

PAPER • OPEN ACCESS

## Objects of water use in Sicily in the albums by A.S. Norov and A.D. Chertkov (first half of the 19th century)

To cite this article: N A Ozerova *et al* 2020 *IOP Conf. Ser.: Earth Environ. Sci.* **579** 012169

View the [article online](#) for updates and enhancements.

# Objects of water use in Sicily in the albums by A.S. Norov and A.D. Chertkov (first half of the 19th century)

N A Ozerova<sup>1,2</sup>, O A Aleksandrovskaya<sup>1</sup> and V A Snytko<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>S.I. Vavilov Institute for the History of Science and Technology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 14, Baltiyskaya str., Moscow, 125315, Russia

<sup>2</sup>State University of Land Use Planning, 15, Kazakova str., Moscow, 105064, Russia

E-mail: ozerova@ihst.ru

**Abstract.** The paper considers the objects of water use depicted in albums and described in notes of Russian travelers A.S. Norov and A.D. Chertkov, who visited Sicily in the 1820s. Among these objects are rivers, springs, fountains, ancient aqueducts, water mills. For A.S. Norov most of the drawings were made by the Russian artist F.M. Matveev, who lived most of his life in Italy. A.D. Chertkov was accompanied by the German artist C.F. Stange. The images in albums help to better represent local household traditions and features of water use and significantly supplement descriptions in texts published by the travelers.

## 1. Introduction

The image of Sicily as a paradise and a mysterious place, where any traveler making a journey through Europe would like to reach, was born in Russian culture in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The first publications of the travelers' notes, who visited southern Italy and Sicily, belong to this period. They were composed in the genre of "picturesque journey", which was widespread in France, England and Germany between 1770 and 1850 [1–4].

The interest in the nature and attractions of Italy was fueled by the fashion for southern landscapes in fine arts. The great lords and lovers of art sought to see historical and architectural monuments, natural views recognized as "the most noble". It was believed that only in Italy the luxury of southern nature was connected in perfect landscapes with ancient architectural monuments, which represented the history of mankind [5].

Thus, there were all the prerequisites for two trips to take place almost simultaneously in the 1820s: a Russian state and public figure, travel scientist, writer, bibliophile and collector Abraham Sergeevich Norov (1795–1869) and a historian, numismatist and collector Alexander Dmitrievich Chertkov (1789–1858).

## 2. Materials and methods

The materials for the study included albums of drawings and engravings compiled by A.S. Norov and A.D. Chertkov based on their travel materials in Sicily.

*The Atlas* by A.S. Norov consists of 96 drawings and 8 engravings [6]. It is currently stored in the Department of Art Edition (DAE) of the Russian State Library. The drawings are made with graphite and Italian pencil, carcass, tone drawings – by brush and sepia. The author of most images was the Russian landscape artist F.M. Matveev (1758–1826) – a gold medalist in landscape painting and a graduate of the St. Petersburg Academy of Arts [7]. In 1779 the artist went to Rome to improve his



Content from this work may be used under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 licence](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/). Any further distribution of this work must maintain attribution to the author(s) and the title of the work, journal citation and DOI.

landscape painting skills, but never again returned to Russia. From 1780 until the end of his life he lived in Italy. It is known that in the 1788 and 1810s the artist made several trips to Sicily [8]. Apparently, when travelling in Italy Norov bought drawings from Matveev, adding them with copies of illustrations from *The Picturesque Journey of Uel* and drawings made with his own hand. This collected made the Norov's *Atlas* [7].

*The Album* by A.D. Chertkov was published in Moscow in 1835. [9] The author of the drawings and engravings was the German artist Carl Friedrich Stange (1784–1851), who accompanied Chertkov in his trip [10]. During the journey, the artist painted more than a hundred “original views of wonderful places, remnants of antiquities, natural history objects, etc.” [11, p. V], of which only 29 were printed. The fate of other drawings is unknown.

