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CHILEAN WINE HERITAGE ¹

Cultural and heritage identity

During the last years, it has generated a great interest among the academics –of social sciences, in general, and of historiography, in particular- the study about the concept of cultural identity, what is usually illustrated, in a cultural way, as the traditional group of values, behavior, beliefs and symbols to the interior of a social system that acts as a blending among the people that form it, in such a way that it is identified by its components as the substratum that originates the sense of mutual pertinence and cohesion among complementary, supplementary or even antagonistic entities, but that share essentially the same cultural codes, like rules, rituals or certain patrimonial elements.

Within that frame, what is understood by cultural patrimony is the group of goods, material or immaterial, that have been inherited by a specific nation, with those who are being built and that will be acquired by future generations, where the social group in its vast majority is the one that recognizes in such patrimony an exceptional esthetic, symbolic and historical relevance.

¹ Text originally published in Spanish, 2010 in the framework of the commemoration of the Bicentennial of the Republic of Chile. In: Chile, Terroir de Viñas 1810-2010. Rosner Publishing House, Santiago de Chile. Edited, updated and translated by its author, for VINIFERA, 2018.

The Cultural Patrimony is divided in two types: material and immaterial (or intangible). As regards the first one, it corresponds to the expression of the cultures through tangible facts, such as monuments, archeological places, typical zones, buildings and portents of engineering, etc. The second one, it is important to point those spiritual demonstrations of a certain culture, like the art, music, poetry and all that lives in myth, ritual and orality.

In these general conceptual terms, it is precise that, for the effects of this chapter, the interesting part is specifically those implications that the historical development of viticulture has had for the construction of the identity and national heritage of Chile as a wine producer country.

By virtue of this point of view, it has to be considered that, firstly, according to all the registers that today are available in the histotrophic field, we are experiencing a phenomenon with much information, which dates back to the arrival of the first Spanish conquerors, a time when the first wine arbors were introduced around 1540 and 1550, what shows that from the first years of the Hispanic settlement the wine was present, not only as a necessary element for the ceremony, but also for dissipating the thirst of the new inhabitants.

During these first decades, in almost all the plots of land of the city of Santiago of the New Extreme and its bordering small farms, there were vine arbors and it was produced wine for the domestic consumption. With the passage of time, this practice spread throughout the territory, from Coquimbo to Concepción and, in 1594, the ecclesiastic registers show that around 100.000 arrobas were produced in the country annually, the same as to 1.600 million liters of wine.



VALDIVIA





During the Colonial period, the price of this beverage maintained considerably stable (about 20 reales per each arroba, unit equivalent to 35.5 current liters) and it were only registered sporadic rises, as a result of eventual bad harvests or of the Arauco War that affected the production in the South of the territory.

As regards how this condition of wine producer region has affected the Chilean identity, it is precise to consider a series of aspects related to the process of nationality formation.

In general terms, it is known that the Chilean identity has experienced stages that commonly associate with the great periods of this history: the discovery and conquer of the territory, the following colonization of what is usually referred to as “Chilean Central Valley” and the Independence Revolution, with the consequent beginning of the Republic Era, marked by the territorial and economic expansion during the 19th century and by the democratic institutional construction during the 20th century. So it could be wondered: how important has the wine been in this identity construction?

In a great number of academic studies published in recent years in the country, it has been strengthened the idea of a great viticulture influence in the historical development of the heritage and cultural identity, an importance that not only would fit strictly in the agricultural field or around the characteristics of the rural

world, but also would have transcended to other spheres that form the social system.

During the course of the Colonial centuries, the vine cultivation originated a nation identified by the landscape of the Central Valley, an affiliation that thanks to this activity, more than others, gradually rooted in its geography. Additionally, it is important to emphasize that through the systematic production of wines, it may also be seen an incipient feature linked to a self-determination conscience in front of the systematic prohibitions of cultivating new vineyards out of Spain.

Even when the viticultural production was devoted preferentially to the domestic consumption, part of it was exported to the neighboring countries. In 1595, the Spanish Crown, as a way of protecting the peninsular wine commerce, dictated a royal order to prohibit the exportation of Chilean wines to New Spain and New Granada. This Royal Ordinance was ratified in 1620, 1640, 1661 and 1794. Despite this policy, in the middle 18th century, Chile had become the first wine producer of Hispanic America, displacing Peru and Mexico.

Given the characteristics inherent in the vine cultivation, widely recognized not only for their historical, but also educational significance, it can be said that the existence of this activity in Chile motivated gradually a detailed work knowledge, a closeness between the man, the land and the nature cycles, that with the passage of the Colonial decades it contributed in an important way to the construction of our identity as a nation.



"Don Tano". Imagen gentileza de Viña Zaranda

At the end of the Colonial period, the viticulture development had marked notable differences between the Chilean society and the rest of the Hispanic American societies, mainly with respect to the early appearance of the small free owner.

This figure marked a certain local difference as regards the spread privileges system of the nobility, characteristic of the Spanish world, in which the mechanism of the will of lands for services rendered to the Crown resulted the principal conformation way of an oligarchic society highly stratified and disposed in hierar-

chies, that found its greatest splendor in those colonies where it was developed a highly extensive agriculture, as it is the case of products like the cotton, coffee and sugar, among others.

Opposite to this, the intensive exploitation of the fruit lands in general, and vine growing in general, marked a rupture with this system, presenting an alternative due to the lack of lands out of the aristocratic property. The wine generated, in the course of the 18th century, an incipient domestic industry that boosted the commercial entrepreneurships of the artisans (as blacksmiths, glassworkers, carpenters, grocers and coopers) and diverse professions that in the viticultural area could go from the simple pruner to the specialized vine grower, without avoiding the very important appearance that the muleteers of the Andes had in the transportation of such goods.

A kind of industrial “cluster” that, even at a much reduced scale, was also relevant for the construction of a society which institutional quality and order were distinctive seals from the beginning of the independent life, even when it does not have to be avoided the fact that in this self-defining construction process they excluded completely the least benefited classes, a highly heterogeneous group that has frequently been associated, reasonably, to suffering characteristic of the utterly poor situation in which it was stuck during the whole Colonial period, a situation that would start to improve from the constitutional reform of 1925.



