an enemy of the state in 105 and setting out for Dacia in the first week of June; it was too late in the campaigning season for him to do more than consolidate the existing military positions in the province, but over the course of the next year, 106 CE, Trajan's soldiers recaptured the mountain fortress system that surrounded the Dacian capital, Sarmizegetusa, at which the final decisive battle took place during the summer of 106, with the participation of the *Legio II Adiutrix*, the *Legio IV Flavia Felix* and a detachment from the *Legio VI Ferrata*. Such forces represented a far larger assembly of men than those convened by Rome in the First Dacian War, which is indicative of the magnitude of the task Trajan faced, as well as his intent to bring the conflict to an end in a decisive fashion. Such an end was not reached until September 106 CE, when Decebalus was tracked to a remote part of the Carpathian mountains, where he committed suicide in order to avoid capture; 50,000 Dacians were taken prisoner and the land was given over to colonists from nearby provinces (Bennett, *Trajan*, p. 101; Eutropius, *Brief History of the Romans*, 8.6.2).



The *Tropaeum Traiani* was built to commemorate this victory, but the ‘revenge’ indicated by the dedication to Mars Ultor did not, in fact, refer specifically to Decebalus’s renewed efforts against Rome. Although a significant site, Adamklissi was not a battle fought under Trajan, but rather the location of an earlier incursion that had caused heavy Roman losses, under the emperor Domitian. Between 86 and 88 CE Domitian’s legions had suffered several defeats at the hands of the Dacians, including the loss of two generals, Oppius Sabinus and Cornelius Fuscus, although the sources reveal little in the way of detail as to the circumstances of the losses (Suetonius, *Domitian*, VI). More precise, although incomplete, detail is provided by the archaeological record, and it is for this reason that the site of Adamklissi has proven so important. The *Tropaeum Traiani* is in fact one of three monuments situated on the high plateau of the site for which the dates, form and function have generated much debate. Two monuments – a large tumulus measuring c. 37m in diameter, and the remains of an altar – are similarly oriented east-west, and are made of similar materials and craftsmanship (Poulter, “The Lower Moesian Limes,” p. 525); their dates are unknown, but fragments of the dedicatory inscription from the altar appear to have been part of a list of legionary soldiers and auxiliaries who died in battle close to the site (*CIL* III, 12467. For the altar and its inscription, see Sampetru, *Trofeul lui Traian II*, p. 145-60; Stefan, “*Tropaeum Domitiani* à Adamklissi,” p. 617-621; Turner, “War losses and Worldview,” p. 277-304). Mihai Sâmpetru believed these two monuments to be contemporary with the *Tropeum Traiani*, with all three initiated in 102 CE following Trajan’s triumph in the First Dacian War (Sâmpetru, *Trofeul lui Traian II*, p. 18). This was convincingly contested by Constantin Petolescu, who argued that the altar and tumulus were built at an earlier date, and possibly following Domitian’s campaigns (*Dacia*, p. 137-141). Along with the lists of soldiers’ names and origins, the fragmentary inscription from the altar recorded that it was dedicated to the *fortissimi viri qui pro republica morte occubuerunt* (‘the most brave men who met death for the State’), who may have numbered as many as 3,800, based on the space of the epigraphic field proposed for the altar (Cichorius, *Die römischen Denkmäler*, p. 28). If this speculative loss is indeed correct, then the dedication to *Mars Ultor* becomes more significant; Trajan set up an enormous trophy to the Roman god of vengeance in response to the losses recorded by the altar (Turner, “War losses and worldview,” p. 283). Honouring Mars in this way – especially when combined with the brutal imagery of war depicted on the metopes of the *Tropaeum* – not only drew attention to the ferocity with which Rome had returned to battle in the region, but also eliminated the former disgrace and defeat (Richmond, “Adamklissi”, p. 32). The size of the trophy, its visual and textual language worked together to proclaim how, and to what extent, Rome avenged her dead. The dedication of the building essentially ‘sealed’ the Dacian wars as complete; in the name of Mars the ‘Avenger’ “a grim and remorseless defeat” had been exacted upon the Dacians, with the trophy monument a permanent reminder of Rome’s pride, power and mercilessness in the face of continued incursion (Richmond, “Adamklissi”, p. 32).

Keywords in the original language:

- [Mars](#) [3]
- [ultor](#) [4]
- [Traianus](#) [5]
- [Dacicus](#) [6]
- [exercitus](#) [7]
- [imperator](#) [8]
- [tropeum](#) [9]

Thematic keywords:

- [Trajan](#) [10]
- [Domitian](#) [11]
- [trophy](#) [12]
- [Mars](#) [13]
- [Revenge](#) [14]
- [vengeance](#) [15]
- [army](#) [16]
- [battle](#) [17]
- [Dacia](#) [18]
- [Dacians](#) [19]



- [Adamklissi](#) [20]
- [legions](#) [21]
- [conquest](#) [22]
- [defeat](#) [23]
- [First Dacian War](#) [24]
- [Second Dacian War](#) [25]

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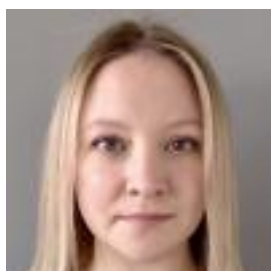
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