

## CHANGING MEDITERRANEAN ENVIRONMENT: IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE FROM PRE-INDUSTRIAL, UNPUBLISHED SCENES CONTEMPORARY WITH A MISSION (1786-1787) IN THE LEVANT

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### ABSTRACT

This paper provides an introduction to one hundred thirty one, pre-industrial, unpublished Mediterranean scenes kept in Oxford, which constitute valuable evidence of changing environment. The largely unknown and unpublished paintings witness environmental wilderness and the cultural landscapes of the region, late in the 18th century. They depict sixty two scenes from Greece, forty two from Turkey, twenty two from Italy, three from Cyprus and two from Gibraltar. The paintings reveal changes that have occurred over the last two centuries in Mediterranean ecosystems; uninhabited areas, mountainous expanses, coastal regions, and Aegean islands. The region belongs to the hotspots of the biodiversity on Earth. Scientific interest in archival material has been revived, on account of research into a diversity threatened by anthropogenic activities and climate change. In this context, unknown Mediterranean scenes of 18th century offer another perspective on this complex subject of enquiry, they support efforts towards protection and preservation of natural environment and heighten interest in the management of diverse Mediterranean ecosystems.

**KEYWORDS:** Aegean - Greece - Cyprus - nature - Italy - Oxford - Turkey - wilderness.

### INTRODUCTION

It was during the first journey of Professor John Sibthorp (1758-1796) from Oxford to Greece (1786-1787) that the Austrian painter Ferdinand Bauer (1760-1826) drew numerous Mediterranean scenes. Bauer studied landscape painting in the celebrated studio of Brand in Vienna and he assisted in the library and the botanical garden of Vienna (Lhotskt, 1843). It was in this context that he was introduced to J. Sibthorp, Professor of Botany at the University of Oxford (Bruce, 1970), who visited Vienna in order to see two famous manuscripts of Dioscorides, in the course of his preparations for a scientific exploration in the South Eastern Mediterranean (Harris, 2007). Sibthorp's main interest was the wealth of plants known since the classical antiquity in unexplored areas of Greece and he hired Ferdinand Bauer as the draughtsman of his mission in Eastern Mediterranean (Stearn, 1976; Lack and Mabberley, 1999; Krimbas, 2004; Rhizopoulou, 2004; Harris, 2007). This was a time when travellers were accompanied by a professional artist, whose work supplemented their discoveries with visual evidence (Nickelsen, 2006). Over the course of their journey from 1786 to 1787, a large number of plant-, animal- and geological-specimens were collected. Ferdinand Bauer made on-site sketches as preparation for his extraordinary detailed and accurate watercolours, illustrating living organisms and landscapes (Wise, 1989; Lack and Mabberley, 1999; Harris, 2007). Although, the monumental edition *Flora Graeca* (Sibthorp and Smith, 1806-1840) illustrated by Ferdinand Bauer, is considered the most splendid and expensive *Flora* ever produced, his work with Mediterranean landscape paintings has not been publicized and is still unknown. Environmental scenes support efforts towards the protection, the culture and preservation of natural environment (Smocovitis, 2003; Kent, 2009). Also, pictorial representations of landscapes reveal interactions among factors affecting the size of the regional species pool and

of locality acting processes such as competition, disturbance, productivity and seasonality (Kay *et al.*, 1997; McAllister *et al.*, 2009).

The purpose of his work was to present Mediterranean scenes contemporary with a scientific exploration in the region and simultaneous, irrefutable evidence of environmental status. With skill and sensitivity F. Bauer conveyed information about South Eastern Mediterranean region. His Mediterranean scenes in conjunction with *Flora Graeca Sibthorpiana* (Sibthorp and Smith, 1806-1840), herbarium specimens (Lack, 1997) and the unpublished *Fauna Graeca Sibthorpiana* (Sclater, 1904), all housed in Oxford University, disclose wide aspects of Mediterranean ecosystems.

