

## The plant landscape of the Sicilian archaeological areas through the iconographic documentation of travellers and naturalists

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The landscape is commonly defined as the set of physical and historical-anthropological characters expressed by a territory. Our re-elaboration defines the landscape as the set of perceivable characters of a territory expressed in relation to the stratification of the occurred natural and cultural processes. The *Grand Tour* reports are one of the most effective means to fix at least one stage of evolution from the Sicilian landscape, before its further transformation. These reports provide often a stereotypical image of the landscape of the Island, in particular as regards the major archaeological areas subjected to particular attention by the cultured travellers.

The authors summarize the characters of the plant landscape of the main Sicilian archaeological areas, through the analysis of both the rich documentation handed down by travellers, in particular of the *Grand Tour*, and the descriptions of some naturalists who visited the region, between the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> and the whole 19<sup>th</sup> century portraying and /or describing the most expressive places of its classicism.

In the landscape of these areas, the ruins are almost always framed by men in transit or in front of the archaeological remains or in the surrounding area dedicated to the livestock care, with sparse trees and bushes, sometimes constituted by exotic elements very incisive for the travellers, in majority European from across the Alps; being unknown in the travellers' countries they represented very attractive subjects. In fact, *Opuntia ficus-indica*, *Agave americana* and the historicized *Phoenix dactylifera* are frequent. Among the indigenous elements we can recognize *Olea europaea*, *Ceratonia siliqua*, *Ficus carica* and other species of leafy trees, partly survived and still present on the margins of the ancient temples and theatres. Among these there would be *Celtis australis*, *Fraxinus ornus*, *Quercus ilex*, *Ulmus canescens*. In the archaeological landscapes of the time, pines and cypresses are missing: these trees were already introduced and widespread in Italy in Roman times but they appeared around the Sicilian archaeological areas starting from the late nineteenth century.

The subject of this demonstration is presented by relating some photographic images of the places – obviously later - beginning with the Alinari Archive (end of the 800s beginning of the 20th century), with reproductions of iconographic documents by J.P.L.L. Houel (1782-87), P. Brydone (1806), R. Saint-Non (1785), J.W. Goethe (1787) and other travellers (J.F. D'Ostervald, 1822-24; D.-D. Farjasse, 1835; C. A. Schneegans, 1890 and G. Vuillier, 1893). In this path of great utility was the reading of the travel diaries of some naturalists, in particular C.S. Rafinesque Schmaltz (1810) and K. Presl (1817).