

Producing Tradition and Managing Social Changes in the French Vineyards

The Circle of Time in Burgundy

Marion Demossier

Demossier, Marion 1997: Producing Tradition and Managing Social Changes in the French Vineyards. The Circle of Time in Burgundy. – *Ethnologia Europaea* 27: 47–58.

The vineyards of Burgundy have an unparalleled reputation for the quality of their wines and an image of unchanging tradition. Such clichés hide the reality of a dynamic and fluid society which has been subject to the constant pressure of social and economic change. By providing the first ethnographic study of the major regional festival, the Saint Vincent Tournante, this article demonstrates not only the methods by which local wine producers have “invented” tradition for their own commercial advantage, but also the importance of ritual to the social and professional world of the *vigneron*.

Dr Marion Demossier, School of Modern Languages and International Studies, University of Bath, Claverton Down, Bath BA2 7AY, Great-Britain. E.mail: mlsmd@bath.ac.uk

In France, tradition, origin and age are the essential contributory factors in forming the reputation of a wine. Nobody questions the quality of the ancient vineyards of Burgundy¹ and of its so-called *terroir*. The word *terroir* which is effectively untranslatable, means more in French than mere soil. It is the synonym of the land made for the culture of vines and it has also described, since at least the XVIth century, a wine or a person who has all the qualities and the defects of their place of birth. With the emergence of pedology as a science in the XIXth century, the concept of *terroir* has been presented as immanent. Man is only there to bring forth the potential² of this *terroir*. In France, the concept of *terroir* has been given legal expression by the *Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée* or AOC and its definition of the *cru*.

As they have passed from one generation to another, no real change has occurred in the geographical landscape of the renowned vineyards of Burgundy. Exploited first by the monks, later by the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie and now in the majority by families of wine growers (*vignerons*), these plots are perceived as im-

morial and stable. Such permanence and continuity offer a guarantee of the quality of the vineyards and their production. Some of the most celebrated families of wine-growers have been in the same village since the XVIth century, for example the Esmonin in Gevrey-Chambertin³ or the Barolet in Saint Romain and this is often taken to be symptomatic of a wider pattern. However, the historiography of the region and the results of my ethnological fieldwork contradicts this image of an unchanging social space. This paper⁴ is the result of six months of ethnographic fieldwork in the village of Puligny-Montrachet during 1990–1991 when I participated in the organisation and management of the forthcoming festival.⁵ I will argue that the Burgundian vineyards have belonged to different social groups at different stages of its history. Each succeeding class of landowners has stamped its own mark on the vineyard, most recently the families of *vignerons* who since the phylloxera crisis of 1886 have formed the predominant group of landowners. Since that crisis, different social groups have contributed to a process of “inventing tradition” which

has helped them to legitimise their own status as wine growers and maintain the tradition of Burgundy's ancient wines. The aim of this article is to explore the relationship between the notion of tradition and the reality of social change in Burgundian viticulture by examining, in particular detail, a key regional festival: the Saint Vincent Tournante.

Since the publication in 1983 of the influential collection of essays edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) entitled "*The invention of tradition*", there has been a great deal of scholarly interest in the idea of the "invention" of the past. Robert Ulin (1986) has recently discussed some of the limits of the interpretation of the concept of tradition by scholars like Linnekin (1983) or Hanson (1989). For Robert Ulin (1995:526),

"the current status of Southwest French wines follows conjointly from their political and economic history and a process of invention that links place and individual property with the authenticity and quality of wine".

The author believes that there is much to be gained from viewing the wine growing past as invented but that not all discourses of an imagined and relativized past have an equal chance of being advanced and recognised as authoritative. In Bordeaux,

"the conjuncture of the political economy of wine-growing and the cultural representation of elite wines as authoritative has enabled elite growers to use the cultural capital associated with their wines to tremendous commercial advantage".⁶

In the example of Burgundy, I will show how the local wine-growers have taken the task of constructing tradition into their own hands. Through their increasingly powerful position in the professional sphere, they have been able to impose themselves through local associations and regional or national bodies like the *syndicat de village* or the *Bureau Interprofessionnel des vins de Bourgogne*. Their financial and numerical strength has helped them to take control of the process of construction and legit-

imisation of the vineyards. They have called into play the organisation and recognition of the landscape because of their economic domination of the region and the symbolic importance of their control of the whole process of wine making. By examining the festival of the Saint Vincent Tournante, it is possible to illustrate how this process works in practice.