Imagen gentileza de Viña La Montaña

The silent work, and a few times documented, of the vine growers, had important repercussions in the diffusion of more hygienic customs among the population; as the dynamics of a cyclic agriculture, unlike the great extensive tasks, it made the liberation of workers possible, during a long period of time of the year, diversifying the cultural instances to the interior of the rural and estate world, exhibiting the emergence of a historical subject that is closely related to the construction of the Chilean viticultural heritage, an inheritance that goes from monumental constructions and big public works

to anonymous legends and poetry that still survive in the country and villages of the traditional valleys.

The esthetic beauty of the Colonial vineyard is another crucial element to consider. It caused an impression of austere elegance to the Chilean scenery while it contributed to mold a gentle character in men and women in an environment always marked by serenity, a picture where the vine arbor appears like a festive and family environment in the threshold between the private and the public, where there are the most varied episodes, from religious celebrations to business conversations.







In this sense, the image of the vineyard is the symbol of the agricultural prosperity par excellence.

Associated, from the beginning of the Colonial times, to an elegant picture, in the vineyard we see a group of elements characteristic of a world of very powerful symbolic significance that has experienced practically the whole history, not only as a component characteristic of the prestigious noble, but also as a widespread proposal among the average owners of the Central Valley as a symbol of a higher status.

In general terms, the viticulture, considered as cultural construct, has demonstrated to be able to promote not only models of more industrialized development, but also “socially more equal, and politically more stable”. The interaction between nature and culture has acquired, through this old activity, more complex and diverse forms than the dichotomy many times exposed among a society of landowners on the one hand, and laborers on the other.



The formation of vineyards in Chile, between the middle of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th, constitutes an interesting case for those who study the characteristics of the Latin American businessman, related to the agricultural activities. In fact, the important landowners, especially the owners of ranches, have not had a very good historical image.

Opposite the historical models of the owners of several large states, oligarchic and a little inclined to the agroindustry, the technology incorporation and the reinvestment of the rents, the vineyards, on the other hand, they are completely compatible with the small property, with the intensive work, the industrialization, the technology and capital investment. Besides, they generate a series of strongly dynamic secondary activities, like the cork industry, the bottles manufacture, the labels design and printing and many others.

They have often been characterized as owners who are more interested in the advantages of social domination that the land gave them, in acting with the maximum productive efficiency: The Chilean case seems to confirm these characteristics, because the rural elite based their power on the land property and on the extensive use of workers.

This last factor constituted the key of the productive system, in which there were registered a few attempts to mechanize the tasks, which constitutes one of the principal differences with the path followed by the

agriculture in countries such as the United States, Canada and Australia in those times. Several historians coincide, however, in stating that from the middle of the 19th century there was a process, at least partial, of renovation in the productive practices of the country, with more use of machinery and hiring of technicians (generally European) to increase the production and improve its quality. This would have given rise to an “agriculture modernization”, that motivated the appearance of an agroindustry.







On the contrary, the vine made possible the appearance of what could be referred to as “medium sectors”, not exactly a class given that we do not see the correspondence of defined ideals nor the confluence of declared objectives, but we do see a group of agricultural small-sized businessmen which social discipline shows clearly the influence of the viticulture and its most outstanding characteristics. The definite break of this system would begin to experience from the first years of republican life.

The procedures brought by the Spanish conquerors for the wine production did not change too much until the first decades of the 19th century. The situation started to change the air as a direct result of the process of modernization and spread of the Chilean economy, linked to the business opening with the nations of the North Atlantic from the decade of 1840, the export of raw material to the industrialized world and the incorporation of enormous American and English capitals from the second half of the century.

The consolidation of Valparaíso as one of the most important ports of the South Pacific, the spread of the area of irrigated hectares in the Central Zone with the construction of new canals, the arrival of European scientists and engineers, the creation of banks and the emergence of the credit, the development and use of steam as energy in the land transportation with the arrival of the railways, the new industrial machineries and the urban growth, among many other factors, cre-

ated the right conditions for the diversification of business and of the economy. In this way, it was originated a group of mining businessmen and traders, coming, most of them, from groups of European immigrants and some members of the traditional elite who promoted a transcendental change in the viticultural activity.



Imagen gentileza de Viña William Ferré Chile.



Imagen gentileza de I.M. de Sagrada Familia

An external factor that facilitated this task was the phylloxera pest that affected the European and American vineyards, and left many of the best European specialists with no temporary job, who were available for being hired in Chile.

On the other hand, the business firms started to import agroindustrial machinery, transport systems and they dedicated to the building of underground wineries that allowed a better preservation of the wine. Some barrels from the United States and France were shipped to the country due to the requirements of enologists and French technicians hired by the new vineyards, events that at the same time motivated with prosperity to the national manufacture of distillers and filters in the National Boiler Shop and in Fundición Las Rosas, as well as bottles and other containers in the National Factory of Glass.

As regards the introduction of new vines, principally French, this initiative is usually connected with Silvestre Ochagavía around 1851, however, the truth of this issue is a little more complex in the documents.

Del Pozo has stated that the incorporation process of French vines had started at least ten years before, between 1830 and 1850, a period in which there had been introduced about 70 grape varieties, which were settled in the Agricultural Experimental Plant of Santiago, known later as Quinta Normal de Agricultura.

In those days, the Plant was under the direction of the Genoese Juan Sada and among the most outstanding

helpers it was the French naturalist Claudio Gay. It has also made reference to the priests of the Sacred Heart of Jesus of Quilpué, who, at the beginning of 1850 had begun the import and cultivation of new vines in the Aconcagua valley.

Now, even when the adaptation process of new vines had started before (in fact, Del Pozo also attributes the introduction of some French varieties to the enologists Nourrichet and Poutays between 1845 and 1848), it is from 1851 when the Chilean viticulture starts to develop significant changes that would transform it almost completely, the year when Silvestre Ochagavía brought personally to the country vines for vinification also from France.