The content of the albums and the sequence of drawings and engravings presented in them correspond to the routes of Norov and Chertkov, so the albums were analyzed in complex with published descriptions of travels alongside with their illustrative applications.

### 3. *The Atlas* by A.S. Norov

A.S. Norov visited Sicily in 1822 [12]. In the pages of his *The Travels in Sicily...* [13] he noted exceptionally hot weather, unusual for a resident of Russia. Thus, it can be concluded that the Norov's trip took place in the dry season [14]. In addition to the descriptions of ancient ruins, difficulties and pleasant impressions of the journey, the Norov's book highlights numerous objects of the hydrographic network of the island, ruins of ancient and operating hydrotechnical structures, gives routine observations concerning local traditions of water use.

The analysis of the content of *The Atlas* by M.S. Filantieva and E.A. Ershova shows several major cycles from among the set of drawings: the views of Naples and the surrounding areas, the views of Palermo and the surrounding areas, the views of Messina, Etna and Syracuse [7]. In almost each of them you can find images of water use objects. Thus, the first cycle (Naples and its surroundings) includes drawings numbered 11–14 illustrating the lake Agnaro (*Lac Agnaro*), Fuzaro (*Fuzaro*), Lukrino (*Lago Lucrino*) and Averno (*Lac Averno*) located in Campania.

The first image of Sicily's water basin in *The Atlas* is a drawing numbered 41 – *Selinunte* made with ink. The view of ruins holds the central place in his composition, and only in the left part you can see the valley of the Ipsa River (now the Beliche River) flowing in the western part of the island.

Drawing 88 – *Water Pipelines of the Simeta River* (now Giaretta) – depicts an ancient two-tier aqueduct crossing the Simeto River Valley, which flows into the Ionian Sea 10 km south of Catania. The widest arch is drawn directly above the river bed.

Several images of hydraulic structures are included into the cycle of views of Syracuse and its surrounding areas. Thus, number 91 is the drawing called *The Arethusa Spring* made with ink. It shows a fortress wall with an arch (cave) with the statue of a woman (probably a nymph Arethusa) above it. Some women doing the washing are standing in a spring ankle deep in water, with tied skirts. The baskets with linen are near them. A tree is painted at the left corner of the drawing. Stones and grass vegetation can be seen in the foreground; on the left near a woman there is a boy bridling a horse. On the right there is a building with a gridded window, below – a natural raw ledge of rock with a fragment of stone laying. The image of the spring exactly corresponds to its description in the text *The Travels in Sicily...*: “what an interesting picture I saw: crowds of half-naked girls washing their covers standing ankle deep in water, in different groups, in the spring, transparent as glass; it flowed quietly from under the ancient body of city walls. <...> Its bottom was made with multicolored mosaics onto the distant space that the sea now occupied; the remains of all mosaics were still visible, as I was told, ten years ago...” [13, part 2, pp 38-40].

Another ancient aqueduct is shown in Drawing 92 – *Latomea*, which illustrates the view of ancient stone pits.

The series of drawings numbered 95, 96, 97 and 99 show *The Syracuse Theatre* – the ruins of an amphitheater with a mill on its steps – from different angles and made with different techniques. Next to drawing 97 is a piece of text from *The Travel...* by Norov with its description: it acted “by means of

a water pipeline (Saracen construction) directed from Tichy outskirts” [13, part 2, p 84]. Drawing 99, made by sepia, surprises with the delicacy of drawing. Apart from the mill and the waterfall on the steps of the amphitheater it shows washing and bathing women.

Apparently, similar numbers 95 and 96 – versions of pencil drawings to F.M. Matveev’s picture *A view of the theater in Siracusa*, which is stored in the Tretyakov Gallery (Fig. 1) [15]. Drawing 95 shows people on the steps at a grove, perhaps, that resting family of a miller about which Norov wrote: “The family of the miller had a rest on marble steps where Timoleon once sat, exciting or pacifying the crowd of Siracusa people surrounding him...” [13, part 2, p 84]. The drawing shows a mill building and a mill pond with vegetation at the dam, going to the left edge of the drawing. In the foreground – a sketch of a washing woman. In the drawing number 96 you can also see a mill, a dam, and a pond extending into the left edge of the drawing.