I

The festival of the Saint Vincent Tournante takes place on the first weekend following Saint Vincent's day, the 22nd of January, in order to honour the patron saint of winegrowers. The right to host the Saint Vincent Tournante rotates amongst the winegrowing villages of the Côte de Beaune and Côte de Nuits and returns every twenty to thirty years to its point of departure. Although Saint Vincent is recognised as the patron saint of winegrowers, before the creation in 1937 of this peripatetic festival every village organised a celebration in honour of its own patron saint, who could be Saint Vincent, or another martyr such as Saint Bernard, Saint Thibault, or Saint Cyr. Today the Saint Vincent Tournante is the established regional festival, but the cult of individual saints' days is still kept alive and is marked by a formal mass and then a banquet for the inhabitants of the village. It was these traditional celebrations that provided the model for the Saint Vincent Tournante. The village chosen for the event organises a procession attended by representatives of all of the seventy-five mutual aid societies in the region followed by a church service held in parallel with a free wine tasting, and finally the three banquets of honour.

The role of the mutual aid societies is crucial for understanding the origins of the Saint Vincent Tournante. During the Old Regime, these mutual aid societies, known as confraternities, fulfilled both a spiritual and secular function, and in times of illness or death would come to the aid of their members. Although abolished by the Revolution, they reemerged in the course of the nineteenth century and in 1865, the first modern mutual aid society was founded in Meloisey. Their role was to provide financial or physical help to the winegrowers in the event of

sickness, death or other calamities. Many of these societies were closely associated with the Church. The political friction between Church and State in the period before 1914 also saw the establishment of purely secular societies. Today the winegrowers are economically independent and few require the assurance of mutual aid, but the societies continue to act as a focus of sociability and they help young winegrowers to integrate into the professional community. They also provide the structure for the organisation of the Festival of Saint Vincent Tournante.

In order to understand the festival and the local society in which it is held, it is necessary to examine the historical background of the Saint Vincent Tournante. In 1934, the *Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin* was created in Burgundy (Nuits-Saint-Georges) by two local notables, Camille Rodier, the chairman of the tourist office, and Georges Faiveley, a winemerchant in Nuits-Saint-Georges. Their aim in establishing this Bacchic society was twofold. Firstly, they intended to build an attractive ritual based upon gastronomy, wine and Rabelais. Their inspiration was the statutes of a confraternity called the "Order of the drink"⁷, invented by a certain Mr de la Posquière in 1703, whose activities were described later in a manuscript written by a retired colonel of the Hussards. He penned his account in 1812 and it provided the framework for a confraternity held in Beaune at that time but which disappeared soon after. The second aim of Rodier and Faiveley, but not the least important one, was the promotion of the wines of the region and more precisely those from Nuits-Saint-Georges.⁸ The *Confrérie* has served as an example all over France and similar *Confréries* now promote the wines of regions such as the Loire and the Bordelais. It is also important to note that since the 1970s the *Confrérie* has issued its own special commendation for Burgundian wines called *Tastevinage*. The opportunity to participate in the competition for this label is open to all winegrowers, whose product is subject to a "blind tasting", that is to say the producer of the wine is unknown to the judges. For a wine grower to be accorded the "*Tastevinage*" label is a source of professional prestige and potentially of advan-

tage when it comes to the commercialisation of his vintage.

The economic and social context is equally important for understanding the origins of the *Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin*. The dire economic situation of the 1930s meant that demand for wine fell sharply, producing serious tensions between two very different social groups: the winegrowers and the winemercchants. It was the merchants who bought the grapes from the *vignerons*, produced and marketed the wine. When they stopped buying the grape harvest, this soon meant hardship for the winegrowers. The winemercchants themselves were also in a difficult position because they were left with large unsold and expensive stocks.

Another source of friction between winegrowers and winemercchants was the introduction of the *Appellations d'Origine Contrôlées* legislation, which involved the establishment of a hierarchical scale of quality for the different vineyards. It was not a new idea. In Bordeaux, a classification had been established in 1855 which was the first widely accepted hierarchy of wine appellations and it has changed little to the present day.⁹ This classification was established in response to that requested by the organisers of the Universal Exposition of Bordeaux wines held in Paris. A similar classification was devised in Burgundy soon after by Dr Lavalley and although it initially encountered hostility, it has subsequently become the basis for the *Appellation's* of the region's wine. The aim of this classification was to promote the wines but also to protect the production against fraud. In the context of 1930s, the *Confrérie* dominated by the local wine nobility, called the tune in the forthcoming organisation of the *Appellations*. Although, the system of *Appellations* had been tacitly recognised in 1919, it was only confirmed in 1930 with a legal decree issued by the Tribunal of Commerce of Dijon which stated that individual communes had the right to petition for an *Appellation*. This was complemented by a law of 30 July 1935 establishing the foundation of the *INAO* which declared that the individual *Appellations* were produced from a precise geographical area according to current and common practices and customs.¹⁰

