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A History of Wine in Europe, 19th to 20th Centuries, Volume II

Markets, Trade and Regulation of Quality

Edited by

Silvia A. Conca Messina · Stéphane Le Bras
Paolo Tedeschi · Manuel Vaquero Piñeiro



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Editors

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Quantity Is Not Quality: Expansion and Limits of Wine-Producing in Sicily

Francesco Dandolo

The Initial Increasing After the Italian Unification Process

When the Italian Kingdom was formed in March 1861, the Sicilian farming activities were already set. The island was at the centre of massive trade exchanges among centuries, resulting in an important mutation of exported agricultural products. The corn was the main product, but it was progressively followed by other cultivations, with particular regard to that taken by specialized tree crops, that are typical of the Mediterranean vegetable garden (Aymard 1987, p. 7). Viticulture became important after the finishing of the Italian unification process, it allowed to increase profits of both the landowner aristocracy and the smallholders. In fact, the political closeness with French empire strengthened the economic relations among the two countries, as it could be clearly shown by the bilateral commercial agreement signed

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in January 1863. The Italian wine-producing, with particular regard to the Sicilian ones, was already famous for special types of wines, but it became much more relevant in this context because of the phylloxera infection that in a short time destroyed a significant quantity of French vineyard starting from the 1860s. Moreover, Sicily was helped by the Mediterranean routes that permit to reach French harbours in an easy and safe way.

Specifically, the Marsala harbour became the island's most important one for the Sicilian wine export abroad. Marsala became a head-quarter of important wine plants starting from the nineteenth century, operating by the English managers John Woodhouse and Benjamin Ingham, and also by Florio starting to the 1830s (Iachiello 2003, p. 45). Vincenzo Florio built a shipping company together with Ingham in 1840 dedicated to winemoving from the island (Cancila 2008).

France was obliged to massively import grape or wine at rough state; the Italian wine export doubled respect to the prior years starting from the end of 1870s and the beginning of the 1880s, with 80% of the product absorbed by the French market (Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria e Commercio 1896, pp. 844–845). The export continued to stay at high levels until 1887, when a quick shrink of export related to France occurred due to the French commercial treaty condemnation (Montoneri 1933, p. 125).

The quick and massive export increasing led to a significant production rising; it is noticeable how it emerges from the rough statistics of these decades that the Palermo's province was at the first place of the national wine-producing level, followed by Trapani at the fourth place, while the Trapani and Girgenti areas were among the first places due to the maximum production obtained by every hectare (Ottavi 1885, p. 47). The grapevine covered land increasing encompassed all the island and it was progressively intensified starting from the Italian unification process, according to the general events exposed at the beginning of this study. The passage was from 120.000 to 130.000 hectares in the 1850s to 200.000 hectares at the beginning of the 1870s, overcoming the 300.000 hectares during the 1880s. Focusing to the 1870–1874 and 1879–1883 period of five years, the increasing of wine-producing in the island was about 80%, becoming the most relevant respect to

other Italian regions and crowning Sicily to the first place for this type of product (Cerletti 1887a, p. 217). So an important agricultural landscape change occurred, encouraged by the agricultural crisis that hit Sicily starting from the 1870s.

So the grapevine cultivation became one of the most productive inside an agriculture-oriented economy as it was the Sicilian one (Giarrizzo 1976, p. 18). The proverb *Cu avivigna, avipani, vinu e ligna* sums up the advantages of this cultivation: the grapevine was the most valid alternative to the extensive and self-consuming agriculture, assuring a good labour absorption and a profitable occasion for the island to assume an important role inside the international trade (Barone 1987, p. 217). The vineyards, even the small ones, were a wealth source guaranteeing an acceptable economic stability and introducing dynamic elements that modified the traditional social hierarchy in the Sicilian rural areas (Cancila 1992, pp. 206–207). But the vineyards were not able to modify the contractual relationships between the landholders and leaseholders of grapevine dedicated lands. So, the grapevine strong expansion continued to be functional to an old type economy (Renda 1977, p. 98 ss.).