The year 1877 marks the beginning of the viticultural exports to Europe, consolidating with that a long process of almost half a century that had begun in the decade of 1830 with the first imports of European aristocratic vines. In 1880, the viticultural industry was in the middle of the peak, in virtue of which the Chilean wines were taken to compete in Europe in the exhibitions of Bordeaux in 1882, Liverpool in 1885 and Paris in 1889, with very good results.

The Chilean wine got another presence and the production increased considerably, at the same time that the commercialization and transport systems became more efficient, allowing in 1883 the existence of a group of ten “big” Chilean vineyards that exported to

Europe, apart from other South American capitals, like Buenos Aires and Lima.



Other fruitful attempts during the same period were the ones boosted by the businessmen, José Urmeneta, close to Limache, and Maximiano Errázuriz in the estate of Panquehue, during the decade of 1870. Both of them introduced vine shoots of Pinot, Côt (Malbec), Cabernet and Gamet vines for the red wines, and Semillón, Moscatel and Sauvignon for the white ones. Viña Santa Ana, formed by Francisco Undurraga in the Province of Talagante, was planted that same year with Pinot and Cabernet, and German vines, principally Riesling.

Another aspect to emphasize as regards the transformation process of the national viticultural production is related to the topic that, in those years, a great quantity of the most important agricultural products that were cultivated in Chile, suffered a strong depreciation and, in a similar way to what happened in France, the profits that could be obtained through the vine cultivation experienced a significant expansive cycle. As a reference, there are registers that prove that, for the decade 1890-1900, the viticulture rents could exceed ten times, average, those of wheat, principal agricultural area in Chile at that time⁷.

According to the registers of the National Agricultural Society, in 1897 there were 5,031 hectares planted with vines in Chile, under tens of vineyards classified as medium to big-sized, with variable extensions between 9 to 800 hectares. The list of vine growers associated to the National Agricultural Society in that same year closed with 161 members and there is a detail of the distribution of lands per province, from Freirina to the

North, until Laja to the South, separated by category between fine vines (3,604 hectares) and common ones (1,426 hectares). This information may give an idea of how advanced the Chilean viticulture was at the end of the 19th century, which makes less strange the pretension to elaborate better class wines.

In this context, it is of great importance the “Viticulture and Winemaking Agreement” of 1897, of the writer and agricultural engineer Manuel Rojas, who during the last years of the 19th century did a detailed research in land that led him to conclude about the diversity of the Chilean wine in production, that among its vines it had, apart from Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot, already very widespread, with Blanqueta vines, Chasselas, Cabernet Franc, Gamet, Listán, Meslier, Pinot Noir and Pinot Blanc, Chardonnay, Riesling, Sauvignon Blanc, Semillón, Aramón, Grappu, Cot, Mansene, Merlot, Pinot Gris, Romana, Syrah, tintoreras, Tressot and Verdot, to mention some of them.

It calls the attention the great variety of vines present in such list and the fact that many of them continue nowadays their production. A great testimony of that have been the recent rediscoveries of Carmenere and Fer fifteen years ago in the Maipo Valley, and the one of vines of Verdot (Grosse Merille) and Trousseau, among others, that as it is shown in the agreement of Rojas, they were already present in Chile from the second half of the 19th century.



As regards the viticultural panorama at the beginning of the 20th century, the relationship between wine and commerce was presented in a very auspicious way, having consolidated many vineyards its enormous exports to Europe and the neighboring countries, satisfying with ample efficiency the increasing demands of the domestic market in expansion thanks to the revenues coming from the saltpeter.

This boom was materialized, in the public field, in the important works that started to renew the old appearance of cities like Santiago and Valparaíso facing the Centenary, and also in the private field, where the oligarchy was in charge of materializing its showy desires in palaces, parks, gardens, wineries and vineyards that made the Colchagua and Maipo valleys seem like a second French countryside.

On the other hand, the wine consumption showed serious complications as regards the public health among popular classes. Complimented by its pleasant and spirituous goodness by the oligarchy of those times, as well as by poets, novelists and singers, it was, however, strongly questioned by the Medical Association and some political authorities that accused it as the responsible for the principal social vice of those days among the crowd: the alcoholism.

But having overcome the quarrel very characteristic of the so-called “Social Issue” and the consequent obstacles that established the Alcohol Law of 1902 and 1938,

that regulated its consumption, the first one, and dic-taminated the prohibition of planting new vines, the second one (a rule that would be derogated in 1974), the development of the national viticultural industry did not stop. On the contrary, in pursuit of getting over a period of lack of progress after the end of the Second World War, it retook its growth during the last decades of the 20th century, to a large extent strengthened by the expansion of the world market at the end of the eighties, the progressive increase not only in the domestic consumption but also of the world average and, significantly, boosted by the relation price and quality, competitiveness that ended positioning the Chilean wine in the world context.

As regards the cultural heritage of the Chilean viticulture, from what can be referred as the second Era (considering the Colonial viticulture as the first one), it is precise to underline the indelible mark that the French influence left from the 19th century.

Considered by most of the specialists as a valuable contribution to the renewal and modernization of the enological culture of Chile, it is not less certain that it printed a push seal in the way the wines have been produced and commercialized from that time on, knowing that kind of depressive interregnum that experienced the industry from the postwar and until the end of 1970.

It also true that, unlike cases that eventually may be nearer, as the Argentine or Uruguayan 12, the bases of the Chilean viticultural reformulation during the fore-

gone century did not agree with the arrival of a great number of immigrants from the Mediterranean Europe, who brought with them their customs, language, gastronomy, ways of vine cultivation and of relating with the surroundings, etc. In one word, their culture, and more specifically in this chapter, their viticulture. An issue that has been exposed in diverse instances and that in certain occasions plays against the image that is searched to project Chile in the world as a wine producer with a hallmark.

Opposite to the viticulture of Río de la Plata, the heritage and productive revolution of the country originated from the great mining, commercial and bank fortunes, in which sinus there appears the image of France as a cultural referent with much sophistication.