Throughout the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century, the process of establishing the system of AOC in Burgundy was marked by two conflicting tendencies. Firstly the predominance of the large landowners who exercised a powerful influence on both a professional and institutional level. Secondly by the emergence of an increasingly powerful and vocal lobby of *vignerons* anxious to mark their own professional presence. With such sharp sources of social friction, it is clear why the *Confrérie* wanted to create a festival which would be a medium between the competing groups. Previously the large landowners had argued with the winemercants about the limits of different appellations and had denounced the arbitrary nature of a classification based on the commercial considerations contained in the project of Dr Lavalle of 1855. Now rather surprisingly it is the *vignerons* who prepare their dossiers in favour of the right to an appellation by using, in part, the classification of Lavalle. The Saint Vincent Tournante for its part provides an additional stamp of legitimacy to recently recognised *crus* by integrating them into the ritual of the festival.

In order to alleviate the effects of the depression, several major projects were undertaken locally with the aim of promoting Burgundian wine. In 1930, Burgundy like the rest of France was experiencing a revival of interest in its folklore and tradition as is revealed by the "*Guide of the popular and traditional festival of Burgundy*" published in 1930. In its preface, the authors declared:

"Don't forget that like Provence and Brittany, you have many regional festivals, traditional and popular. Don't let them die and disappear, it is with your wine and your archaeological monuments one of the flowers of your tourism".¹¹

A few years later, in 1937, the town of Beaune decided to fund the creation of a museum of wine¹² and the founding of the *Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin* was another example of this trend. It was hoped that such a body would repair the relationship between the merchants and the winegrowers and give a commercial

boost to Burgundian wines in the context of a grave economic crisis. It was also an attempt to encourage communication between two separate worlds: the world of the vine and the world of wine. As Fernand Woutaz declared in 1971:

"Against the difficulties of this period which seem to ruin a lot of people, don't revolt but take the Tastevin and establish the dialogue".¹³

What could better break down social barriers and remove a sense of conflict than sharing a drink?¹⁴

The Saint Vincent Tournante was therefore born out of the social and economic crises of the 1930s. The collapse in wine sales and the disputes about the introduction of the AOC legislation which was threatening to add fuel to the already combustible relations between *vignerons*, local notables and *negociants*. In this tense atmosphere, Rodier and Faiveley created the *Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin*. In doing so, they drew upon the myth of an earlier Burgundian golden age of social unity, and the increasingly popular contemporary enthusiasm for local folklore and tradition. Through the costumes and pageantry of the *Chevaliers* and the Saint Vincent, they hoped to cement over social divisions and provide an economic boost to their ailing commerce. The incredible success of the enterprise would exceed even their wildest dreams.

II

Today the role of the *Confrérie* is to oversee the organisation of the festival and it is responsible for choosing the village which will hold the Saint Vincent Tournante. It is easy to see why such an administrative structure is needed. The Saint Vincent Tournante takes more than a year to prepare and the organisers need to be able to welcome as many as 100.000 visitors in two days. The budget supported by the host village and by an association created especially for this occasion is around 4.000.000 French francs. This is a fabulous sum when we consider that a village such as Puligny-Montrachet has a population of only 400 people. A number of different factors lie behind the citing of the

festival. For example, when new *Appellations* were created in the Hautes Côtes de Beaune, or in Marsannay-la-Côte the Saint Vincent Tournante played a significant role in validating their enhanced status. According to M. Chevginard, responsible for the *Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin*:

“When there is a new *Appellation*, we study the question with the winegrowers and if they agree, we use Saint Vincent”.¹⁶

But the *Confrérie* also reinforces the position of the more famous villages by allowing them to hold the festival every twenty or thirty years.

The *Confrérie* helps to maintain the ethic and the original sense of what is now an enormous festival by supervising the preparations and by suggesting alterations where necessary. For example, during the meetings to prepare the Saint Vincent Tournante of Puligny-Montrachet, the wine-growers suggested opening the cellars and offering wine tastings at 9 a.m., well before the church service and mass. The reaction was a very clear and quick no from the *Confrérie* because they wanted to maintain the religious side of this popular event. This is a very good example of their role, it also reveals the different political and ideological values of the social groups involved. The festival highlights conflicting religious values, those of the wine notability, on the one hand, and that of the winegrowers on the other, and it is possible to detect traditional political divisions between clericalism and anti-clericalism. Puligny-Montrachet we should note had possessed two mutual aid societies, one catholic the other secular until 1914, and in the neighbouring village of Pommard the division between the lay *Union of the wine-growers* and the Catholic *Society of Saint Vincent* still exists today. On the whole, however, it is fair to say that relations with the church are now harmonious. The sermons of local priests stress the fundamental role of wine in Christian ritual, immortalised in the words of chanoine Kir, clergyman and mayor of Dijon, who in 1937 spoke of “Le vin de l'éloquence sacrée”.

