

## Padua 2017 Abstract Submission

### I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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### Keywords

Migration; identity; colonization; Russian Empire; viticulture; international wine trade; national wine market.

### Research Question

What were the sources of community identity in an immigrant colony of vintners to south Russia, with reference to the national and international wine trade in the 19th century ?

### Methods

Qualitative micro-historical examination of archival resources on community identity in the context of existing examinations of Russian national and international wine trade and industries

### Results

The paper demonstrates that a south Russian immigrant community's sense of identity was contingent upon the international and national wine trade and to a lesser degree upon Russian colonial policies.

### Abstract

The paper examines the evolution of community identity in a colony of migrants living in the southern part of the Russian Empire over more than 100 years. The colony specialized in viticulture, so the context of the examination is not only changing models of Russian colonialism, but also the impact on the community of economic and other changes to the interaction among local, region, national and international wine trade and industry. The conclusion is that very local identity formation is in this case contingent on broad transformations in the wine industry in Russia, among other things.

Groups of West European migrants were invited by the crown to colonize the recently conquered steppes in the borderlands of early 19th century Russia. The goal was to introduce, not just more people, but also specific, highly prized artisanal skills to the region, as well as examples of an imagined West European work ethic for local agriculturalists. A number of viticulturalists were among the invitees, including the Fench-speaking Swiss of the colony of Shabo (a corruption of the Turkish Acha-abag, or «the lower vineyards»). Many of the migrant groups, Shabo among them, to this day argue that throughout their nearly two-century stay in Russia, they preserved an entho-linguistic heritage identity of themselves as «German», «French», or «Swiss.»

This paper questions the heritage identity of the Shabo colony in Western Ukraine and by extension of other similar colonies. It examines the colony's correspondence with the local Russian administrative overseers and governors, who were initially seen as supervisors of Russian internal colonization. But, Russian colonial policy changed at mid century, and correspondingly so did the conditions of South Russian immigrant colonies. Given this colony's occupational focus on viticulture, the colony slowly abandoned its colonial and entho-linguistic status, to base its identity increasingly on its occupational contributions. Initially, in early stages of this process, the colony identified itself as a purveyor of superior (occupational) techniques used by west European viticulturalists. By the 1860s and 1870s, however, sources indicate that the Swiss colony of Shabo had gradually abandoned its self identification with European occupational knowledge about viticulture (terroir, presses, pruning, storage, mixing). Instead the colony became involved with elite (and middle class) Russian concerns with scientific viticulture, and then with the efforts of Russian viticulturists to encourage and change the Russian national wine trade and

industry. Thus, Shabo participated in a half-century long effort to improve the quality of south Russian wines, to project them as important competitors to Crimean and other Russian wines, and to encourage increased regional and national consumption of domestic wines. Their «occupational assimilation» into Russian viticultural communities thereafter was rapid and dramatic. They left behind much of their earlier colonial perspective and instead participated as members of south Russian wine producer community. This led them to advocate competitions and fairs for high-quality wines, to lobby for better wine taxation rates in the era of hard-liquor prohibition, to demand more favorable transportation tariffs, and sponsor the dissemination of local viticultural knowledge, among other things. It was an uphill battle: the Russian national market for wine was dominated by imports from France and not well understood by either producers or consumers; purchases for regional and even very local consumption dominated most Russian wine sales. Nonetheless, the destruction of important Crimean vineyards by the war of 1854-56 delivered a competitive advantage to viticulturalists slightly to the west, and Shabo's prosperity bolstered its Russian occupational identity.

Shabo's efforts as Russian high-quality viticulturists continued to produce marked economic success in the last third of the 19th century. Although Russia (like other colonial outliers) was unable to take advantage of marketing possibilities in France as the phylloxera epidemic struck, the community was able to take advantage of its unexpectedly «phylloxera-proof» vineyards in Russian regional and local markets when the infestation struck south Russia. These successes were ironically supported by the unfortunate failures of the Russian wine industry and market to expand and participate in world markets towards the end of the 19th century. That is, as vineyards worldwide began to recover from phylloxera and as industrial vineyards in California and elsewhere undermined prices in the international wine trade, Shabo and similar communities in the Russian Empire were protected from the effects of these events not only by import tax barriers, but also by the very local and regional nature of their markets—indeed by their failure to expand into coveted national and international venues.

Thus, although an occupational identity as viticulturalists prevailed (and indeed brought the reinforcement of significant prosperity) for the latter part of the 19th century in Shabo, the paper goes on to argue that there were dramatic changes to viticulture in Shabo and in Russia more broadly after the turn of the 20th century. The new political landscapes of 1917-1919—World War, revolution and Civil War—then undermined community occupational identity. These led the Shabo community to disregard its well-established occupational (viticultural) identity. Instead, whenever possible, the community staked a claim to a century-old ethno-linguistic heritage. Beginning in the 1920s and gaining significant ground by 1940, the community laid claim to its 'Swissness' in a not-unsuccessful effort to save itself from politically inimical events in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

The paper thus demonstrates the importance of the local, regional and national wine industry on the very contingent identity of south Russian communities throughout the long 19th century.