**Figure 1.** F.M. Matveev. View of theatre in Syracuse [15]

#### 4. A.D. Chertkov’s album

In 1823-25, A.D. Chertkov travelled through Western Europe, visiting Austria, Switzerland, Italy and Sicily. The journey from Naples to Sicily and back took 43 days, from March 22 to May 9, 1824 [16]. The time for the trip was not the most successful: at this time of the year there are heavy rains in Sicily. In this regard, Chertkov repeatedly mentioned the flooding rivers and springs that he had to overcome because of the lack of bridges.

Going on a trip, Chertkov planned to design his trip with a book, and for this purpose he invited a German artist Stange on a trip across Sicily to capture the sights and amazing nature of the island [10]. Among the drawing presented in the album there are three reflecting the peculiarities of local water use. Thus, the drawing number 4 – *Palermo Ordinary Folks* – shows women collecting water from the fountain into different jars to take it home. Chertkov noted that in Palermo “there are many fountains on the squares” [11, part 1, p 49], so it is no surprise that in his album there was a place for a plot typical for this town (Fig. 2).

Drawing number 7 – *Sciacca Vicinities* – shows the travelers rising astride mules uphill with a dark niche or a cave with a small river flowing at the bottom. Probably this is the mount of St. Kalogera, from which the warm springs flow, described by Chertkov in his *Memories of Sicily*: “This mountain consists of carbon dioxide lime filled with shells. It also contains sulfur, pyrites, magnesium and table

salt. Steam and smoke get out from each flaw, from the slightest crack. The mountain is full of natural groves and artificial caves” [11, part 1, p 141]. Chertkov described the use of sources near Sciacca: they “were very popular among the ancient, but now no one visits them, although they have not lost their healing qualities and could now help to treat various diseases. They are full of sulfur, magnesium, limestone and salty particles. Some springs near Sciacca are so filled with lime solution that for several days they cover and combine into one mass the bodies immersed in them” [11, part 1, pp 142-143] (Fig. 3).



**Figure 2.** Palermo women collect water from the fountain [9].



**Figure 3.** Sciacca Vicinities

Finally, the drawing number 15 – *Syracuse Amphitheater* – shows the plot already familiar by A.S. Norov's *The Atlas*, but from another perspective: the steps of the ancient amphitheater with the mill building, a dam, a pond and a spring. The banks of water bodies are dusted with cane and other wetland vegetation. Chertkov wrote about this theater that it "was so great that two stone mills constructed in the 16<sup>th</sup> century <were> in its interior, on the spring flowing here" [11, part 1, p 201].

## 5. Conclusion

The history of water use in Sicily dates back several millennia. No wonder A.S. Norov and A.D. Chertkov paid much attention to the ancient ruins of aqueducts, water pipelines, fountains, and springs. Both travelers rightfully emphasized that each spring on the island served as a source of water for household needs, including washing, bathing, as a source of energy for mills. The practice of careful collection and use of water by means of hydraulic structures established in the past is caused by the problem of lack of water for household needs, which remains relevant at present [17, 18].

A.S. Norov managed to collect a large collection of views of Italy and Sicily, a large part of which was painted by F.M. Matveev. A.D. Chertkov, who invited C.F. Stange as an accompanying artist, prepared and published an album with the views of Sicily. The drawings from Norov's *The Atlas* and engravings from Chertkov's *The Album* do not only supplement the verbal description of the economic use of the water sources of Sicily published in the books, but also help to better present local domestic traditions and peculiarities of water use.