The *Confrérie*, through the Saint Vincent Tournante and its other activities, tries to play

the role of a medium between two connected but hostile worlds: the winegrowers who are the most numerous and powerful in the village and the handful of large landowners or winemercants. The latter traditionally formed the social elite, or bourgeoisie, of the region; they owned the largest and most prestigious plots but never worked directly in the vines. In the past, the village was marked by these social divisions and it is still vital to understanding the contemporary social organisation. In the daily discourses and practices, the winegrowers define themselves as “workers in the vineyard”¹⁶ and describe the landlords as those who “don't work in the vineyard”.¹⁷ Their respective habits, clothes, hands, gesture and language illustrate two separate social worlds. The attempts of the *Confrérie* to build bridges between these two social groups can be seen in their invitation of two representatives of each of the seventy-five mutual aid societies to their banquet.

In fact, the banquets themselves provide eloquent testimony to the social, professional and cultural world of the vineyards. At midday on the Saturday of the Saint Vincent Tournante, three banquets are held in different parts of the region. One is the banquet of the local priests organised in the host village by a catholic landlord, the second is the banquet of the winegrowers and their guests (customers, foreign and French winemercants...); and the last one is the banquet of the Clos-de-Vougeot organised by the *Confrérie* in its fief, the chateau of Clos-Vougeot, and it is remarkable for its prestigious public of international celebrities, politicians and businessmen. Through this tripartite division, we can glimpse the three medieval orders: Church, Nobility and Third Estate which was almost certainly the original intention of its authors in 1937.

Another important function of the *Confrérie* is the *Intronisation* of new members.¹⁸ Every year, the village which hosts the festival proposes a list of the oldest and most worthy winegrowers from the village. These winegrowers are received into the *Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin* following the ritual incantation of “Noé, Bacchus, Saint Vincent”. This quasi-religious rite offers a public recognition of their

career as worker of the vineyard. It is a consecration of their position in the community and the village. As one *vigneron* declared of his father: "To be received with the oldest winegrowers of the village, it was something for him".¹⁹

This part of the festival is a key point for our understanding of the local community in terms of family lineage, identities, social capital and belonging. The village is composed of different families of winegrowers some of whom have lived there since the XVIth century. Traditionally, the winegrowers were tied to their ancestors not only through their work in the vines, but also to the wine itself via the foundation of perpetual masses for their ancestors paid for by wine from their annual production.²⁰ Every generation brings something new to the lineage by adding agricultural, technical or commercial skills, or land to the family patrimony. It is the family name of the vigneron that is conspicuous in the Burgundian wine industry. Unlike wine elsewhere in France, it is the vigneron's name on the bottle that is the most important element, not just the particular parcel of vines or, as in Bordeaux, the Château.

The role of the mutual aid society in the festival is to control the success of the Saint Vincent Tournante in terms of gaining economic, social and symbolic weight and assuring a balance in the budget. It is also a method of creating tradition. The festival is in the hands of the principal members of the mutual aid society. These winegrowers who are in many cases the most important economic and social individuals in the village take the key decisions. One big change help to explain how the event is perceived and directed by the producers. The money invested in the Saint Vincent Tournante has been increasing steadily since the 1950s, and between 1959 and 1988, it has multiplied thirtyfive times. In 1961, two hundred people came to Puligny-Montrachet, but by 1991 more than 100.000 visited the village during the weekend of 20–22 January. From a small and traditional event, it has been transformed into a major commercial and public venture using all the techniques of the modern media. The organisation in 1991 was handled by ten committees and the festival was covered

by the local, national and international press. The mass was broadcast live in the village. Yet the underlying aim of this gargantuan festival remains the confirmation of the legitimacy of the village's vineyards and the quality of their wines. The question is how can a local festival create tradition and reputation, or help to manage the effects of social change. Are the images, discourses and identities produced by the local people really effective in the broader context of the world winemarket?