This fact points out that the Chilean viticulture enjoys a slant that frequently shows as excessively oligarchic; a wine culture that has been built, since the 19th century, controlled from the peak of the social pyramid to its huge base, element characteristic of our idiosyncrasy which explains, among other things, the exiguous level of domestic consumption that today are evidenced by the figures, unlike the neighboring countries that double, triplicate or quadruplicate.

The fact is that it was this renewed oligarchy, conformed from the combination between the traditional landowner aristocracy and the new social actors that appear during the second half of the 19th century, the

responsible for the transformation, not only of the heritage elements characteristic of the Colonial viticulture, such as the winery, winepress and country house, but also of the superposition of the archetype of the French vineyard over the Creole Hispanic traditional legacy.







Paradoxically, with a tradition broken between the Hispanic inherited from the colony and the French influence from the beginning of the republican life, a great part of the Chilean wine has been systematically designed for the medium classes of the world, having been well-known due to its price and quality relation more than its centenary tradition, rooted deeply in the identity of its people, the landscape and the material and immaterial heritage of the nation.

This possible fact faces not only the question about the origin of the Chilean viticulture, but also about which its historical sense is, recovering that centenary tradition that was deeply submerged by the new ways adopted from 1850 and every certain time remembers of its “obstinate” presence in some provinces like the unirrigated land of Maule, the transversal valleys of Norte Chico or the coast Araucanía.

New presentations, that although reported great benefits as regards economy under its developing and modernizing proposal, in the near future they threaten to obscure the local heritage disseminated in the almost unembraceable mosaic of small towns and villages that had lived in the shadow of the vine arbors of the country and Muscatel for centuries.

A scenario where the historical subject that emerges is not the one of the prosperous vine grower with exclusivity, but it includes the common peasant for whom a wine glass is so natural as water. Basically, as the wine

has always been present in its environment, among its common places in a landscape that still in these times is able to show the huge cultural heritage the viticulture has bequeathed to the Chilean identity.



Symbolic aspects that surround the Chilean viticulture.

“The symbols watch as if they were guardians or advertisers for the man not to lose in the overwhelming misery of each moment; and for him to remember his projects and his life as a whole. The symbols are the representatives of everything opposite the parties, of the universe opposite the element, of the total duration of life opposite the moment; of the individuality opposite the dismemberment in a beam of instincts and desires”.

Jurij Lotman

When it is talked about symbol, it is necessary to precise what it makes reference to. Every symbol is a representation of an idea identified by the society or by part of it in virtue of certain conventions socially accepted. Unlike a sign, this does not have necessarily correspondence nor proximity between signifier and signified, that is to say, between the context in which it is expressed and what is understood by it. It is not attached to a time in particular nor a delimited space. It does not have time nor place defined, because it is a convention that lives in the world of ideas, in the environment of collective thought. The symbols are works with their own meaning.

Its name comes from Latin *symbolum* and previously, from Greek σύμβολον, a word that from very old times has been used as a way of communicating ideas, generally abstract ones, being validated in the field of social studies as the expression means to which it is attributed a conventional meaning and in which genesis it is the resemblance, real or imaginary, with the signified.







The old Greeks believed that it was impossible to think without images, therefore they developed the concept of symbol in the interior of the scientific disciplines as an essential epistemological tool. This thought manifestation was understood as the revelation of the intelligence, as a guide to communicate what objects, circumstances and natural phenomena cause in the person and the collectivity.

For the case of symbology that surrounds the Chilean viticulture, it is not less certain that the images and concepts with which this cultural heritage is associated very according to the area of significance from where the observer is positioned. However, there is a wide specter in which the significance nets with which this practice has been historically associated obey to a long series of conventions socially accepted, which in some occasions resist to the new intentions of the own industry, that has done important efforts during the last twenty years for improving the general image of the Chilean wine, not only in the domestic but also in the foreign market.

Recent studies, requested by the author to elaborate this chapter, have allow to corroborate an interesting pattern of archetypical ideas consonant with the most outstanding concepts that the Chilean people syndicate with the national viticulture. Ideas that, at the same time, are related with the sense of belonging to a determined socioeconomic sector, educational level and age area, which demonstrates a correspondence be-



tween what commonly relates, in symbolic terms, to the Chilean viticulture.



Imagen gentileza de Viña Zaranda

The answer to such question has evidenced variations, not only in the field of the conceptual significance nets around the historical development of the activity, but also reports the evolution of the significance itself that the different social groups give it, depending on its social position.

In the area of historical considerations, within the ones that express more predomination among the Chileans, there are those that say relation with concepts such as “tradition”, “antique”, “aristocratic sense” and “pride”, around a kind of European-like image that is planned for abroad. Likewise, the generalized identification with the scenery –lush valleys, mountains, clear and luminous sky, quietness and scenic beauty- and the party, celebration and rituality, are other elements that give an account on how incorporated it is in the group of images with which it is habitually characterized the rural world.

However, concepts like “quality”, “health” and “originality”, among others, have appeared recently in the population's conscience as a result of the transformations experienced by the industry in the last decades. Thanks to new experiences with which today the wine is associated, there have appeared, among the consumers, new appraisals around a “social change” in the consumption and a kind of “democratization of pleasure”. Considerations that are validated not only by the statistic evolution of the domestic demand in quantitative terms, but also by others with qualitative character such as the “elegance”, “acquired taste” or “status”, perceptions that undoubtedly have separated the

wine from the old associations that used to consider it as a “second-class”, “vulgar” beverage and responsible for a great part of the alcoholism of the working class at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century.

Nowadays, however, the general appreciations of the wine, connect it with activities such as gastronomy, hotel and tourism, every time we see how the evolution itself of the Chilean viticulture has diversified its areas of significance and incorporated new symbolic elements to the image expected to show through publicity.

New ideas that today appear with naturality among a greater and greater number of Chileans and that, gradually, they have added technical notions that permeabilize from the enological discipline to the non-specialized society, to a great extent thanks to the initiative of the wineries that have dare to invest in training programs directed to its habitual channels of commercialization (like hotels, restaurants and supermarkets).

An activity where the figure of the sommelier appears strongly as a necessary bridge between the academic and the technological world, and the neophyte consumer, communicating conceptions like “adaptability”, “variety”, “land”, “assemblage”, “regularity” and many others, without leaving aside the ones that result from the sensorial analysis, such as: “body”, “persistence”,

“after taste”, “aging” and all the qualifying adjectives that are used conventionally to describe a wine.

