



SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY
STANDARD LEVEL
PAPER 1

Monday 6 November 2000 (afternoon)

1 hour

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the passage carefully and then answer all the questions.

Texts in this examination paper have been edited: word additions or explanations are shown in square brackets []; substantive deletions of text are indicated by ellipses (three points ...); minor changes are not indicated.

Vintages and Traditions: An Ethnohistory of Southwest French Wine Cooperatives, Robert C Ulin (1996), (Smithsonian Series in Ethnographic Inquiry.) Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, Pages 142-146.

5 The identity that winegrowers [in the Médoc and Dordogne regions of Southwestern France] construct with respect to their work is dependent upon the reputation of their winegrowing region and its relation to the nation-state. By associating their wines with an 'invented' aristocratic past and by building small-scale replicas of medieval châteaux to distinguish themselves and their wine from the masses, elite Médoc proprietors sought during the nineteenth century to construct an identity that participated in the symbolism of French national culture.

10 At the 1855 Paris Universal Exposition, only the proprietors of elite estates were invited to exhibit their wines. Such universal expositions, like the world's fairs of the twentieth century, were central to the invention and representation of national cultures. As their wines came to be viewed as part of the French national heritage, elite growers, their wines, and their châteaux evoked the symbolism of the nation-state. Médoc growers are thus able to benefit from the prestige associated with their region in a manner that is not duplicated in the Dordogne where the production of mass wines predominates.

15 My informants from the Dordogne cooperative invoked the winegrowing hierarchy as a point of reference but, in contrast to Médoc growers, also as a source of self-effacement. For example, they questioned why I was interested in their wines, and by extension themselves, when elite vineyards were so close to their own. Such a comment indicates that they understood their social position in the national winegrowing hierarchy and thus had a minimal claim on the esteem associated with French wines. In fact, the distinction between regions was at the root of the winegrowers' attitudes toward their work and their product which, in turn, contributed to their sense of self-identity.

25 Winegrowers from the Dordogne cooperative understood their labour in practical terms. This is evident in the comments of some informants, confirmed also by the director of the cooperative, that 'profitability is most important,' and in their desire to produce a wine that did not vary in taste from year to year. Moreover, the fact that most of the large growers in the Dordogne cultivated a variety of crops contributed to their practical attitude about their winegrowing, since they practised it often in addition to the raising of cows and the cultivation of tobacco and cereals. Their identities were thus tied, like the overall reputation of the region, more to the general categories of 'agriculturist' and 'farmer' than to the specific identity of 'winegrower.' For the part-time growers of the Dordogne, winegrowing contributed to only a small part of their livelihood and thus they saw their own labour, no matter how enjoyable, in likewise practical terms. If they worked in a factory, as many did, it was more common to identify with the industrial working class than with those who gained their livelihood from working the land.

Médoc cooperative growers, in contrast to those of the Dordogne, spoke first about their concerns for producing and improving the quality of their wines and only secondarily about profitability. Moreover, the identity of most growers as native winegrowers of the Médoc region was largely borrowed from the established reputation of the Médoc as an exclusive winegrowing region. This was even true for the vast majority of part-time growers who gained their livelihoods as wage workers on the elite estates, yet identified with the reputations of those estates. While many of the older growers still referred to themselves as ‘farmers,’ it was more common than in the Dordogne for these growers to identify themselves as ‘winegrowers.’ With few exceptions, winegrowing and self identity go hand-in-hand in the Médoc. In addition, in contrast to the practical attitude of the Dordogne, many of these Médoc cooperative growers saw their work much more as an art or craft than as a science.

The relation between art and science has several implications for how Médoc growers understood their own work and knowledge, not to mention the bearing that it has on their identities. This became evident to me in a discussion with two elderly members of one cooperative in Médoc, ... who clearly believed that it is necessary to integrate scientific methods with those of the artisan, even though oenology [*i.e.* the science of wines] has only recently gained widespread acceptance. However, by ‘artisan,’ they have in mind knowledge, techniques, and skills which are specific to the Médoc. They exhibit some contempt for the agricultural schools where classroom learning is not linked to practical experience in the vineyards, a point of view that is common among the older growers. Nonetheless, they see themselves as caretakers of traditions that are particular to place and thus they regard their own labour in the vineyards as like that of an artisan. It is the linking of labour to the particularity of place through the concept of artisan that creates and reinforces the Médoc identity and distinguishes winegrowers of this region from those of the Dordogne.

Winegrowing labour is thus not simply technical but is also culturally framed and linked to both regional identity and national culture.

1. How did Médoc wines come to be seen as elite products? [4 marks]

2. Compare and contrast ways in which winegrowers in the Médoc and Dordogne regions describe both their work and themselves. [6 marks]

3. What does it mean to say that winegrowing is ‘culturally framed’ (line 62)? [5 marks]

4. Winegrowers from Southwest France construct their identity in relation to place, to work, and to symbols. Compare this to ways in which people in a different society you have studied construct their own identity in relation to **one** of these elements. [5 marks]