III

In order to answer these questions, we have to analyse more precisely how the Saint Vincent Tournante and its organisation fulfils an important function in the construction of a local and even national identity. Wine is crucial to the social exchanges within the professional community of winegrowers and this is central to the festival. Every year, the host village proposes a free winetasting organised by the winegrowers and landlords of the village. In Puligny-Montrachet, three vintages were prepared for this purpose: one of wine harvested in 1982 consisting of 4.000 bottles, another from the grapes of 1986 of 6.000 bottles and finally that of 1988 totalling 20.000 bottles. The economic value of the gift is considerable. The grapes used in the production of these wines were collected from the individual wine producers in the village and the wine made by the elites of the local society, one landlord and three important winegrowers. The preparation of these vintages takes different forms from one village to another. Sometimes, the vintage comes from a declared stock; but sometimes it appears as if by magic, that is to say it is undeclared for tax purposes. The local authorities have long turned a blind eye to this practice, although since 1992 the tax office has been showing an increasing interest. Their concern is perhaps linked to the fact that every year, the size of this "free production" has been growing, revealing competition between villages.

Another way of seeing this competition is by examining the structure of landownership in the local vineyards. The winegrowers of Puligny-Montrachet own vines in their own village, but

they also have plots in the surrounding villages. Certain of these villages are in what can be described as “compatibility of production” with Puligny-Montrachet. For instance, Meursault and Puligny-Montrachet both produce Chardonnay and prestigious *Appellations* and they are therefore in competition. Puligny-Montrachet and Pommard are, on the other hand, complementary to each other. They produce different sorts of wines, quality white and red wines respectively, and are thus compatible in terms of production. A winegrower is happy to have both of them to sell in his cellar. Moreover, the *vigneron* plays with this variety in order to improve his image. This notion of “compatibility of production” is also essential for understanding the social tactic of buying lands and the adaptive character of the domain. It is defined by social affinities such as traditional exchanges or professional solidarity, or by cultural ties, for example, the organisation of festivals or masses. Technical factors can also play a part, notably the vinification of the same variety of vine usually pinot noir or chardonnay. There is a strong resemblance between some villages in terms of the nature and quality of their wines. The festival in switching from a village of the *Côte de Beaune* to one of the *Côte de Nuits*, from a vineyard of red to white reflects this hierarchy and the compatibility of production. We could therefore say that the festival of Saint Vincent works to the advantage of all by promoting the value of Burgundy's wines.

The professional hierarchy between villages is different from the commercial one established by the wine-merchants. Overall, there are different classifications and different customers. It is something which is constantly changing and is illustrated by the gift of wine during the festival. The position of a new *Appellation* within the broader winecommunity is, in part, determined through the Festival. The gift, as Marcel Mauss has shown, obliges the person receiving it to reciprocate. This obligation takes place in the peripatetic festival and has been transformed into a massive and collective gift. The festival is turning and the gift also. This enormous circle of gifts creates an obligation and a competition for all the members of the professional community. This circularity is also

a ritual which offers protection against an adverse economic situation. It is true that the offering of gifts obliges the winegrowers to compare their production with that of others. By the same token, the economic value of the gift is used for an evaluation within the professional community and is related to the position of the village in the winehierarchy. Two factors are available to judge its value: the number of bottles and the different year of the wine. For example, Puligny-Montrachet is considered to be a very prestigious village, owning some of the most famous wines in France. Its choice was, therefore, to offer 30.000 bottles of wine from three different vintages 1982, 1986, 1988 more than the neighbouring Hautes-Côtes which organised the festival the year before. The more vintages offered, the greater the value of the gift. Every one of them assesses its position and gives in relation to its position in the market. When a new *Appellation* has been granted, the successful village has to demonstrate to the rest of the community its enhanced position. The Festival of Saint Vincent Tournante is one way to be evaluated and accepted by others.

By buying a glass at 25 French francs, the visitors are able to taste the wines for free. However, the gift won't be the same for everybody. Access to different wines is determined by social and professional status. For the visitors coming mainly from the nearest departments, it is the youngest year which is proposed in the cellars. The representatives of the mutual aid societies on the other hand, have the right to taste the oldest vintage during their *casse-croûte* before the procession. The *Confrérie des Chevaliers du Tastevin* also has the privilege of sharing this wine even if they only follow part of the procession. This control of access to the winetasting reflects different values both inside and outside the community. At the same time, during all the preparation of the festival, the gift and the circulation of wines will be encouraged. The local institutions and certain national bodies like the *Office National des Forêts*, the Police and the *EDF-GDF* are all thanked for their contribution by the gift of wines. By the gift and the counter-gift, everybody is evaluated and evaluates the other. The aim is to secure their position in the region's



Fig. 1. The procession of the mutual aid societies of Burgundy in Puligny-Montrachet.

winehierarchy. At different times in the course of the weekend the public participating in the festival changes. The banquet of the winegrowers, given over to the celebration of the local wines, provides one example. Gastronomy adds its own prestige to the festival and to the village, and the wines are chosen in harmony with the finest delicacies. The grand *cru* Bâtard-Montrachet will be associated only with a lobster which will enhance the value of the local wine.