The Expansion Structural Limits and Attempts to Modernize the Production

The progress was abundant on a quantitative basis, but qualitatively there were lots of production problems. It was an old issue: even in the past phases of expansion, nothing changed about land organization, contractual conditions regulating the relationship between landholders and leaseholders and possibilities to realize a good-quality product. Only in the dessert and fortified wines target, like Marsala, Siracusa's Moscato, Eolie's Malvasia and some others Palermo's province wine, the Sicilian production was appreciated for its quality (Cancila 1992, p. 220). The wine-producing majority part came out from a special international conjuncture. The foreign demand modified only superficially the agricultural structures and productive paradigms, that remained abundantly speculative.

This condition was clearly underlined during the “Italian wine-producing Agreement” sponsored by the General Association of Italian Winemakers. Based on a regional analysis, it came out that the big wine-producing agglomeration was basically concentrated among the Trapani and Palermo provinces’ countries, different areas of Messina’s province, Etnea and Terreforti area and Catania’s province. In some cases a highly specialized productions were made, like Marsala, Moscato and Albanello: anyway, there were just a few cases with respect to the general production trend largely dedicated to the must-wine exported in France. This trend was typical from small landholders or leaseholders, that were able to realize an easily tradable and low cost rough product thanks to favourable climate conditions. It was obvious that the rough way of grapevine cultivation and wine preparation with absence of basic industrial planning would be come out when the favourable international trade conditions shrank (Cerletti 1887b, pp. 566–567).

The institution of viticulture and winemaking schools was conceived to tackle with this risky situation of an expansion sustained by fragile basis. These schools were part of a wide agricultural education project promoted by the Agriculture Ministry aiming at modernizing the primary sector, even if it was hard to realize because of the chronicle financing lack (Bidolli and Soldani 2001; Ivone 2004). The Catania’s viticulture and winemaking school was inaugurated in 1884 because it was one of territorial areas most grapevine intensive of the island. The school location was fair because the Catania’s province recently experienced a huge change in the agricultural landscape and it needed that farmers knew the most updated grapevine cultivation techniques. The school realization law was approved three years before, during November 1881, but the delay of the course starting was due to the hard research related to the field where the school practice could take place. At the beginning only basic courses were delivered, while the starting of theoretical courses was delayed. The paradox was that the school was mainly attended by the high class sons, while the poorer ones did not attend even if the basic courses were conceived for them. So there were no progresses in the education delivering because only people coming from an already skilled family had a real access to these schools, while the ones coming from a poorer and under-skilled one continued to stay away from the education process.

During the summer of 1894 the school board tried to tackle with this hurdle and decided to transform the basic courses into very short special courses dedicated to all aged and all level skilled farmers, with the aim of spreading among farmers the basic teachings of modern viticulture. Moreover, itinerant conferences were promoted into the main viticulture-oriented areas by the itinerant professors; the teaching approach was closely related to the users by the using of Sicilian dialect and by delivering lessons during days and hours when the winemakers were free from their work. Related to this approach, there were the Riposto and Noto experimental wine bars experience, respectively in the Catania's province and in the Siracusa's province. These wine bars were conceived as a meeting point for the rural society because people could stay there during the free time; moreover, they were very useful for spreading the wine culture among people that were not directly involved in the production, because they could go there and taste the wines produced by the wine bars organizers. They could be considered as a turning point that changes the relation between producers and users; they anticipated what nowadays are considered cool places to socialize and taste good wines.

The main idea of these proceedings was to revolutionize the teaching with a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down one, in order to be more closely related to the population.

These teaching experiences came out with better results if related to that of Catania's school. The winemakers appreciated this change in the winemaking teaching experience because they claimed it was closer to their needs and especially it was more ductile about times and techniques with which the modern viticulture essential principles were transmitted (Dandolo 2010, pp. 60–67). The contents transmission became urgent due to the rapid phylloxera infection diffusion in the Sicilian countries, this event rose a hard debate between the winemaking issues experts and the grapevines landholders.

The Phylloxera Discovering in Sicily

A lot of Italian regions, especially Sicily, took advantage when the phylloxera infections spread in France destroying a significant part of its grapevines. But when the first infections were discovered in the island

countries, a big contrast clearly arose between the Agriculture Ministry experts and winemakers. In fact, a lot of interests other than the productive ones were implied, as it was already underlined above. Among the main issues there was the forthcoming decline of local credit banks because of the winemaking difficulties to entirely finance the agricultural reconversions and the buying of tools needed to transform grape into must-wine.