In the most strictly commercial area, some *syntagmas* have established such as “price-quality relation”, “brand country”, “business profitable” and “position international”, as well as there have incorporated foreign nouns like “cluster” to define the intentions of the industry.

Concepts such as “potentiality”, “differentiation”, “sustainability”, “optimization” and “innovation” have already started to become habitual in the world of the specialized journalism and of the academic research, where, recently, there have added contributions of the antroposophical agriculture like “organic viticulture” and “biodynamism” and of the ecology world like “green viticulture” and “wines with no carbon trace”.

Aspirations of an industry that does not stop in its intentions of modernizing and positioning as a relevant actor in the international market, leaving aside the old considerations like “good but cheap wine” or “superabundant and exotic wine” as the Chilean wine used to be described until no long ago, associated almost with exclusivity with Cabernet Sauvignon or with the usual wines produced from vulgar vines of very low reputation and sold in bulk as concentrated must or in tetrapack containers.

Another interesting element that deserves to be distinguished here is the symbolic revalorization that has been seen in recent years due to the vestiges of the

Colonial viticulture, that in some way or the other they survived to the passage of time, to the Frenchification of the industry during the 19th century and part of the 20th, to the difficulties characteristic of an activity that was sunk in a deep economic depression for a long time of the past century.

The wide heritage rescue that many vineyards have begun with tourist purposes and some (a few) of philanthropic character, in some towns and villages of the Central Valley, have given unequivocal samples of a new intentionality towards the forms traditionally Creole that still exist in places like El Monte, Cauquenes, Linares or the Limarí Valley, zones in which it is possible to connect, not with the French viticulture incorporated and adapted since the century before last one, but with that one inherited from Hispanic times.

A new research field has been opened by historians who traditionally have dedicated to the Colonial studies within the framework of the economic history and the cultural history, incorporating new epistemological methods coming from disciplines like the semiology, the social anthropology and the archeology.

Recent publications in this subject have given important ideas about how the Chilean wines have been valued and represented in the different stages of history, and how the symbolic speculations that are associated with it have evolved. In that sense, researches such as the ones by Guillermo Feliú Cruz and Mario

Góngora, in the decades of 1960-70, and José del Pozo, Guillermo Muñoz, Juan R. Couyoumdijan and Pablo Lacoste, in the last two ones, have made great contributions which tend to a greater and better understanding of the Chilean viticulture, activity that, although it has more than four centuries of history and covers a vast and varied portion of the land, it is still known very little.





The traditional vineyards

“(…) The lands of Chile are admirably on purpose for the vineyard cultivation. Either for its nature or for the form of amphitheater that its hills present. Its cultivation begins in the northern boundary of the Republic and it does not extend more than the province of Concepción, 37 degrees South.”

Claudio Gay

Nowadays, the viticulture is a fundamental part of the Chilean development model; a true pillar of the exporting economy, every time it strengthens the desire of making the country an agro food powerful nation. Last decade it consolidated the wine exports and it made visible the regional leadership in the area, positioning the country as one of the most important producers of the New World. As it has been emphasized in numerous occasions, the wine is nowadays “an emblematic industry” which product is of high added value, an article that gets to the tables of the world taking with it the map and the name of Chile.

In this context, it results particularly interesting to refer to the economic and historical circumstances that made the conformation of the group of pioneering vineyards possible in this path, the producer places today called “traditional”, those in which nowadays we recognize a solid base over which an important part of the country image rests as producer of quality wines.







The viticulture revolution that it experienced in the middle of the 19th century, from the incorporation of the noble vines, European architects and enologists, allowed the appearance of an important number of vineyards in the sinus of the oligarchy, in those times enriched by the mining exploitation and the flowering speculative economy.

Between the years 1860 and 1890, there appeared a group of twenty vineyards that became the most important of the country, a situation that has maintained up to now, in many cases. The notable thing is that before the first of these dates, none of the new producers appeared among the principal Chilean vine growers, for the simple reason that no one practiced that activity.

But at the moment of analyzing the circumstances in which there are originated the majority of these new companies, it is important to point out that during the 19th century not everything was growth and expansion.

Although after the promulgation of the Constitution of 1833 and the consolidation of the conservative regime, of Portalian spirit, there were at least three decades of a great economic development (associated principally with the Chañarcillo mining and the reorganization of the estate as an agricultural productive unit), however, in 1864 it had to face a deep economic crisis caused by the contradiction of the production in Europe and the stop to the foreign investment, especially in South America.

In this way, the mono-producer model that not only had characterized Chile, but also the majority of the American nations that had not been colonized, started to show its first breaks and alterations. From that year, it began a recessive year that was only overcome in 1866, the year when the saltpeter exploitation started to be relevant for the Anglo-Chilean companies in Tarapacá and Antofagasta, adding later American and French capitals.

A little expansion, that again was stopped due to the crisis of 1874, new contraction of the world economy after the Franco-Prussian War. In those years, the economic model of central-periphery relations showed its worst side, making the countries of this part of the world suffer a virtual collapse, sunken in weakling primary-exporting structure.

However, the Chilean viticulture businessmen of that time, convulsed and unfortunate for Europe and America, they could reach an unexpected advantage of some of the factors of the crisis that desolated the Old Continent, as the phylloxera pest, discovered in 1863.

The phylloxera was found initially in an agricultural nursery in the suburbs of London, a year later it was denounced in France. In 1865, it had already been detected in the Duero Valley in 1865, and in 1871 it had spread almost in all Spain and Switzerland. In 1875, it was present in Central Europe and almost the whole

France and in 1880 in Italy, the Islands and coasts of the Mediterranean Sea. In a little more than thirty years, the spread of the plague had occupied the three quarters of the viticultural area of Europe, at a rate of 25 km² per year and just France had devastated around two million hectares. At the end of the 19th century, the pest had settled in East Europe, in all the area of North Africa, in South Africa, practically the totality of Australia and New Zealand, and it started to become stronger in South America; in Argentina (1878), Peru and Uruguay (1888).