The procession of the mutual aid societies also plays an important part in this process of definition. The participants with their banners and effigies of the saints follow the old route of the famous *crus*, therefore all the community, winegrowers and landlords can visualise the name of the plots, their position and worth, and who owns them. The vineyard is divided into small plots with, in the case of the landlords and notables, their name on the wall of the field. This social structure is easily legible from the landscape. As Mr Carillon described the procession of Puligny-Montrachet:

“It will going down the hill to begin with, then it will pass between the Clavoillon and the Folatières, above the Pucelles and it will going down again in the direction of the grands *crus*, the road of Chassagne, near the Bâtard-Montrachet”.²¹

After seeing these geographical landmarks, it is easier when tasting the wines to remember the plot. It helps to legitimise the concept of *terroir*.

The winetasting takes place in the morning and is defined by different forms of sociability. For the Burgundians and even for the guests of the winemercants, it is a privilege to taste wine from the area without having to pay a lot of money. In fact, because the festival is in the hands of a social group, the winegrowers, who until very recently were peasants, there is a prodigious democratisation of the consumption of wine. The idea is to keep the winetasting as a form of gift, although it has some inconveniences. By Saturday afternoon the Festival has been transformed into a popular and alcoholic event. It is above all the young people who



Fig. 2. The social structure of the vineyard and the geographical landmarks of the landlords.

finish completely drunk and in 1991 no less than 40 were treated for the state of alcoholic coma. It is hardly surprising that they are accused of ruining the image of the Festival. This process shows the popular origins of the *vignerons* who want to keep their wine affordable despite the luxury character of their product. From this discussion, it is clear that for the village hosting the festival the aim is to accumulate prestige and respect for its wines from both the professional community and the outside world.

On one level, therefore, the festival is an enormous advertising campaign for the host village with its wines offered to thousands of visitors in a display of pride and publicity. More importantly, it offers an opportunity for the villages to situate themselves within the professional hierarchy. Those who have recently acquired the status of an *Appellation* can justify their enhanced position through the festival, while a long-established and internationally renowned village such as Puligny-Montrachet has an opportunity to confirm its status. Yet the

festival also provides a mirror in which the participants have a chance to glimpse their own place in the social and professional sphere.

IV

The village plays a key-function in the social construction of tradition. It represents the locality in a changing world. It is associated clearly with the *crus* and most of the time, the *crus* have given their name to the village. For example, Montrachet to Puligny, Chambertin to Gevrey, Corton to Aloxe. It is helpful to consider this association of the village and its wines and how it relates to the of Saint Vincent Tournante. In 1991, the village of Puligny-Montrachet was composed of two winemercants, one landlord, around 10 big winegrowers, some small *vignerons* (22 have between 1 and 5 hectares) and finally some parttime workers.²² It is the landlord and the group of wealthy owners who were primarily responsible for organising the event. Although the social structure has been largely static since 1930, with a

small number of notables and the large majority of *vignerons*, there is nevertheless an ongoing process of renewal.²³

By emphasising the importance of the *terroir* and also of the wines and their owners or producers, reputation and tradition are constructed while helping to disguise the reality of social change. The collective memory incorporates the recent transformations and presents them as part of a seamless fabric that helps the society to preserve and guarantee its social ties and its hierarchy. The vineyards are central to this process and they provide a social cement for a changing community. But time is essential for the complete integration of a new family into the community. The collective memory has not forgotten the old social structure and it was expressed on many occasions during the festival by the most important landlord of the village: "To be part of the village, you need three graves in the cemetery or fifty years of being part of the community".²⁴

Belonging to the village is determined by this cultural pattern. Like the vineyard with a new Appellation which needs two festivals in order to acquire legitimacy, the workers of the vines need fifty years, or two Saint Vincent Tournante, to be completely accepted as part of the community.

We must also remember that family lineage, defined in patriarchal terms, is essential to this culture. The recognition of the lineage in the social structure not only passes through the family and its reputation in the social space of the village but also through the professional community which confers its own legitimacy. In the village, the individual is defined above all in terms of his family, whose name adorns not only the houses and property, but also the plots in the vineyards where the name of their owners is frequently displayed, helping to reinforce the association between the prestige of the *crus* and that of the family. The local society registered slowly all these transformations. In everyday conversation, the population continues to maintain categories like Landlord/Winegrower which are related to the evolution of this society. They also remember the notability associated to the big properties. As one *vigneron* said of a former mayor:

"Chartron, he was elected two times, he was a winemerchant and landlord. At the time, we appreciated having a mayor with an important social situation. He shielded us with his body".²⁵