The discovering of huge phylloxera infections in the island starting from 2 March 1880 created a big fear, while smaller phylloxera infections hit the Messina's province. The area which the infections were founded was an internal one, in the Caltanissetta's country, the most marginal province among the abundant Sicilian viticulture. But the fear was related to the possibility that the infection could quickly extend to important close viticulture areas destroying the entire island economy. The Sicilian deputies understood this fear and stimulated the government to rapidly conceive a systematic destroying plan of infected viticulture fields. The landholders and winemakers of the infected areas sharply opposed to that and claimed their opposition to the field destructions. It was a clear interest conflict, even if both parties were bounded by sharp criticism towards the area's government delegates. More specifically, the Ministry experts were criticized because of the criteria they used to define an area to be destroyed. In the Sicilian grapevines the phylloxera hit very deep into the roots (Ministero di Agricoltura, Industria, Commercio 1880, p. 61). So it was necessary to destroy grapevines that apparently were productive, but instead were already hit by infections. Nevertheless, the winemakers did not give up and claimed their opposition to destructions of grapevines they thought were sane and very productive. Protests were organized and thousands of winemakers and their families took part, the security forces hardly tackled with them (Maccagno 1881, pp. 470–476). Considering these protests, divergent opinions emerged among experts about the indiscriminate destruction system, even on the basis of experiences matured in other countries, like France. This way of acting expanded a confused and uncertain situation. Nobody knew who was right between government and protesters. Anyway, nobody knew if the government way of acting was too exaggerated even if it was right in the principle of tackling the phylloxera expansion.

The Phylloxera Infections Inside Principal Sicilian Viticulture Areas

The destruction system was abandoned during the 1884 spring. It was a compulsory choice because of the massive phylloxera infections extension and because other European countries adopted similar decisions (“Atti del congresso fillosserico internazionale” 1885, p. 54). New important phylloxera infections were discovered around one year ago in the Catania’s province, one of the most important viticulture areas in Sicily. The grapevine cultivation in this province took advantage of the volcanic soil fertility and of the favourable climate conditions. The situation collapsed when phylloxera infections were discovered in the Noto’s plain, inside the Siracusa’s province. This area turned recently into a massive viticulture one because of the agricultural mutation guided by the international trade demand. Small leaseholders bore the new grapevine implantation in the Catania’s province and Siracusa’s province, relying on private and popular banks credits (Reale Cantina di Noto 1894, p. 25). So the winemakers of these areas strongly opposed against the destruction system abandon because they were frightened to be left alone without any State protection. It was much better to destroy grapevines and justify this way the impossibility to repay their bank debt rather than continue producing without a real possibility to repay debt in the State aids absence. The difficulty to repay debt came from both sides: there was a problem related to the production, as it was the phylloxera infection one, and another related to the lack of demand.

In fact, this feeling rose more after the French commercial treaty condemnation in 1887. It occurred that not only someone needed to bear costs for grapevine reconstructions, but also that incomes were no longer easy as in the recent past. The problem was not only to restart the production, but also to produce quality wines able to compete in order to catch new commercial opportunities in the international markets. The most famous Sicilian grapevine areas—Noto, Vittoria, Pachino, Ragusa—were totally abandoned at the beginning of 1890s. In some areas there were autonomous and spontaneous reconstructions operating with American rootstocks, but it resulted in a total

failure (“Tristissima condizione della Sicilia di fronte alla fillossera” 1893, p. 772). A Ministry of Agriculture survey in 1893 certified that infected grapevines in Sicily occupied a 63.000 hectares surface, compared to the 96.000 hectares definitely destroyed. Around 14 million working days were lost in the 96.000 destroyed hectares, with a total loss amount of about 22 million liras. The grain cultivations that were replacing grapevines cost 3.368.715 working days, with a total salary of about 17 million liras (“Relazione sui provvedimenti contro la fillossera attuati nel 1893” 1894, pp. 7–8). The crisis became stronger and led to a sensitive wine-producing shrink during the 1890s and the beginning of the twentieth century. Related to that there were a sensitive farmers economic conditions worsening, the people that took more advantage of wine rising foreign export before (Inchiesta parlamentare sulle condizioni dei contadini nelle provincie meridionali e nella Sicilia 1910, pp. 73–74).

