

# **MOUNT TEIDE IN THE WORK OF OLIVIA STONE: LANDSCAPE AS A TOURISM RESOURCE**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The landscape and nature of the Canary Islands stand out on the world map for their diversity and originality. This fragmented insular space combines a variety of geographical factors, namely volcanism and its subtropical location, resulting in many diverse landscapes all within a small area (7,493 km<sup>2</sup>). Romanticism, a cultural movement that inspired the beginning of leisure travel to the Canary Islands, took traveling beyond the strictly European borders and brought it to more exotic and distant destinations, which, in the late nineteenth century, began to place this archipelago northwest of the African continent in the limelight.

The objective of the paper presented is twofold. On the one hand, our objective is to explore the tourist interest in the landscape of the Canary Islands, and especially by the predominantly natural physiognomy, among Europeans, particularly among the British in the late nineteenth century. And secondly, once this first objective has been fulfilled, we will demonstrate that one of the main centres of attraction in this sense was the exceptional scenery associated with the stunning Teide stratovolcano.

To accomplish this dual objective, it was first essential to make a brief analysis of the European culture of British high society that inspired leisure travel and spending free time in nature and the countryside during that era, and then analyse the stories of travellers who were drawn to visit the islands due to the landscape and who played an important role in the tourism industry taking off during those years. In this last phase of the paper, a brief description of the most outstanding features of the landscapes of Mount Teide is taken as a point of departure to demonstrate, through analysing British writer Olivia Stone's travelogue, that this author, fascinated by Mount Teide, discovers this exceptional mountain through insights that share surprising similarities with the geographical recognition of the landscape.

## 2. LANDSCAPE AS A TOURISM RESOURCE

The meaning of landscape as a form of scientific knowledge focuses on the study of the physiognomy of the territory and, thus, on explaining all the forms and elements that compose it. This concept implies every single component of the landscape, both natural and cultural, the search for relationships that occur between them and their spatial materialization (Martínez de Pisón, 2009a; Beltrán, 2000 and 2007). Never before has the landscape been so valued by society, to the extent that it is an existential reference for all mankind, and also to the extent that individuals and different social groups attribute certain values to it. But its value also increases if it is considered as a tourism resource, as today's tourist is less homogeneous, more informed, more demanding and wants to visit authentic environments with a unique geography.

Although there is no escaping the fact that today, in a new mature era, the landscape possesses the highest social value and precious views as a tourism resource, it is very striking, when the origins of tourism in the Canary Islands are traced back to the end of the nineteenth century, to discover how the interest in landscape as a tourism resource is perceived from its very beginning among European foreigners visiting the Canary Islands at that time.

Indeed, starting in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, there is a notable change in the tourism interest of the British elites, who began to travel to more remote areas of the continent situated in the eastern Atlantic, such as the island of Madeira and the Canary Islands and, within the latter, mainly to Puerto de la Cruz de Tenerife and Las Palmas.

## 3. THE EARLY TOURIST ATTRACTION OF THE ISLAND OF TENERIFE IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The economic prosperity that England experienced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brought with it high growth to the city of London, which, by the late nineteenth century, already had a population of nearly five million people (4,766,661) in the year 1881 (Howarth, 1911). The worsening of smog or smoggy air, a thick fog consisting of a mixture of smoke pollution and fog that covered the industrial cities, was a catalyst in prompting the upper classes to flee the British capital. To combat the smog, British doctors and writers of the era recommended contact with nature, breathing fresh air and taking trips to the countryside. Therefore, the British upper class used to move to the countryside for seasons at a time to live in their spacious and posh homes, where they could enjoy the landscape and country life. Soon the wealthy bourgeoisie would also take to the countryside and this would become one of the most outstanding cultural values of the British elite of the time: paying homage to natural landscapes. This *lifestyle*, which is still preserved today in British high society, is linked directly to the quality style of tourism that would be developed in the Canary Islands during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and particularly on the island of Tenerife, in the Orotava Valley, with the Pico del Teide splendidly crowning its mountaintops.

In this sense, it is very important to analyse the contents of the tourist guide by Alfred Smaler Brown, who had a prominent role in tourism taking off on the islands during those

years. The guide *Madeira, the Canary Islands and Açores. A Complete Guide for the Use of Invalids and Tourists* was published for the first time in 1889 and posted record sales. His guide contains various routes for exploring the islands, its main cities, towns and the most important architectural and cultural enclaves, and is very insightful from the point of view of nature and landscape tourism, the attention paid to the striking features of the terrain, climate and vegetation of the islands (with detailed figures and tables) and, of course, the Teide volcano. The guide makes valuable comments about this volcano and offers different routes for hiking in the National Park of Las Cañadas, even indicating the best places for enjoying Tenerife's summit.