Despite the appearance of an unchanging social landscape provided by the continuing importance of notable families, there is nevertheless a process of social change which the Saint Vincent Tournante facilitates. As a new inhabitant of Puligny explained matters: "Me, I took part in the Saint Vincent because I needed recognition".²⁶

Whether they have lived in the village for centuries or are new to the community, the families share the stresses and strains arising from the preparation of the Saint Vincent Tournante. The organisation of the festival creates a tension between the different participants because the host village is not guaranteed to recoup its investment. The only way to make money is to sell glasses and to welcome a great number of visitors. The financial risk is enormous and millions of francs could be lost if there was an inopportune blizzard or other calamity. With this sword of Damocles suspended above them, the relationships between the organisers are very intense in the days preceding the festival. Yet this is more than compensated for by the sense of solidarity that unites the villagers as they work together for this communal expression of professional pride. The degree of financial brinkmanship has also to some extent been mitigated by the fact that the Saint Vincent Tournante, as a rotating festival, has bred a sense of solidarity and mutual obligation between the participating villages. In the event of a deficit, the money collected on earlier occasions will be used to help the losing commune. When the village makes a profit, it has to decide how to spend it. Usually, the community invests in roads, the promotion of its wines, and its tourism or the restoration and improvement of the village. In 1991, after more than 12 months of hard work, worry and preparation, the villagers of Puligny-Montrachet realised 800.000 French francs of profit.

The Saint Vincent Tournante is a symbol of both tradition and modernity, of old structures and the new power of the winemakers, of individualism and solidarity. The festival gives the impression of stability, creating a collective memory and provoking the recollection of past time. From this, it would seem that the Saint Vincent Tournante has served as a way of facilitating and even legitimising social change. Returning regularly to each village, it allows the inhabitants to praise the qualities of their wines to local, national and even international visitors, reinforcing the impression of unchanging tradition while frequently integrating new wine makers or *Appellations* as part of the apparently seamless tapestry of Burgundian viticulture. The contradictions between the 'gift' of wine and need to make a profit, or of the conflicts between landlords and *negociants* on one hand, and winegrower on the other shows how it is crucial for this rural society to maintain its stability in a modern changing world of competition. The only way to distinguish Burgundy from the other wines of the world is to propose its unique geography, time and proofs²⁷ as regional and even national emblems. Tradition creates value and offers a point of comparison to measure the evolution of the local society and its wines over time. Through this newly invented tradition of the Saint Vincent Tournante, it is possible to demonstrate how a new group of wine-makers has to a large extent taken control of wine production. They have achieved an equilibrium with the landlords and *negociants* developing a mutually rewarding partnership which maintains their respective identities through the rituals of Saint Vincent and the *Chevaliers du Tastevin*. By inventing tradition and by reconstructing their past, they define themselves and help to structure the identity of Burgundian viticulture in a competitive and changing world. This identity distinguishes Burgundy from other vineyards by a manipulation of tradition based on the concepts of notoriety, origin and age or by ... the Circle of Time.

1. There are four different appellations : regional (38% of the Burgundian surface), villages (37%), premiers crus (20%) and grands crus. Three quarters of the surface is planted in Pinot noir. Overall, there are 1.400 exploitations in Burgundy.
2. See Bérard, Laurence & Marchenay, Philippe. 1995: Lieux, temps et preuves, la construction sociale des produits de terroir. In: *Terrain*, 24, mars : 159.
3. I would like to thank Dr Mack Holt for providing me with this information.
4. I would like to thank the Ministry of the Culture in France, The Mission du Patrimoine ethnologique, the Direction Régionale des Affaires Culturelles in Burgundy and the Museum of Wine in Beaune for their grant which made this research possible.
5. This research contributed to a wider study of the cult of saints amongst winegrowers in Burgundy and formed part of my doctoral thesis on the transmission of knowledge and technical practices in the Burgundian vineyards. See Demossier, Marion 1995: *Le cru, la cuvée, le vigneron et le village: une anthropologie des communautés viti-vinicoles en Bourgogne*. Thèse de Doctorat en Anthropologie sociale, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. To be published in 1997.
6. Ulin, Robert. C. 1995:526.
7. "L'Ordre de la Boisson".
8. There is still competition between the two côtes and the towns of Beaune and Nuits-Saint-Georges. The influence of the Dioceses shown by Roger Dion and the organisation of the market explained the bipartition of this area.
9. Ulin, Robert. 1995:22.
10. It means simply tradition.
11. "Bourguignons, N'oubliez pas qu'à l'instar de la Provence et de la Bretagne, vous possédez un splendide faisceau de fêtes régionalistes, traditionnelles et populaires. Ne les laissez pas mourir et disparaître, c'est, avec votre vin et vos monuments archéologiques l'un des plus beaux fleurons de votre couronne touristique". Association pour le renouveau des fêtes populaires bourguignonnes (1930:1).
12. Demossier, Marion & Jacobi, Daniel 1994: La bouteille de Bourgogne, entre recherche et esthétique. In: *La Revue*, Musée des Arts et Métiers, juin, 24–30.
13. "Contre les difficultés du moment qui semblaient mettre en cause les moyens traditionnels d'existence de milliers d'honnêtes gens, mieux valait lever non pas l'étendard de la révolte mais le pacifique Tastevin et instaurer le dialogue". Woutaz, Fernand (1971:65).
14. An important contribution on the Anthropology of Drink has been made by Mary Douglas (1987).
15. "Quand il y a une nouvelle appellation, on étudie