The Grapevine Reconstruction

The grapevine reconstruction with phylloxera-resistant American rootstock was complicated. The Sicilian winemakers were reluctant because they thought that distinctive peculiarity of local production was damaged. As it is typical to development of economics processes, the society demonstrated a certain degree of resistance to the introduction of new techniques.

The rootstock could be subject to infections not only when winemakers tried to do it themselves without experts, but also when the Ministry of Agriculture directly implanted grapevines (Precile 1891). In July 1885 the Palermo’s “Reale Vivaio di Viti Americane” was created, but the grapevine reconstruction struggled. Marsala was the Trapani’s province that produced the most quality Sicilian wines and that was massively hit by the phylloxera; only in that location there was a new impulse to grapevine reconstruction in the nineteenth century ending years (Dell’Orto and Vajarello 1914). But the reconstruction process was slowed by a newly discovered grapevine disease spread in the Trapani’s countries, Siracusa’s countries and Girgenti’s

countries that hit the new grapevines built with American rootstocks. These events shocked the Sicilian winemakers, that doubted about the American grapevines phylloxera resistance. An enquiry commission of the Agricultural Ministry affirmed that the main cause was the climate adaptation hurdle, because the climate, the soil composition, the implant system, the agricultural techniques, the fertilizers and the high variety of local grapevines was very different in Sicily from the conditions the rootstocks came first. To sum up, the idea to transplant an American production technique in Sicily without taking into account the different local conditions was wrong; it was necessary that this new acquired technique adapted into the new environment: it needed time and patience.

The Sicilian grapevines partial reconstruction extended to all the 1920s having tackled these hurdles, especially with the using of “Rupestris du Lot” that was easily adaptable to dry island climate. Taking into account the hard times of the phylloxera infection and the subsequent difficult reconstruction, the winemakers continued to give more importance to the specialized grapevine, that was not associated with any other cultivation, so the typical wines that were produced before the infections continued to be made, as *Marsala*, *Moscato* and *Malvasia* (Paulsen 1933, pp. 181–198).

The Hard Times During Fascism

The fascism found the viticulture and the national wine-producing industry in a bad state because of the lack of production organization and because of the diminishing export on the foreign markets. Italy continued suffering of overproduction crisis even if the phylloxera infection was ended, because of the intensive Mediterranean countries competition—especially Spain and Tunisia—that led to a rising of grapevine cultivation (Carpentieri 1924, p. 705). So a lot of difficulties appeared for the Sicilian viticulture and they would be even more intensive for the coming years. The total of grapevine cultivated soil in Sicily was about 178.900 hectares in 1927, of which only 1300 hectares dedicated to mixed cultivation, achieving a 2.448.000 hectolitre wine production.

The foreign export amounted to 44.341 hectolitre in barrels during the same year, diminishing respect to the 99.441 in 1924; so the wine export represented the 5,03% over the total Reign export, while the exported wine bottles were 17.000. Referring to Marsala, it resulted that in 1927 were exported 7517 hectolitres in barrels and 285.461 in bottles (of which 163.864 in the United States). To sum up, the Sicilian wine export reached a low level, especially regarding the bottled ones (Buttitta 1977, p. 82). During these years the Sicilian countries became poorer. The situation turned into a more dramatic one when Mussolini adopted the “quota 90” resolution, that permitted to rapidly reevaluate the lira causing new hurdles in the wine foreign export. Even stronger were the 1929 crisis effects, also because the Sicilian wine production was abundant the prior year, as it was at the national level (Montoneri 1933, p. 135; Buttitta 1977, p. 82). At the same time, the most quality island production was threatened by others phylloxera infections that hit massively the Pantelleria island starting from 1930; Pantelleria produced high alcoholic white wines together with Marsala, that were highly sought by the wine industries in Trapani’s province (Scarponi 1939, pp. 294–332). So the production was abundant but with low-quality standards. The fascist regime did not pay attention to the increasing hurdles related to viticulture and winemaking; the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Giacomo Acerbo understood the situation and invited substituting the grapevines with other cultivations in a newsletter dated March 1930, with special regard to the corn and grass plot; this was in line with the “corn battle” (“Il problema della vite e del vino” 1930, p. 139). During the 1930s the situation did not seem to come to a solution. Sicily suffered a lot for the backward conditions of its production even if it was at the first place national level for specialized cultivation before Puglia and Piemonte and even if it was a reference to the woody crops in the estate colonization elaboration process (Tassinari, pp. 8–16). An important treaty published at the beginning of the 1940s observed that the production was low quality in all the island, except from the Trapani’s province. This situation emphasized among small landholders and sharecroppers in the Agrigento, Noto and Vittoria countries, because they well cured the grapevine but did not do the same for the winemaking process, especially for the lack of proper

