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Wine Economics Research Centre

Wine Brief No. 8

Book review of

***The World Atlas of Wine*, 7th Edition**

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WINE ECONOMICS RESEARCH CENTRE

The Wine Economics Research Centre was established in 2010 by the School of Economics and the Wine 2030 Research Network of the University of Adelaide, having been previously a program in the University's Centre for International Economic Studies.

The Centre's purpose is to promote and foster its growing research strength in the area of wine economics research, and to complement the University's long-established strength in viticulture and oenology.

The key objectives for the Wine Economics Research Centre are to:

- publish wine economics research outputs and disseminate them to academia, industry and government
- contribute to economics journals, wine industry journals and related publications
- promote collaboration and sharing of information, statistics and analyses between industry, government agencies and research institutions
- sponsor wine economics seminars, workshops and conferences and contribute to other grape and wine events

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HUGH JOHNSON and JANCIS ROBINSON: *The World Atlas of Wine*, 7th Edition. Mitchell Beazley, London, October 2013, 400 pp., ISBN 978-1-845-33689-9 (hardback), US\$55.

This classic reference book has sold more than four million copies since Hugh Johnson first put it out in 1971, and it is now published in thirteen languages. It tells us *where* winegrapes are grown, and is a natural companion to the seminal Robinson/Harding/Vouillamoz 2012 book on *which* winegrape varieties are grown around the world (*WINE GRAPES: A Complete Guide to 1,368 Vine Varieties, including their Origins and Flavours*, reviewed in the previous issue of *JWE*), as well as to Robinson's *Oxford Companion to Wine* (the 4th Edition of which will appear in 2014).

The *Atlas* has been revised every six or so years since it first appeared, with Jancis Robinson joining the project from 2001. If you already have an earlier edition, should you indulge in this new one? For anyone who refers at least occasionally to it, the answer is almost certainly yes. It is worth its modest price for the new set of spectacular photos alone, but of course its unique maps are the book's greatest strength.

So much has changed in the industry even since the 6th Edition appeared in 2007. Key trends include the expansion of vineyards in new or reforming regions, the striving to raise the quality of wines by paying more attention in the vineyard and intervening less in the winery, and the beginning of a diversification away from well-known international winegrape varieties to less-familiar local ones.

Among the regions getting expanded treatment or new maps are Tasmania in Australia, the Okanagan Valley in Canada, Ningxia in China, coastal Croatia, Ahr in Germany, Khaketi in Georgia, Peloponnese in Greece, Canterbury in New Zealand, Etna and northwest Spain, Swartland in South Africa and Northern Virginia in the US. To keep the volume to 400 pages, some other regions were dropped, including North Africa where the wine industry has been in the doldrums for decades (in contrast to the first half of the 20th century (see Meloni and Swinnen, 2014)).

These changes in coverage invite speculation as to what regions might change before the next edition of the *Atlas* appears. Might the Arab Spring lead to a resurgence in winegrape production in countries bordering the southern and eastern Mediterranean? Certainly Turkey has been striving to do so, such that it deserves its own new page in the 7th edition – even though barely 3 percent of its vast vineyard (4th largest in the world) is directed toward wine at present. One reason growth is hampered there is Turkey’s poorly developed wine laws and heavy taxes (Ozdemir, 2013). Might the dramatic growth in the middle class in India see its embryonic wine industry boom? Heavy import taxes and promotion by the Maharashtra State Government have encouraged domestic production, but currently India has only 0.1 percent of the world’s winegrape area, making its wine industry about 1/100th – yes, one one-hundredth – the size of China’s. Brazil, or Uruguay? Both face viticultural challenges, being far wetter than their southern cone neighbors, but both are striving to improve the quality of their winegrapes, as indeed are other tropical countries (Bolivia, Peru, Thailand, and even Myanmar). The 3rd International Symposium on Tropical Wine was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in 2011, and the 4th one is scheduled for August 2014 in Brisbane, Australia.

A better understanding of the geography and *terroir* of each region helps the consumer know where tonight’s bottle came from. Just as importantly, it helps producers assess their place in the ever-evolving wine world. For them, and for those just wishing to keep up to date with where the wine industry is globally, the latest edition of this book will appeal, as it continues to be an essential and unrivalled part of every wine lover’s library.

References

- Meloni, G. and Swinnen, J. (2014). The rise and fall of the world’s largest wine exporter (and its institutional legacy). *Journal of Wine Economics*, 9(1), forthcoming, based on AAWE Working Paper 134, February 2013.
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