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The contribution of historical aerial and satellite photos to archaeological and geo-archaeological research: case studies in Italy and Turkey

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Abstract. The paper evidences the importance of old aerial and satellite photos of ancient topography studies, with examples concerning archaeological and geo-archaeological research conducted in Italy and Turkey, during a cooperation between the Ancient Topography, Archaeology and Remote Sensing Laboratory (AnTAReS Lab) of the Institute for Archaeological and Monumental Heritage of the Italian National Research Council (IBAM-CNR) and the Ancient Topography and Photogrammetry Laboratory (LabTAF) of Salento University.

The historical aerial photos, i.e. those before the big transformations of the 1950's and 1960's, and the space photos taken in the 1960's and 1970's, particularly useful for the Near East, represent a fundamental tool for the study of the territory. In many cases, in fact, they document landscapes that have been modified by urbanization, building of large infrastructures, transformations in the land use and diffusion of mechanized agricultural methods. Only through the detailed analysis of these aerial and space photos it is possible to recover a fundamental documentation concerning the existence, the location and the layout of archaeological evidence and paleo-environmental elements otherwise lost; so, their use during research is very important for the reconstruction of the ancient topography of urban and territorial contexts.

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