## MATERIALS

The original, folio, monochrome landscape paintings (48.7 cm x 29.5 cm) from Eastern Mediterranean by Ferdinand Bauer were observed at the Department of Plant Sciences of Oxford University (MS Sherard 408) during scientific visits in 2006 and 2009, in the context of a broader research project on *Flora Graeca* of Sibthorp (Rhizopoulou, 2004; Harris, 2007; Rhizopoulou, 2007; Rhizopoulou and Harris, 2009). The whole collection of the extremely rare edition *Flora Graeca*, which is kept at the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of Oxford, is not accessible to the public. Also, it seems likely that Mediterranean scenes by Bauer were not made at Sibthorp's request and they were not included in the material related to the *Flora Graeca* and deposited at the University of Oxford after Sibthorp's death in 1796; they were devolved to the University of Oxford in 1932, i.e. 136 years after Sibthorp's death (Harris, 2007). Subsequently, the program "Flora Graeca in the twenty-first century" brought to light one hundred thirty one Mediterranean scenes by Ferdinand Bauer (Appendix 1), which are now accessible via the web (Digital Flora Graeca) and can be studied from distance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Mediterranean scenes by F. Bauer depict sixty two scenes from Greece, forty two from Turkey, twenty two from Italy, three from Cyprus and two from Gibraltar (Figs 1, 2). The drawings are contemporary with the mission (1786-1787) in the Levant, since Bauer numbered them according to the order of places they were visited (Appendix 1, Fig. 2).

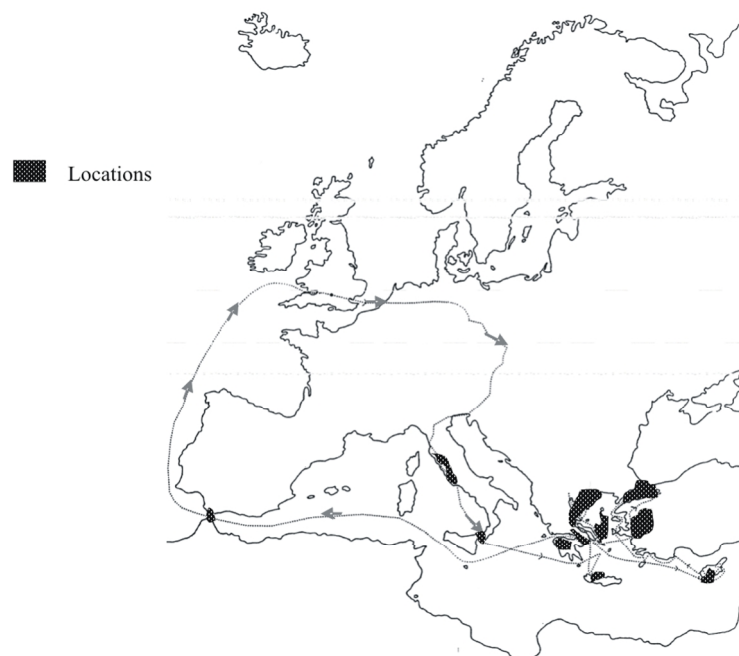


Figure 1. Sites of Mediterranean scenes by Ferdinand Bauer (darkened hatched areas), during the first journey of J. Sibthorp and F. Bauer (1786-1787) indicated by line and arrows

