

Weinakademiker Thesis - Abstract

Title of the Thesis: Pinot Noir in the Old World – Origin, Significance and Role of Our Beloved Finicky Grape

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I. Motivation for choosing the topic

There is no doubt that the Pinot Noir variety is an excellent terroir grape, but during the climate change experienced in recent years and decades, the average temperature of the variety's traditional European growing areas has increased significantly, which does indeed affect the nature and quality of the grapes grown and the wines produced.

In Burgundy, for instance, before 1990 there were an average of 2-3 excellent (i.e. optimal in terms of grape ripening) vintages per decade, but since 2010, warmer vintages have become particularly common, which means that the wines often have a warmer character and higher alcohol content.

Given that I am a long-time fan of classic European, cool climate Pinot Noir wines, the changes and trends experienced in recent years regarding the climate and the wines produced, gave me an excellent incentive to explore this topic in more detail and examine what solutions have arisen and may still be considered in order to preserve the character of this beautiful wine style (and ultimately ensure its survival).

II. Problem / objective

The essence of the problem raised can be best understood in the fact that these warmer, slightly jammy, higher alcohol Pinot wines (which are increasingly common in the 21st century) are in my opinion generally less able to convey and present the small characteristics of terroir. Accordingly, these changes in climate can directly or indirectly influence the most important qualities of the wines, as well as the market position of traditional Pinot Noir-growing regions.

So the main question is that would this great noble variety be able to maintain its role and significance in these times of climate change and warmer vintages, and if not, what could be the possible solutions?

III. Methodology

Regarding the methodology, I can say that – given that I like the wines in question and have been following their character and changes for years – I regularly read books and articles about Pinot Noir and the regions that traditionally grow and vinify this variety, and I am always happy to read new interesting pieces on the topic. I have now tried to find those parts in these sources that confirm or refute my suggestions and theories, or can simply provide related information.

In order to place the changes (i.e. mostly in the style of wines and market situation) in the right context, it is of course necessary to know to a certain extent the origin and spread of Pinot Noir in Europe, and – in connection with the spread – the main characteristics of the regions which typically produce high-quality wines from this variety. The main point of reference for Pinot-producing regions can of course be none other than Burgundy.

IV. Content

The contents of the thesis – in accordance with the previously approved structure – include legends and evidence regarding the origin of the variety, the role and spread of the variety in the Old World, the essence of the terroir concept and its different approaches, the relationship between Pinot Noir and the terroir concept, the reasons for the development of the current appellation systems and some criticisms of them, the environmental conditions under which this variety is able to provide the highest quality, the effects of climate change on European Pinot Noir cultivation and wines, possible further consequences, some possible solutions and many other interesting elements that are directly or indirectly related to the topic.

The text is divided into five main sections: it begins with a brief introduction of the topic, then three substantive main chapters, followed by a concluding section containing the main conclusions. The content related to the fundamental issues appears more prominently in the middle (third) chapter, titled „*Terroir grape*“, „*Terroir concept*“ and *the sense of terroir*.

The only change compared to the previously planned structure was that some of the topics and ideas originally intended for Section IV. were – primarily for logical reasons – moved to Section V., to the summarizing and concluding part.

V. Conclusion

As a final conclusion, we can state that the spread of Pinot Noir southward from its current growing areas is not at all likely in the future, and furthermore, these traditional growing regions must take significant and decisive steps to maintain the main values and quality of their wines and to preserve their established market position, as climate change is not particularly favorable to them anymore.

Based on my research on the topic, I assess the situation as such that the survival of the classic „cool“ European Pinot Noir wine is by no means hopeless, but it is primarily the producers who need to recognize the problem in time, come together and jointly take the steps that are most appropriate based on the experiences and research to date. Some growers have already started this in several world-famous wine regions, and the results are typically encouraging.

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M. J. M.