The necessity of importing wines at reasonable prices in Europe, the low advance in costs of the productive factors and the expansion of the world market from 1882 originated favorable conditions for the consolidation of the country as one of the most important producers of quality wines. Likewise, the demands imposed by the new professionals that integrated in the growing vineyards generated a movement about improving in quality as regards viticulture, that went from the hygiene area to the productivity and development of the annexed small industries previously described and, of course, the extension of the railway.

In less than half a century, it could be reverted the drowsy viticultural panorama inherited from the Colony and it started to show proudly the significant change that the Chilean wine experienced. In this area, Rodrigo Alvarado, a distinguishable expert in these historical subjects, has written:

“Contrary to what it is argued, in Chile the wine consumption was scarce because due to the instability of

the product, most of the part that was obtained, was distilled to produce spirits, easy to transport and also fermented chichi, both stable beverages, compared to the wine. The situation changed only when the railway was introduced and developed from the last third part of the 19th century, and with that, it was possible to transport wine with the necessary fluency to avoid its deterioration. The following antecedents allow forming an image of what happened at that time. In the middle of the 19th century, there were 30,000 hectares of vineyards, approximately, in Chile” (Alvarado, 2006).

The first Chilean in shape vineyards started to work in the middle of the century, with the initiative of renowned men of politics and business of that time. In 1841, Viña Tocornal (property of the businessman Manuel Tocornal), followed by Viña Ochagavía (Silvestre Ochagavía) in 1850. The same year, it appeared Viña Urmeneta (José Tomás Urmeneta), and the following year Viña Correa Vergara. Viña Cousiño-Macul (property of Matías Cousiño) was founded in 1856 and, a few years later, in 1865 the brothers Correa Albano began with what would be later Viña San Pedro.

In 1870, there started their activities Viñas Errázuriz (Maximiano Errázuriz) and Santa Ana de Talagante, that later would be referred to as Viña Undurraga (Francisco Undurraga). The next year, it appeared Viña Ossa-Subercaseaux, to end the list with Viña De Rojas (Fernando De Rojas y Salamanca) in 1874 (later Viña Zavala and, finally, Tarapacá Former Zavala), Viña Santa Caro-

lina (Luis Pereyra) in 1875, Viña Santa Rita (Domingo Fernandez) in 1880 and Concha y Toro (Melchor de Concha y Toro) in 1883.



In 1914, the wine consumption per capita in Chile was around 90 liters, a record. The Chilean vineyards were in the middle of the peak, enjoying the generous years of the *Belle Epoque*.

A great part of the ostentation that these vineyards have as distinctive elements was originated in this boom time. European-style palaces, idyllic gardens, sophisticated architecture in wineries and winepresses, are fundamental parts of the cultural inheritance inherited by the traditional wineries to the group of material heritage of the Chilean viticulture.

However, the encouraging panorama the Chilean vineyards perceived at the end of the 19th century, would not last too much time, and on the contrary, it would have dispelled among the vertiginous changes that the new century would bring along.

The consequences of both world wars, the recovery post-*phylloxera* of the competitors, the internal prohibitions of 1938 as regards the Alcohol Law (to a great extent, a result of the alcoholism abraded from the workers), the contradiction of the world market after the Great Depression of the 30s, the legality of the Prohibition of Alcohol in the United States, the definite crisis of the primary-exporter model after the appearance of synthetic saltpeter and finally, the lack of innovation to the interior of the Chilean economy in its whole finished, if not burying the industry, at least delegating it to really exiguous positions of the ranking of producer and detonating the uncontrolled fall of the domestic consumption and exports.



The 106.000 hectares of existing vineyards in 1938 reduced in less than five years to 92.000 hectares and continued the decrease in the following years. The consumption per inhabitant also fell strongly up to 60 liters in 1950, about fifty in 1950 and in 1970 the number had already reached forty liters.

The Chilean vineyard was gradually starting to be again what it had been in previous times, in general a wide horizon of Spanish vine arbors of high vegetation and potential crop, exaggerated fertilization, all that derived to red wines of bad color and white ones of herbaceous taste. That is, the traditional quality of the Chilean wine went to the soils and what it the most serious thing, the alcoholism levels reduced because the beer appeared and very soon the Pisco began to achieve an unknown preponderance.

The traditional wineries, gradually, started to be less prosperous companies in the old days and began to be seen as luxurious aristocratic of "the wine surnames" rather than a business alternative. A panorama that would start to change at the end of the decade of 1970.

Although the controversial legislation that prohibited the plantation of new vines (of 1938) was abolished in 1974, the weakness of the domestic market allowed the increase of the planted surface a decade later. The overproduction in which the majority of the traditional vineyards would incur in those years, did not help much to develop the industry, stuck in a politics of high yield per hectare, old methods of production and concession of the Argentine aggressive competence, a

country with the double surface planted and a domestic market that tripled the Chilean one, not only in population, but also in equality of purchasing power.

The first good changes began to be seen in the middle of the decade of 1970, a time when some radical decisions started to be made as regards the promotion of the national viticulture. Apart from the lifting of the prohibition of new vineyards plantation in 1974, in 1979 it was sanctioned the Law 2,753 that freed completely the productive process of the state control, allowing the incorporation of hybrid varieties (more resistant), new plantations according to the market demand, blend of vines regardless their origin (not only national, but also foreign) and it made the wine commercialization possible, which alcohol content was under 11°.

With a new scenario and with the new air that started to blow for the Chilean wine (that already had the double golden medal of Santa Emiliania of 1971 in Bristol and more and more recognition in Europe), the traditional producers began to rethink the productive chain and its components in favor of an emergent modernization.

During the last three years of that decade, important wineries like Concha y Toro and Canepa had already started the substitution of the old casks for vinification and as their replacement they had started to import stainless steel vats. Later, the Spanish businessman

Miguel Torres, in 1979, bought a small winery in Curicó in Santa Digna estate and bet on the production of its varietal lines in the zone.