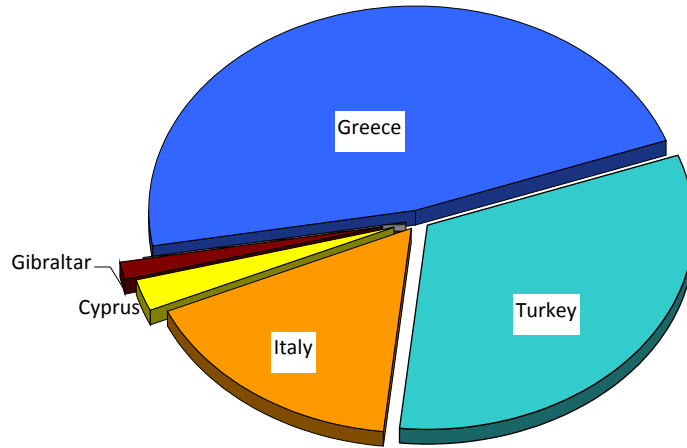


Figure 2. Geographical status of pre-industrial Mediterranean scenes by F. Bauer

The first twenty-two landscapes depict scenes from Italy, i.e. volcanic areas, views of Rome, Naples and Sicily, during spring of 1786. The following scenes portray islands of Greece, i.e. Kythera, Milos and Crete. In the Cretan interior, a monastery with clusters of cypresses and treacherous mountainous regions, indicate locations where they pursued native and medicinal plants. After departing from Crete and heading towards Athens, Bauer captured the aridity of various islands in Aegean archipelagos. The travellers set sail for the coasts of Turkey and travelled thence following in caravan the traditional routes into the interior, via mountainous areas illustrated in three landscapes. The delightful environment of Istanbul was the subject of twenty paintings; a cemetery, the Besiktas Shore Palace and an ancient aqueduct diverge from the usual focus on the natural environment. These were followed by views of the Black Sea, a village near Istanbul, the Princes islands and the Sea of Marmara; in particular, the depictions of views with ancient fortifications preserved the historical memory of the place. Bauer displayed considerable interest in the pictorial cartographic landscapes of European and Asian coasts in this strategic region and he developed some panoramic views in either two or four illustrations on a single plate. In several scenes ports, defensive structures near tidal waters and ancient monuments dominate (Fig. 3). Few of the Mediterranean scenes convey the spirit of locations and the genius loci of cities, such as Athens, Istanbul and Rome, which may carry their identity into the future to the extent that they face their past.

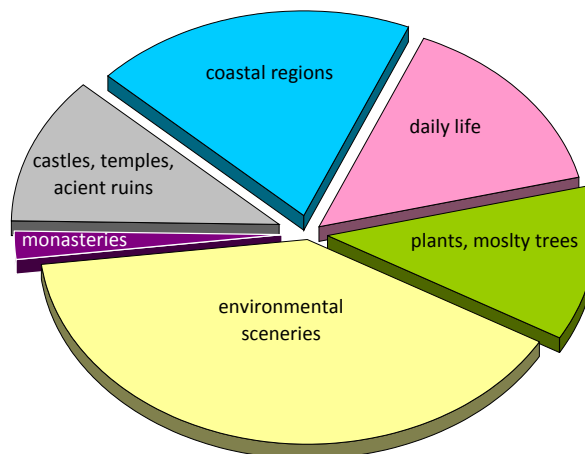


Figure 3. Status of scenic character of Mediterranean scenes by F. Bauer

In considering the natural environment, the journey through Cyprus was one of the most successful parts of the exploration to the Eastern Mediterranean; they collected hundreds of specimens. It is noteworthy that Sibthorp's group was the first scientific mission of naturalists to reach Cyprus, as

the famous explorer of the eastern Mediterranean J. Pitton de Tournefort (1656-1708) did not visit this island. Also, the mission was the first to reach Mt. Parnassus, in the mainland of Greece, in recent times and the second to the mountainous environment and monasteries of the Athos peninsula in the north of Greece. In the Levant, ancient knowledge of healing properties of natural products from living tissues was well preserved in monasteries; their gardens and cultivated fields were a natural focus of interest for scientific inquiry (Lardos, 2006; Rhizopoulou, 2008). As the summer of 1787, with its few flowering plants, drew to an end, so did the mission to the Eastern Mediterranean. Sibthorp and Bauer returned to England by sea in the winter of 1787.

Sibthorp's idea to execute a naturalist exploration of the eastern Mediterranean was realized through hard work, under field conditions, late in the 18th century. It was an outstanding achievement, especially in light of the short time in which the samples from living organisms were collected and the wide-ranging geographical coverage of the expedition (Fig. 1). Only after *Flora Graeca* was eventually published (1806-1840) and the main participants in the expedition were no longer alive, the interest in the eastern Mediterranean began to increase in the 19th century. The region was incorporated into the Grand Tour tradition as a major source of knowledge. The curiosity of travellers was nourished by knowledge of natural history and archaeology; some of them even earned themselves the appellation "Levant lunatics" (Tregaskis, 1979). Descriptions of naturalists in the 18th and 19th century played an important role in the more general development of ecological thought (Mayr, 1982). Also, a sizeable reading public was (and still is) interested in travellers' chronicles, graphic images and pictorial landscapes that revealed the natural history and physiography of this region.

Recently, interest in *Flora Graeca* has been revived (Strid and Strid, 2009) on account of research into a biodiversity threatened by climate change. The region has been identified as belonging to one of the world's biodiversity hotspots (Myers *et al.*, 2000) and it is characterized by endemism richness (Naveh, 1998; Başkale and Kaya, 2009; Georghiou and Delipetrou, 2010; Lymberakis and Poulakakis 2010; Pafilis, 2010; Türe and Böcük, 2010). Numerous places viewed in the 18th-century Bauer's paintings were designated as "Natura" sites under the EC directives, at the beginning of the 21st century and heighten the interest in the study of the diversity of ecosystems. However, Eastern Mediterranean ecosystems have been profoundly influenced by human impact and issues of environmental concern have become very important; for example, land cover changes and land degradation has attracted attention (Jones-Walters and Čivić, 2010). In this aspect, landscapes paintings are "visual symbols" of a particular time, indicating considerable changes occurring in the regional environment throughout two centuries (Antrop, 2005; Daskalothanassis, 2004; Vogiatzakis *et al.*, 2006).