tools and wine cellars (Garoglio 1941, pp. 204–205). This way, one of the main products able to grasp foreign currency was sacrificed due to the regime agrarian political choices that anticipated the autarky turning point (Marescalchi 1938, pp. 111–113).

Rebirthing Processes After the Second World War

The national trade intensified during the Second World War. There was a high demand coming to the foreign troops allocated on the Italian soil. Sicily was implied with an increasing wine export. This augmentation stayed at high levels even in the post-war years. Anyway, the demand enforcement did not provoke production changes: the Sicilian winemakers continued to furnish raw grapes or blending wines to other Italian regions that were able to transform them in other Italian wines (Buttitta 1977, p. 83). The backwardness was showed by the production per grapevine hectare, one of the lowest at national level, and by the high production costs, limiting the local consumption among the poorest people. Moreover, if the product was exported the high transport costs had to be added; they rose during the war and they did not diminish the years after, affecting Sicily very much because they were distance-based. So it was impossible not to lower profits in order to continue exporting increasing wine quantities. All these correlated problems constituted the basis of the winemaking Sicilian crisis (Rossi 1955, p. 12).

The issue was at the top of the Southern-oriented politics during the post-war ages, in the perspective of a wide primary sector modernization. The first credits issued by the Banco di Sicilia went in this direction because about one-third of them was dedicated to the wine-making sector (“I finanziamenti deliberati per l’ industrializzazione del Mezzogiorno sul D.L. n. 1598” 1951, p. 275). The “Associazione per lo Sviluppo Industriale del Mezzogiorno” (Svimez) seemed to show a lot of attention in the winemaking empowerment sector; it was born at the end of the 1946 and it was the main reference for politics oriented to tackle Southern Italy underdevelopment. The Svimez promoted a series of regional studies and from the Sicilian survey emerged an irregular

condition: in the Trapani's province the wine was made in medium-large factories, but in the Messina's province and Catania's province the wine-related tools were primitive and limited the winemaking production, even if some years the grape crop was larger than the Trapani one. Anyway, the general overview was optimistic: the hypothesis was to create big wine model factories with the State financing, because the private sector was not able to finance all the project; they would be created in limited areas—Vittoria, Riposto and Barcelona, respectively in the Ragusa's province, Catania's province and Messina's province—corresponding to the main viticulture oriented island areas (“Indagine sulla industria enologica in Sicilia” 1948, pp. 478–480).

The idea was to rethink the production environment in order to improve quality wine other than quantity export. In fact, the Sicilian winemaking was not top quality because related tools and factories were very primitive and roughly managed, resulting in a low-quality production or in a raw wine ones. At the same time strategies applied aiming at rebuilding a link with European countries in order to facilitate wine export (“La crisi vinicola” 1948, p. 404). The Sicilian region issued some actions for the island winemaking valorization; the region had significant freedom of political action thanks to the Italian Constitution that applied from the 1 January 1948. The most important one was the institution of the “Istituto regionale della vite e del vino” in July 1950, aiming at important goals: the fungal disease defence, the empowerment of the professional viticulture and winemaking education, the promotion of new wine bars, the foreign countries commercial agreement proposals and related sector-specific laws (Legge 18 luglio 1950, n. 64, *Gazzetta Ufficiale della Regione Sicilia*, n. 27 1950).