Apart from the enormous investments in technology done by the traditional wineries, at the end of the decade of 1980, the hectares planted of vineyards just surpassed the 50 thousand, almost a third part of what today exists and less than the half of what existed ten years before¹⁹. The consumption had also decreased displacing the demand curve to exiguous magnitudes: fifty-two liters per capita in 1980, forty-seven in 1985 and around fifteen in the mid-nineties, with a lower point in 1997 of thirteen liters, to recover slowly a decade later and raise up to sixteen or seventeen liters today.

Facing this complex situation, and regardless the consumption per capita continues being relatively low, the traditional wineries have known how to consolidate their exports thanks to successful strategies they did during the last years, a path that have been, certainly, facilitated by signing the free trade agreements with the principal economies of the world.

On the other hand, the domestic market evolution has promoted a greater diversification of the supply, at the same time that has favored a greater development of the viticultural cluster in its whole. According to the information given by the FAO in the decade of 1975-1985, the five greatest producers controlled around the 60% of the national production, a circumstance in which the 30% of the wines came from produc-

ers/makers, the 15% from cooperatives and the rest 55% from elaborating companies that bought their grape (420 social reasons). In all, 100 million hectoliters, a figure that nowadays has practically doubled.

Likewise, the wine exportations have increased exponentially. From the modest 67 thousand hectoliters of 1970, it went to 132 thousand in 1980, a progressive tendency that has risen the deliveries to 608 million liters, with a value of US\$1,239 million in updated information for 2009, situating Chile in the fifth place of the exporters world ranking.

The greatest traditional viticultural consortiums (Concha y Toro, San Pedro, Cousiño-Macul, Tarapacá Former Zavala, Santa Carolina and Santa Rita) have maintained in the top of the industry, controlling around the two thirds of the domestic formal market and more than a third part of the total volume of net exportations, marking presence in 120 countries of the five continents. A situation that, definitely, does not do other thing rather than demonstrating the undisputed leadership the traditional producers maintain in the viticultural field, even having passed more than a century from its foundation in Chile in the 19th century.



Art and wine

“In which reign, in which century, under which silent conjunction of the stars, in which secret day the marble has not saved, it appeared the valuable and singular idea of inventing happiness? Wine, teach me the art of seeing my own history as if it already was ash of memory”.

J.L. Borges. Sonnet of the wine.

The wine has been present in the collective memory of Chile since the origin, and the viticultural activities, due to their extension, are integral part of the cultural imaginary that in different times has inspired artists of all disciplines. Regardless that situation, the study of the art history in conjunction with the wine history is not a simple work. Apart from the summaries and studies about the Colonial and republican art written during the last century by Eugenio Pereira and Guillermo Feliú, and in the 19th century by authors like Luís Alvarez and Vicente Grez, the truth is that this discipline still raises with a little development in the country.

Now, the causes of this exiguous number of documents associated with the wine presence in the Creole art has its origins in the way it has progressed the artistic task in this part of the world, going from a reality very classified under the directions of the church and of the vice-royalty during the Colonial period, up to its gradual thematic emancipation at the end of the 18th century and beginning of the 19th century.

Experts in the topic, like Feliú Cruz and Pereira Salas, among others, have stated that as regards cultural studies, in general it is precise to consider that in from the 16th to the 18th centuries, it is observed an important religious influence in art, under the attentive supervision of Lima and mainland Spain, a context in which the works commonly focused on representing the landscape, portraits of patricians and national heroes and, of course, issues related to ecclesiastical break.

During the 19th century, however, the panorama experiences substantial changes. Inspired by the economic increase and the progress ideal, the republican authorities had among their first measures to import European wise men in all the disciplines of knowledge and, of course, likewise in the art field.

The arrival of European painters, sculptors and writers contributed decisively in the development of the “winey art” in the country. True masters of their times, such as Claudio Gay, Maria Graham, Searle, Ohlsen, Mastai Ferreti, Smith, Gil de Castro, Rugendas, Somerscales, Whistler, Raimundo Monvoisin and Alejandro Cicarelli, among many others, propitiated new ways to understand the popular art and the representation of the everyday.

The wine, an inexhaustible inspirational source for poets, painters, singers and any type of artists, has been present mainly in the authors' intimacy rather than as protagonists of their works. Painters such as the brothers Francisco and Mercedes Gana, Pedro Lira, Suberca-

seaux, Juan González, Alfredo Valenzuela and Alberto Valenzuela Llanos showed, in their times, the beauty of the Chilean rural landscape, as well as others before and after have showed the image of a bottle or a glass of wine waiting for company.

Among the more than one hundred painters the historiography has registered and the hundreds of poets born in this country, there is undoubtedly an important presence of the wine in their works. But it is not less certain that the process of incorporating the viticulture to the artistic creation field started in Chile later, at the end of the 19th century, thanks to the interests of vinegrowers and industrials, on the one hand, because the sanitary authorities wanted to show the damage that alcoholism produced in the working class.

Topics that would mark the beginning of the 20th century, inheriting not only in literature but also in other arts, the almost atemporal image of “El roto”, always drunk with wine, quarreler and sagacious. The social problems would cross practically all the viticultural iconography of the century, incorporating, later, images of the damages that, for many doctors, were caused by the wine in the sinus of the “Social Issue”. From the prohibition of 1938 and until a little after the implementation of the project of Agricultural Reform in the decades of 1950-60, the images of viticulture, pictures mainly, would be related, every time with more naturality, to the world of agricultural cooperatives, on the

one hand, and of the great traditional wineries, on the other hand.

Recently, with renewed impetus, an interesting winey current in the contemporary art has started to be visible, where distinguishable artists have exhibited their collections, of significant value, inspired in the wine, from sculptures to photographs, going through paintings, songs, poems, etc.

Day by day, the artistic exhibitions are more plentiful, and today they coincide, in some way or the other, with the wine, not only through the strategic association among companies (wineries and museums, for example), but also among citizens that dare to innovate in the search of new spaces to express.

In this sense, it results particularly interesting the decision of some wineries of incorporating pieces of art in their own labels. An initiative that although it is not new, in fact, Viña Canepa had a pioneering experience from 1989 with Nemesio Antúnez and then with Concepción Balmes (1990), Gonzalo Ilabaca (1991), Samy Benmayor (1992) and Eduardo Garcia de la Sierra (1993), it has shown it is tremendously successful in welcoming the public in general.