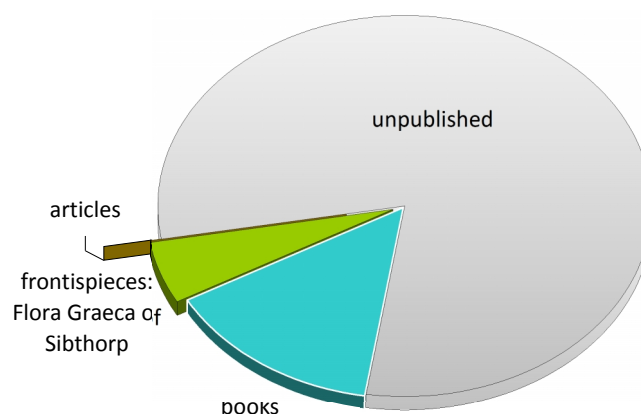


Figure 4. Publicised status of Mediterranean scenes by F. Bauer

Mediterranean scenes by Ferdinand Bauer were completed in England before 1794 and remained unpublished from that time until the 21st century. There are very few references to this work in the international literature, while twenty four Mediterranean scenes were publicized (Appendix 1) with the circulation of books and articles (Harris, 2007; Lack and Mabberley, 1999; Mills and Townsend, 1991; Rhizopoulou, 2004; Wise, 1989). Seven hand-coloured engravings of Bauer's landscapes appear in vignettes on frontispieces of seven volumes of *Flora Graeca* (Fig. 4, Appendix 1) and

reached a limited audience of this highly exclusive edition. According to the best of our knowledge, except all the aforementioned publicized drawings, one hundred seven Mediterranean scenes by Bauer still remain unknown and unpublished (Fig. 4).

The term “landscape” emerged as a way of seeing the external world. It was, and it remains, a visual term, closely bound up with wilderness, space and roughness of the environment, where balance and harmony are believed to depend on absence of permanent habitation. The term “landscape” is frequently used in natural conservation, management, ecology, geography and archaeology, linking all these diverse spaces with the idea that their qualities as dwelling habitats are rendered visible in pictorial form (Cosgrove, 2006).

Ferdinand Bauer conveyed information about South Eastern Mediterranean landscapes: uninhabited countryside, rocky mountainous expanses, seaside scenes, bays, inlets, harbours, villages, ancient monuments, monasteries, temples and castles with historical and strategic importance. Monuments did exist indeed; as splendid evidence of past glories the remains they come across in their journey. All were rendered by the artist’s hand in pencil and pen with black ink, sometimes diluted to achieve shades of grey. He pictured the two gateways of the Mediterranean Sea: Dardanelle at the eastern end and Gibraltar at the west (at a time before the Suez Canal). Islands with cliffs, beaches, distant hills and steep slopes characterize a plethora of habitats of adapted organisms. In many of these scenes, we behold from a distance landscapes which would appear uninhabited and hostile to plant life (Braudel *et al.*, 1985; Baltas *et al.* 2010). Gradually, living organisms adjusted to the harsh environment of brackish soils, caves and arid islands become objects of study, while terms such as ecological biogeography and geographical ecology mutated into environmental physiology (Mayr, 1982). Bauer depicted scenes of daily life, illustrating linkages between biotic and inorganic factors in the region (McAllister *et al.*, 2009).

Bauer’s landscape paintings constitute precious and highly valuable evidence for changes in both environmental forms and cultural landscapes, as well as for some vanished landscapes. For example, several places illustrated in his paintings have retained, to the present, a role as tourist centres (Harvey, 2001; Vogiatzakis *et al.*, 2006). Pictorial landscapes are also for interest, for that they show –rarely depicted before– landscapes earlier than those recorded by travellers in the early 19th century (Harris, 2007). They support efforts towards the protection and preservation of both the natural environment and the cultural heritage (Terkenli, 2001).

