

Jelena (Rankov) Kondić (Belgrad)

The Roman Landscapes along the River Danubius in the Iron Gate Area

“...*Magnum est stare in Danubii ripa...*” (Plin. Ep.XVI 2)

“...*It is magnificent to stand on the bank of the Danube...*”

So notices Plinius, the famous Roman writer, who lived in Trajan’s time, inspired by the fascinating river Danube, about 1900 years ago...

Broadly speaking, at the time, **the Roman Danube/Danubius** controlled by the unique state, the Roman Empire, encompassed the largest number of the Roman Provinces, and was therefore used as a favorable naval military route, west-east and north or south and/or beyond.

Along the mountain Iron Gate Region in Moesia Superior (Upper Moesia, Serbia), one of the Danube Provinces, this river-road was marked as the north-east border of the Roman Empire against the barbarians, furthermore, it geographically separated the Middle and Lower Danube. The river banks and islands were reinforced with a large number of the military technical installations and fortresses, stations and harbors with urban agglomerations... As one of the strongest focal points on the Roman state border, that controlled river communication, it was arranged as a unique military-strategic system, known as **the Roman Limes**.

As a result of **the Emperor’s Trajan grandiose project** for this part of the river Danube, in the shadow of his triumphant campaigns against Dacians between 98/99 – 105/6 AD, one of his major achievements was building a continual, military guarded passage-way along the Danube Gorge, downstream or upstream, and by architectural planning of landscape, he transformed this dangerous, one hundred kilometers long sector, to a safe riverside (naval) road, in spite of the most terrible, wild natural obstacles/barriers.

Built throughout the Iron Gate Gorge, **Trajan’s riverside road, harbors, canal, bridge... via Traiana** represent the most important Trajan’s hydro-technical constructions and huge buildings located on this part of the river Danube, but, at the same time, they are a unique memorial that bear testimony of the Roman architectural pattern, signed by the famous architect Apollodorus, who also was the architect behind Trajan’s Column in Rome, six years later. It is well known that the large frieze on the **Trajan’s Column**, dated from 113 AD, depicts some of these once celebrated buildings, *in situ*.

The Roman fortress Diana at the Danube (Karataš/Kladovo) – *Statio Cataractarum Diana*, the Roman station which is situated at the upstream entrance in the Iron Gate Gorge, and which controlled navigation through Trajan’s Canal dug in 101 AD on Diana Cataracts, is a key site on this stretch of the Roman frontier for presentation and interpretation of Trajan’s building program, and the newest results of the interdisciplinary research program of the long-term excavation carried out at Diana, by author of this subject/paper, who is also the Head of this Project.