In recent years, artists like Benjamín Lira, Bororo, Francisca Sutil, Matías Pinto D'Aguiar, Catalina Abbott, Samy Benmayor, Guillermo Tejeda and Jorge Lankin have created beautiful Works that have been incorporated to wines of wineries such as Viu Manent (Abbott), Quebrada de Macul (Lira), Altaír (Benmayor), Lagar de

Bezana (Bororo) and Los Mareados (Lankin), among others. The beautiful labels of Cherub and Folly, of Viña Montes, were entrusted to the British painter Ralph Steadman, a very interesting case where there is a blend of the design modernity, together with the use of classical icons of literature, but worked from an avant-garde and ludic view. As it is seen, it is about initiatives that approximate the art and the publicity until melting them in one expression, an issue that gives an additional value to each bottle and that undoubtedly, exalts the winery as a whole.

The label of line Santa Laura, of Viña Laura Hartwig, rescues the portrait that Claudio Bravo did to Mrs Hartwig at the beginning of the seventies. A portrait which became label, that was born not only from the unique work of Bravo, but also from a friendship that joined them from those times.

In the poetry field, it is distinguishable the initiative of Viña Sutil, a winery that has wanted to do homage to the principal poets in Chile, showing their faces in the labels of their wines, associating each one of them with a particular varietal.

New topics, new talents. An evolution of creativity that denies to stop and, on the contrary, dares to spread indistinctly in one or in other place, in the art, the music and the letters, demonstrating that the wine is not only inspiration, but also a piece of art in itself.

As an essential part of this cultural heritage, it is undoubtedly that the viticultural activities in their whole and the artistic creativity in any order will continue marking an important presence in the way in which Chileans portray us ourselves, the scenery and the environment.



Imagen gentileza de Viña Clos de Luz

Viticultural history through the cultural and architectural heritage

“If from those cities it remains the wind that blew through them, it will not be about, of course, the previous wind, that knew nothing about the cities. With their asphalt, their tracing of streets and their many windows, the cities, after being destroyed and collapsed, they will live in the wind”.

Walter Benjamin. Comments to poems of B. Brecht

The architectonic heritage of the Chilean viticulture is closely related to the economic well-being of the families’ owners of wineries throughout the history. As a powerful prosperity symbol, the building of splendid palaces and dream gardens became a common practice for the majority of the traditional wineries formed since the 19th century, something that arrived to consolidate the success of the transformation process of the Chilean viticulture, separated definitely from the atavisms of the Colonial world.

In general, the Chilean agriculture enjoyed a long expansive cycle (1883 – 1918) that had among its main consequences the revaluation of the agricultural property, the technological transformation of the tasks and the incorporation of new social actors to the traditional peasant world. The historical landowner aristocratic class, formed almost exclusively by the so-called “Castilian-Basque families”, started to experience a slow but persistent process of heterogeneity that led it, in

less than three generations, to incorporate subjects coming from the immigration who had raised a fortune in mining and commerce.

In this way, the oligarchic composition at the end of the 19th century had plutocrats and foreigners that would help to contribute to generate significant changes in the cultural heritage of the Chilean viticulture.

Particularly, the renowned “wine” families began, during those years, the construction of palaces and gardens that gave information about that prosperity, transforming radically the ways with which the aristocracy recognized itself, leaving aside the austerity signs with which historically had continued from its Spanish past, going to the splendor of the French, Italian, English and German influences that started to dominate the Chilean illustrated culture.

In 1875, the Cousiño family assigned the French architect Paul Lathoud the building of the family palace and the Spanish landscape painter Miguel Arana its contiguous gardens. In the same year, the architect Eugenio Chelli finished the palace Errázuriz (current Embassy of Brazil) and five years before, the eccentric Melchor from Concha y Toro, together with his wife Emiliana, had ordered the building of their splendid palace in the estate of El Llano to the German architect Teodoro Burchard, the same person that in 1885 would make one of his wonderful works in Chile: the palace of Viña Santa Rita, which gardens of Versailles were ordered to the landscape painter Guillermo Renner.

This new style of palaces made the traditional employers' house, based on the Colonial tradition, look less important and even many of the wonderful palaces of Neoclassic style inherited from that Colonial time. Inspired in the country houses of the European landowners, the new palaces that began to be built in the suburbs of Santiago, in the Maipo Valley and in the zones of Aconcagua, Rapel and Colchagua, imitated the style of the Italian isolated village, the French chateaux, the English countryside and the German castle.

The close contact the oligarchy had with other cultures, the influence received in its long and prodigious trips to Europe, the hiring of architects and landscape painters of prestigious name and in general terms, a declared taste for the art, converged to give shape to these real treasures of the Republic.

The changes as regards what existed in the past, introduced by these new architects, are equally noticeable. Despite the traditional country house, also referred to as "employers' house", the new constructions were characterized by their greater height, in some occasions with two and even three floors, and a long series of sophisticated innovations, common in Europe but practically unknown in the 19th century in Chile.

It was introduced the use of interior pillars, sharp and curve lintels, eaves, attics and balconies. There were built towers and widowed balconies, rooms and hexagonal big windows and, inside the palaces it was tried

the use of sophisticated designs, refine carpentry, masonry, decorative paint, parquet floors and colorful floor tiles.

Outside, it was incorporated as a rule, the use of ornamental statues and it was established as law of good taste the construction of gardens inspired in romantic designs, with oval paths, groves of exotic trees, bushes worked with fantasy shapes and even, lagoons and colorful birds. Mosaics of seasonal flowers gave colors that had never been seen in parks that seemed from a fairy tale.







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VINIFERA

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Somos especialistas en el desarrollo de asesorías técnicas en materia vitivinícola, orientados a la investigación y desarrollo de nuevos contenidos para el sector, posicionamiento estratégico, conceptualización y desarrollo de productos vitivinícolas y construcción de marca e identidad corporativa para bodegas de vinos.

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