When Bauer was in England (1787-1793) producing his artistic renderings of illustrations related to biodiversity, natural history and physiography of South Eastern Mediterranean, other travellers were publishing their works with descriptive views and drawing comparisons between the past and the present of this region. Amidst this exchange of information and flurry of publication from the 18th to the 20th century, the work of Ferdinand Bauer on Mediterranean scenes was not publicized; as far as we know, it was neither his responsibility, nor his obligation.

The unpublished, Mediterranean scenes can be viewed two centuries after their creation in detail via the web (Digital Flora Graeca). Picturesque landscape images visible in historical depth are consistently threatened by, if not already lost to, the past (Cosgrove, 2006). Bauer’s drawings represent a unique heritage for scenic characteristics of the environment in South Eastern Mediterranean, revealing the many changes they underwent in the environment and enable us to predict future changes and transformation more reliably. Also, the scientific significance of the images today can be expanded to the analysis of the biodiversity. Further investigation will be required to test this hypothesis.

## CONCLUSION

The largely unknown, pre-industrial landscape paintings witness wildernesses and changing environment in the South Eastern Mediterranean region. The landscape paintings by F. Bauer, which are kept in Oxford, depict regional scenic traits and constitute valuable evidence for vanished landscapes. Revived interest in archives reflects interest in environmental management of the region.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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**APPENDIX 1**

Mediterranean Scenes by Ferdinand Bauer; first column: numbering of scenes and second column scenes labelled by the artist in a continuous sequence according to the order of places visited by the mission (1786-1787). Landscape paintings' numerical disorder is indicated by asterisk (\*)

<b>Number</b>	<b>Scene and legend</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Reference</b>
1	1: Colosseum at Rome	Italy	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
2	2: the bay of Naples	Italy	-
3	3: Vesuvius	Italy	Harris, 2007
4	4: Vesuvius	Italy	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
5	5: Vesuvius	Italy	-
6	6: a grotto Paysilipon	Italy	-
7	7: Solfa Terra	Italy	-
8	8: ruins	Italy	-
9	9: a temple	Italy	-
10	10: Flegrean islands	Italy	-
11	11: a coast of Naples	Italy	-
12	12: Capri	Italy	-
13	13: Capri	Italy	-
14	14: a fisherman's house, Capri	Italy	-
15	15: Capri	Italy	-
16	16: a castle in Capri	Italy	-
17	17: ruins in Capri	Italy	-
18	18: remains of a bath building	Italy	-
19	19: Panara, Stromboli	Italy	-
20	20: Vulcana, Lipari, Saline	Italy	-
21	21: Aetna	Italy	Harris, 2007
22	22: Messina	Italy	-
23	23: Kythera	Greece	-
24	24: small islands and Milos	Greece	-
25	25: rocks near Milos	Greece	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
26	26: harbour in Milos	Greece	-
27	27: Chania in Crete	Greece	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
28	28: Holy Trinity monastery	Greece	Harris, 2007
29	29: Sphakia in Crete	Greece	-
30	30: Sphakia in Crete	Greece	-
31	31: Hydra island	Greece	-
32	32A: Egina island	Greece	-
33	32B: Siphnos island	Greece	-
34	33: the grotto of Antiparos	Greece	-
35	34: the grotto of Antiparos	Greece	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
36	35: the grotto of Antiparos	Greece	-
37	36: Amorgos island	Greece	-
38	37: Amorgos island	Greece	-
39	38: remains of a temple in Samos	Greece	-
40	39: Dilek Dađi	Turkey	-
41	40: Kousandasi	Turkey	-
42	41: a caravan	Turkey	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
43	42: Mt Olympus of Bithynia	Turkey	Harris, 2007
44	43: Mt Olympus of Bithynia	Turkey	vignette, 3rd frontispiece Flora Graeca
45	44: Mt. Olympus with Bursa	Turkey	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
46	45S: the Seraglio point	Turkey	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
47	46S: Istanbul	Turkey	-
48	47S: Istanbul	Turkey	-
49	48: View from Asia to Bosporus	Turkey	-
50	49S: Bosporus	Turkey	-
51	50: Channel of Istanbul	Turkey	-
52	51S: Büyükdere	Turkey	-
53	52S: view of the black sea	Turkey	vignette, 5th frontispiece Flora Graeca
54	53S: Istanbul	Turkey	vignette, 4th frontispiece Flora Graeca; Harris, 2007

