



# Who Were The Dacians? (Romania Explained To My Friends Abroad Book 5)

*Catalin Gruia*

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## Dear reader – stop here for a second, please!

You should know from the very beginning this is not an exhaustive, academic paper. Author Catalin Gruia is a veteran journalist who has written and reported for the Romanian edition of National Geographic for over 10 years. What you'll find here is a collection of myth-busting short essays on the Dacian civilization.

### Who were the Dacians?

The Gradiste Hill. After the exhausting climb, a solitary cyclist, with black cycling pants and a yellow helmet, plopped down for an hour in the middle of the great circular sanctuary of Sarmizegetusa Regia, to absorb cosmic energies. Just one year earlier, I would have joined him in the feast of energies that I too, used to think, were concentrated here. Only in the mean time I had met professor Mircea Babes, to whom I owe almost all I know about the Dacians.

Our schoolteachers taught us to love them as our ideal ancestors. Ancient historians described them as a mysterious people, barbarians who knew how to make themselves immortal. The modern 'Dacomaniacs' claim they were the first great civilization of the world.

At the age of 16, I had even written a book on Burebista's youth. That novel was as mushy and over-the-top as my writings on the subject today are sharply scientific, strictly historical and myth-busting. And all due to professor Mircea Babes, who took my hand like a Virgil right out of the Divine Comedy and walked me through his realm – the kind of history which relies strictly on documents and archeological discoveries regarding the almost 100 tribes (Apuli, Buri, Suci, northern Dacians, Costoboci, Carpi, Calipidi, Crobyzi, Terizi, Tyragetae a.s.o.) who for centuries lived in the area between the Black Sea, the Balkans, the Tisa and the Dniester.

In fact, the very term 'Geto-Dacian' is modern and artificial, a projection of the national ideology meant to present the current Romanian territory as united from ancient times. According to historian Lucian Boia, the Getae probably lived on both sides of the Danube and in Dobrogea, while the Dacians lived mostly in Transylvania.

A century after Burebista, King Decebal repeated his feat by uniting the Geto-Dacian tribes. Trajan conquered half of Dacia in 106 A.D., turning it into a Roman province. In 271 A.D., after Rome called back its legions, Dacia became free, but no longer prosperous, and fell under the invasions of migratory nations.

But this is not the proper place for details. I will only say that the 'Dacian' subject has always been both important and delicate to Romanians. The Dacians and the Romans who conquered them are considered to be the ancestors of the Romanian people. Though for the past 150 years archeologists have been digging hard trying to get to the bottom of the subject, many aspects of the history of the Dacians remain shrouded in

mystery.

In the light of the most recent archeological finds and of ancient historical sources, I tried to lay down, as concisely as possible, a collection of short essays about the Dacians – who they were, how they lived, what they believed in and how this people of mysterious barbarians, who supposedly knew how to make themselves immortal, faded out of history.

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