## References

- [1] *Mr. Bridone's journey through Sicily and Malta in 1770 1795* Supplemented from different newest trips, such as G. Ridezel, Schwinburne, Bartels and others, supplied with notes and useful instructions for young children by Mr. Campe, and published by the original glorious Mr. Dumouriez (Moscow: Selivanovsky publ. house) Part 1, 198 p; Part 2, 183 p
- [2] *Day-to-day notes of travel to Sicily and Malta in 1782 1784* (St. Petersburg) 212 p
- [3] Bronevsky V B 1819 *Notes of the marine officer in the continuation of the campaign on the Mediterranean Sea under the leadership of Vice Admiral Dmitry Nikolayevich Senyavin from 1805 to 1810* (St. Petersburg: Marine Print. House) Part 4, 336 p
- [4] *Saint-Non J-C R de Voyage pittoresque ou Description des Royaumes de Naples et de Sicile 1781–1786* (Paris) pp 1–4
- [5] Usacheva S 2008 The Italian journey of Fyodor Matveyev *Tretyakov gallery* **3(20)** Retrieved from: <https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/39385293/nnn-1-2-n-3-4-u-nnununnu-nu-3-4-n-1-4-nuu-the-tretyakov->
- [6] Norov A S, *Travel in Sicily in 1822. Album of drawings* RGB IZO 74/4. XII-885
- [7] Filatyeva M S and Ershova E A 2019 Atlas of "Travel to Sicily in 1822" by A. S. Norov and artist F M Matveyev *Int. Sci. and Pract. Conf. Rumyantsev Readings – 2019* vol 3 pp 198–203
- [8] Fyodorov-Davydov A A 1953 *Russian landscape of the 18th – early 19th century* (Moscow: Art) 581 p
- [9] *A D Chertkov's album*, Retrieved from: <https://picturehistory.livejournal.com/4248414.html>
- [10] Frolova M M 2007 *Alexander Dmitrievich Chertkov (1789–1858)* (Moscow: Publ. House of the Main Archive of Moscow) 592 p
- [11] Chertkov A 1836 *Memories of Sicily: Imperial Medical and Surgical Academy* Part 1, 256 p; Part 2, 346 p
- [12] Chistikova E A 2011 A.S. Norov's travel to Sicily in 1822 *Clio* **1(52)** 31–3
- [13] Norov A A 1828 *Journey through Sicily in 1822* (St. Petersburg: A. Smirdin's publ.) Part 1, 245 p; Part 2, 247 p
- [14] Venturella G 2004 Climatic and pedological features of Sicily Boccone *World Soil Resources Reports* **106(17)** 47–53 (Rome: FAO)
- [15] Matveev F M *View of theatre in Syracuse*, Retrieved from: [https://rusitalsimpatia.ucoz.org/publ/russkie\\_khudozhniki\\_v\\_italii\\_vekhi\\_sudeb\\_i\\_obrazy/kon](https://rusitalsimpatia.ucoz.org/publ/russkie_khudozhniki_v_italii_vekhi_sudeb_i_obrazy/kon)

ec\_xviii\_nachalo\_xix\_veka/fedor\_matveev\_vid\_teatra\_v\_sirakuzakh\_seredina\_1810\_kh\_nachalo\_1820\_kh\_godov/101-1-0-84

- [16] Chertkov A D 2012 *Journal of my journey through Austria, Italy, Sicily, Switzerland etc. in 1823–1825* (Moscow: Russian World) 768 p
- [17] Ventura D, Consoli S, Barbagallo S, Marzo A, Vanella D, Licciardello F and Cirelli G L 2019 How to Overcome Barriers for Wastewater Agricultural Reuse in Sicily (Italy)? *Water* **11**(2) 335 DOI 10.3390/w11020335.
- [18] Licata M, Gennaro M C, Tuttolomondo T, Leto C and La Bella S 2019 Research focusing on plant performance in constructed wetlands and agronomic application of treated wastewater – A set of experimental studies in Sicily (Italy) *Plos One* **July 2019** DOI 10.1371/journal.pone.0219445.