- la question avec les intéressés et s'ils le souhaitent, on met Saint Vincent à leur service". Mr. Chevignard.
16. "travailleurs de la vigne".
 17. "ne vont pas à la vigne".
 18. "Intronisations". The Confrérie was one of the first to create and to use this ritual.
 19. "Être intronisé avec les vieux vigneronns du village, c'est quelque chose pour lui".
 20. I would like to thank again Dr Mack Holt for this comment.
 21. "Il va descendre de la montagne pour le départ, on passe dans les grands crus entre les Clavoillon et les Folatières, au dessus des Pucelles et ça va descendre vers les grands crus, la route de Chassagne, vers les Bâtard-Montrachet". Mr. Carillon.
 22. The social composition of Puligny is mainly people working in the neighbouring towns like Beaune or Chagny and part time workers in the wine industry.
 23. The vigneronns were a social group that was relatively affluent before the phylloxera crisis of 1880.
 24. "Pour être du village, il faut trois tombes au cimetière ou cinquante ans d'existence au village". Mr. Leflaive.
 25. "Chartron, il a dû faire deux mandats, il était négociant en vins, propriétaire, à l'époque, on aimait avoir un maire avec une situation sociale importante, il servait de bouclier". M. Virot.
 26. "Moi, j'ai pris ça parce qu'on avait besoin de se faire reconnaître". Mr. Vallot.
 27. Bérard, Laurence & Marchenay, Philippe. 1995: Lieux, temps et preuves, la construction sociale des produits de terroir. In: *Terrain*, 24, mars: 153–164.

References

- Association pour la Renaissance des Fêtes Populaires Bourguignonnes. 1930: *Guide des Fêtes populaires et traditionnelles de la Bourgogne*. Mâcon, Combier.
- Bérard, Laurence, & Marchenay, Philippe 1995: Lieux, temps et preuves, la construction sociale des produits de terroir. In: *Terrain*, 24, mars: 153–164.
- Demossier, Marion 1995: *Le cru, la cuvée, le vigneron et le village: la transmission des pratiques et savoir-faire en Côte bourguignonne*. Paris, Thèse de Doctorat en Anthropologie sociale, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales. To be published in 1997 by the Editions Universitaires de Dijon.
- Dion, Roger 1959 (1980): *Histoire de la vigne et du vin en France*. Servin, réédition Flammarion.
- Douglas, Mary 1987: *Constructive Drinking, Perspectives on Drink from Anthropology*. Cambridge University Press, Maison des Sciences de l'Homme.
- Grivot, Françoise 1964: *Le commerce des vins de Bourgogne*. Paris, Editions Sabri.
- Hanson, Allan 1989: The Making of the Maori: Culture Invention and Its Logic. In: *American Anthropologist*, 91 (4):890–902.
- Hobsbawm, Eric & Ranger, Terence 1983: *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Linnekin, Jocelyn 1983: Defining Tradition: Variations on the Hawaiian identity. In: *American Ethnologist*, 10: 241–252.
- Loftus, Simon 1993: *Journal of a village in Burgundy*. London.
- Ulin, Robert. C. 1986: Social Change through a Southwest French Wine Cooperative. In: *Ethnologia Europaea. Journal of European Ethnology* (16), 1:25–38.
- Ulin, Robert C. 1988: Cooperation or cooptation: A southwest French Wine Cooperative. In: *Dialectical Anthropology*, 13 (3):253–267.
- Ulin, Robert C. 1995: Invention and Representation as Cultural Capital, Southwest French Winegrowing History. In: *American Anthropologist*, 97 (3): 526.
- Woutaz, Fernand 1971: *Le grand livre des Confréries des vins de France*. Paris, Editions Halevy.