Among the foreign visitors who started coming to the Canary Islands, there were those who travelled to the islands for health reasons or to rest, and others who mainly came because they were interested in exploring the islands and discovering the great volcano and its original landscapes. The purpose of their visit was to wander the Canary Islands in search of its most picturesque and representative landscapes, to learn about their customs and most important historical facts and, many times, it was considerably difficult to make such trips to the islands. The most outstanding and adventurous traveller of that time period was Olivia Stone. Olivia Stone came to the islands accompanied by her husband John Harris, both of whom can be considered, in addition to travellers, as true explorers of the Canary Islands, if the classical notion of explorer represented someone who searched for the remotest places that no foreign traveller had ever visited before.

Tourism in the Canary Islands first began in the Orotava Valley and, specifically, in the coastal town of Puerto de la Cruz. There are several reasons for this. The first reason has to do with the natural setting. Although the weather was a major factor in the early days of tourism on the islands, the landscape was a key factor in making the choice to visit there. The coast of La Orotava had that beach that was so coveted by the British and European in general of the late nineteenth century, not for sunbathing, but for enjoying it by going on walks or taking a private dip in the sea. La Orotava also offered an exceptional landscape with very attractive natural resources for the European tourist: the impressive stratovolcano of Mount Teide, with its summit at 3,718 m above sea level, the first glimpse of the archipelago when you approach the islands.

With regard to the work by Olivia Stone, our purpose here is to highlight this late nineteenth century traveller and her work as a good representation of what it means to be a quality tourist with cultural concerns that today could be classified as belonging to a new mature stage of tourism in the Canary Islands, where the last century's sun and beach model is now outdated (Hernández and Santana, 2010). The publication *Tenerife and its Six Satellites* became a trusted source on the subject of tourism in the Canary Islands and aimed to provide the upper middle class British society everything it needed for having a pleasant and picturesque experience on their travels to the islands. As might be expected, Olivia Stone's main goal was not only to climb up to its highest peak, but also, like other tourists at the time, to enjoy the discovery and contemplation of the beautiful landscapes from the highest peaks of Tenerife. Therefore, to achieve the main objective of this work, we have chosen this Victorian woman's travelogue to study the text describing her visit to the big volcano.

#### 4. MOUNT TEIDE AND THE TRAVELER OLIVIA STONE

When Olivia Stone delves into Las Cañadas del Teide, she quickly recognizes the two main units that make up this exceptional landscape at the highest point on Tenerife. She identifies the wide volcanic caldera of Las Cañadas as a vast crater and inside, located to the northeast, the great stratovolcano of Mount Teide. But the British traveller not only clearly identifies the essential space and time organization of the landscape, but also recognizes shapes and elements of the spectacular panorama that she contemplates. Thus, she breaks down the landscape into its basic components and makes notes on the terrain, vegetation and the effect of man on the land, and within the land, she outlines a little about the aboriginal past of this place. She often takes temperature data at different altitudes using her field and aneroid thermometer, and as concerns the vegetation, she identifies the individual flora that make up the main features of the plant landscape at that time, pointing out that Teide broom is the dominant species.

The landscape views of Las Cañadas and Mount Teide, and the attempt to take a closer look at the relationships that can be established between their main elements, are reflected through the selected works. But a more refined reading of it reveals other geographical variables in their description that have to do with the author's ability to also offer different descriptions at various levels, deftly strung together, which makes her meticulous writing a successful synthesis of the geographical complexity of this original subtropical mountain.

From Stone's travelogues, we perceive a way of looking at the scenery of Mount Teide with a sense of unity, of configurations and overviews of the landscape, but also the observation of the landscape-form is further filtered, not only by levels of knowledge and of culture, but also a level of sensitivity and by moral categories of relationship with our landscape (*cf.* Martínez de Pisón, 2009b). This English traveller knew how to experience discovering the landscape, not just making a general and direct observations about it, but also living it as a life experience, which made its geographical situation something even more extraordinary and even sublime.

#### 5. CONCLUSIONS

Achieving the dual objective of this paper has enabled us to verify the feasibility of the geographical concept of the natural landscape as a tourism resource, which was already a significant object of attraction for tourists visiting the Canary Islands in the late nineteenth century. Based on a way of looking at nature with a global perspective or as a whole, closer to the identity of the territories, and which the tourist seeks and generally demands with more interest than just viewing their isolated constituent elements, such as the geology, flora and fauna. However, this resource cannot be presented as a tourist novelty today, as it existed in the educated and demanding European elites who had an acute sensitivity towards discovering what it is that makes the landscape in the places of destination so original.