It continued to present an irregular distribution of the wine quality among the island, even if the above-mentioned ambitious proposals were formulated. Marsala was confirmed as the most dynamic area and a wine-protecting committee born, it bounded the 85% of local winemakers; moreover an experimental centre for wine industry was founded there. But the general issue was already unsolved: there were a low incidence of quality wines over the total regional production, amounting about the 25% of the total according to evaluations done at the beginning of the 1950s (“La produzione dei vini pregiati nel

Mezzogiorno” 1951, p. 560). An attempt was done with the agricultural reform applied in Sicily starting from 1950, that tried to introduce the viticulture in dispossessed areas according to a government top-down approach; but generally the effects were weak because of the public financing decision to finance olive groves rather than grapevines according to the extra-production (“Lo sviluppo agricolo nel Mezzogiorno” 1953, p. 556; “Direttive del Consiglio superiore dell’agricoltura in materia di bonifica” 1959, p. 132).

The Sicilian grapevine production amounted to about six million hectolitres on annual basis at the mid-1950s, that represented about the 12% over the total national production. The Trapani’s province assured the 50–52% of total Sicilian produced wines. After that province, there were the Catania’s province with a 9%, Messina and Palermo had lower percentages. The Sicilian wines were the first exported in Switzerland, Malta and Austria, while a lower quantity was exported in Sweden, Germany and England. A stimulating input came from Venezuela, Costa Rica and Nicaragua, even if the total quantity was low (“La produzione vinicola siciliana” 1955, p. 1103). The issue stayed unsolved: the quality production was not satisfying even if it was on a quantity point of view.

The European Integration Impact

The wine-producing restructuring opportunity came from the Roman Treaty signature the 25 March 1957, that created the European Economic Community. The interest was clear: grapevine and wine continued to represent the biggest working opportunity for Sicilian areas farmers. It was calculated that for a grapevine hectare 150 working days on annual basis were necessary, so the entire Sicilian viticulture needed 32.400.000 working days on annual basis, corresponding to 130.000 fully employed workers in the Sicilian grapevines. Moreover, it was also necessary to consider the workers for industrial winemaking and for others directly related activities (transports, wine tanks factories and winemaking machines, chemical laboratories needed for wine-related products, winemaking industries) (Rossi 1955, p. 174).

The winemaking increasing production became massive during the mid-1950s, when an amount of 6832 thousands hectolitres on annual basis was achieved, compared to 4377 thousands obtained during the 1936–1939 years. Given that, Sicily was at the second place for wine national production, with a percentage of 12%. It was preceded by Puglia, that assured a 15,9% total amount; but it came first Piemonte, that achieved 11,9% of total national production (“L’economia agricola della Sicilia”, p. 811).

The European integration process launched again the Sicilian production restructuring issue: in fact, the European Economic Community requests for Italy were about meal-consuming wines rather than blending wines. So a strong competition with Northern Italy regions took place, because they promptly activated significant changes for wine quality increasing. Moreover, the Sicilian winemakers were worried about the Italian law elaboration that permitted an artificial alcohol-realization that favoured the Northern regions and damaged themselves because they obtained the alcohol-realization on natural basis (Buttitta 1977, p. 92). Nevertheless, viticulture and winemaking remained as main Sicilian economy pillars during the 1960s, even if there were not significant production changes; these activities assured an average total income of 66 billion of lira, that was lower respect to that assured by citruses but higher respect to that assured by potatoes, vegetables and grains. A significant production differentiation became clearer during these years respect to the past years: the white wines dominated in the Western Sicily, corresponding to the Trapani’s province, Palermo’s province and Caltanissetta’s province. That production was about 8 million grape quintals, corresponding to the two third of regional production; it took place on a grapevine surface amounted to the 70% of the regional one, the 46% of that referring to the Trapani area, the most Italian grapevine cultivated area. The red grapes dominated in the Eastern Sicily, corresponding to the Messina’s province, Catania’s province, Siracusa’s province, Ragusa’s province and Enna’s province, with a total production of about 4 million quintals. The meal-consuming grape was increasing quantity: in 1965 about 1.345.800 quintals were produced, mostly exported abroad. That production was limited to small

and prestigious Sicilian areas until the mid-twentieth century (Regione Siciliana, Istituto Regionale della vite e del vino 1966, p. 5).