Number	Scene and legend	Country	Reference
55	54S: Istanbul	Turkey	-
56	56*: towers of Oblivion	Turkey	-
57	57S: tower of Oblivion	Turkey	-
58	58S: Besiktas Shore Palace	Turkey	-
59	59S: a castle on Black Sea coast	Turkey	-
60	60S: a village near Istanbul	Turkey	-
61	61S: an ancient aqueduct	Turkey	-
62	62S: the Sea of Marmara	Turkey	-
63	63S: coasts of Asia	Turkey	-
64	64: coasts of Asia	Turkey	Harris, 2007
65	65S: a village on the island Karki	Turkey	-
66	66: Princes Islands	Turkey	-
67	67S: one of the Princes Islands	Turkey	-
68	68: Prinkiponhsa	Turkey	-
69	69S: Prinkiponhsa	Turkey	-
70	70S: old castles	Turkey	-
71	71s: old castle	Turkey	-
72	72S: Dardanelles	Turkey	Harris, 2007
73	73S: Dardanelles	Turkey	-
74	74S: Dardanelles	Turkey	-
75	75: Tenedos	Turkey	-
76	76: Karapaktar	Turkey	-
77	77: Karapaktar	Turkey	-
78	78: a coast of the gulf Macri	Turkey	-
79	79S: port of Rhodes	Greece	-
80	80: Monte Croce, Mt Staveros	Cyprus	-
81	81: Holy Cross monastery	Cyprus	-
82	82: the village Ipsora	Cyprus	Harris, 2007
83	83: port Finica	Turkey	-
84	84: coast of Turkey	Turkey	-
85	85S: a village near Porto Finica	Turkey	-
86	86: Leros island	Greece	-
87	87S: Leros island	Greece	-
88	88: Patmos island	Greece	-
89	89: Patmos houses people	Greece	-
90	90: monastery of Apocalypse	Greece	Lack and Maberley, 1999
91	92*: Skinousa island	Greece	-
92	93: Aegean islands	Greece	-
93	94: Kimolos island	Greece	-
94	98*: Phaleron bay and Attica	Greece	-
95	99: Phaleron bay	Greece	-
96	100: Athens panoramic view	Greece	vignette, 6th frontispiece Flora Graeca; Stearn, 1976; Rhizopoulou, 2004; Harris, 2007
79	101S: Theseum temple	Greece	-
98	102S: Theseum temple	Greece	-
99	103S: Theseum temple	Greece	-
100	104S: Philopappou monument	Greece	-
101	105: theatre Herodes Atticus	Greece	-
102	106: temple of Zeus Olympios	Greece	-
103	107S: Adrian gate at Athens	Greece	Lack and Maberley, 1999
104	108: a fountain near Livadia	Greece	-
105	109: Trophonius' grotto site	Greece	-
106	110: a view of Livadia	Greece	-
107	111S: Trophonius grotto	Greece	-
108	112S: Parnassus	Greece	vignette, 1st frontispiece Flora Graeca; Krimbas, 2004; Harris, 2007
109	115*: the temple at Sounio	Greece	-
110	119*: the temple at Sounio	Greece	-

Number	Scene and legend	Country	Reference
111	120: Negroponte bridge	Greece	-
112	121: Negroponte bridge castle	Greece	-
113	122: Negroponte bridge castle	Greece	-
114	123S: Negroponte castles	Greece	-
115	124: Negroponte: customs	Greece	-
116	125S: Iviri monastery in Athos	Greece	-
117	126S: the summit of Mt Athos	Greece	Harris, 2007
118	127S: a convent of Mt Athos	Greece	vignette, 2nd frontispiece Flora Graeca; Lack and Mabberley, 1999
119	128S: west coast of Mt Athos	Greece	-
120	129S: Thessalonica	Greece	-
121	130: gulf of Thessalonica	Greece	-
122	131: a village near Thessalonica	Greece	-
123	132S: ruins of Eleusis	Greece	-
124	133S: the port of Megara	Greece	-
125	134: Isthmus of Corinth	Greece	-
126	135S: ancient temple in Corinth	Greece	-
127	136S: Corinth panoramic	Greece	vignette, 7th frontispiece Flora Graeca; Lack and Mabberley, 1999
128	137: Isthmus of Corinth	Greece	-
129	139*: Patras, panoramic view	Greece	Lack and Mabberley, 1999
130	140: the rock of Gibraltar	U.K.	-
131	141: the harbour of Gibraltar	U.K.	-

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