The wine-related European law was issued only in the April 1970, when the European Economic Community Ministry Board approved the rules related to “produced quality wines in specific areas”. The followed criteria were the geographic origins one and it was permitted the sugaring only in areas where this practice was already done in the past. The wine foreign export rapidly increased during this phase: the amount was 587.000 hectolitre over the Italian total of 5.846.000 in 1970, it increased to 1.681.000 over 13.384.000 in 1971, achieving the amount of 3.258.000 over 8.338.200 in 1972. At the same time the Sicilian wine national trade towards Northern Italy increased, passing from one million/one million and six hundred thousand hectolitre in 1952–1953 to over 3200 thousand in 1972–1973. These results were linked to a push towards the production modernization process and to a way of working reorganization. Related to that, some data could be shown: there were only 39 wine bars in the island during 1968–1969 years, while they reached 77 unities in 1973–1974 years, with a total amount of 30.868 partners. The wine bars spreading together with the progressive reduction of blending wines and an increasing of meal-consuming and certified wines (Buttitta 1977, p. 92).

The progresses that occurred in the 1970s came out from deep changes in the Sicilian countries during the past decades, like: the diminishing working availability and the related possibility to start a partial process of conglomerating production, the wine price that did not increase too much in Sicily, the augmenting hurdles in trading blending wines due to national and European law, the easing in trading Sicilian meal-consuming wines due to the trade liberalization in the EEC area (Pastena 1976, pp. 24–25). The viticulture and winemaking contest was rapidly evolving, but the type-related industries were already the same as in the past. In fact, 78% of 160.000 winemaking industries were directly directed by the same owner (Pastena 1976, p. 7). So the relevant changes acted in a complex scenario that did not cause transformations in industry paradigms, it was based upon the ancient idea that viticulture guaranteed a better wealth compared to other cultivations. Related to this idea, there was the winemakers way of acting: they

did not carry the effort to change and improve production because they were aware that winemaking guaranteed better economic results compared to that of other cultivations in any way it was done. So there was the problem of changing this way of thinking and related acting to face with the issue of improving quality wines. As it is common to development economics dynamics, the people way of thinking and related working approach analysis is crucial in understanding why an area is still underdeveloped even the attempted reform efforts.

This idea was never criticized even during the frequent overproduction crisis that characterized the Sicilian winemaking for a long time.

Conclusions

It is clear how a series of strong shocks impacted the Sicilian viticulture and winemaking in the above considered years. First of all the phylloxera, that assumed a positive role when infected the French grapevines and stimulated new grapevine implants; but it became negative when the infection transmitted over the majority part of Sicilian viticulture. Other negative shocks were the two world wars that determined and involution and the fascism, that hit massively the viticulture and winemaking interests due to its agrarian politics. The issue approached in this paper could be summed up analysing the foreign demand. The Sicilian wine production was exuberant and easily overcame the Sicilian market among centuries, also because of its geographical position. It is also interesting analysing how Sicily entered the international trade. This is the tricky issue: Sicily exported almost only blending wines, that raw material would be transformed into the final product by the foreign demander; the only exception was represented by Marsala. The relevant quantitative expansion was primitive and it did not take into account the quality production. The market conditions were passively accepted by Sicily, these imposed to the Sicilian winemaking a massive subordination compared to the strong area interests. Substantial changes were introduced in the Sicilian countries after the EEC definition, specifically when it was issued an European regulation about the trade among member states at the beginning of 1960s, taking into account

an increasing meal-consuming demand rather than blending wine one. These dynamics linked to a more general issue. Sicily has all conditions for a typical and good-quality wine production. But this type of production was not realized for a long time, except for some limited areas. So there was a huge quantitative expansion but a low-quality realization. The causes could be identified in the lack of capital investments for bigger projects, but also in the hurdles related to the human capital creation. The grapevine is identified as the opportunity to improve the personal economic condition, but at the same time it did not receive a focusing effort. The viticulture and winemaking could be a way to affirm quality brands competing with massive concurrence of other Italian regions and other foreign winemakers countries. This lack of focus did not permit the relevant Sicilian viticulture and winemaking to become an extraordinary resource. Recent data shows how quality wines production is spreading in Sicily. The above described quantitatively based situation is important but it needs necessarily to come to an end: this is the whisper for the coming years. This way, the international community could appreciate even more the Sicilian typical and quality wine.

The Sicilian winemaking potentialities are higher than the present situation, so it is necessary to improve efforts in order to align these potentialities to the effective market realization. It is not a matter of improving marketing or sponsorship, it is a matter of improving production conditions that permit to a potential real high-quality wine to be appreciated around the world.

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