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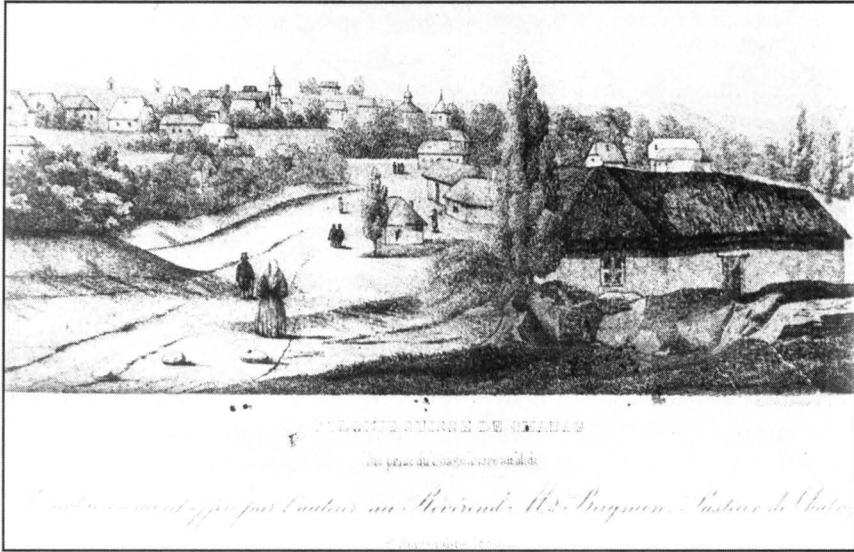
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Once a Swiss Winegrower Colony Named CHABAG in Russia

Now a Modern Winegrowing Center
Called SHABO in the Ukraine

by Heidi Gander-Wolf

The above picture of Chabag was painted by Eugène Duffoug-Favre in 1850. For many years he journeyed through Russia and also visited Chabag. On December 14/26, 1851, he reported in a letter from Prokrovskoi to Alexandre Michoud that also contains this picture of Chabag:

I saw Odessa and parts of Bessarabia, among others also the colony Chabag of which you possibly have heard people talking and of which I send you a bad picture. There the Tardents of Vevey and other Vaudois are living; I spent some happy moments there, drinking new wine and eating raisins.¹

¹ Quoted in Heidi Gander-Wolf, *Chabag, Schweizer Kolonie am Schwarzen Meer*. Dissertation, University of Zurich (Lausanne: Multi-Office, 1974), p. 1.

1. Introduction

This sketch of the former Swiss wine-grower colony Chabag, existing from 1822 to 1940, briefly summarizes my doctoral dissertation and also makes use of older publications. It considers, furthermore, observations of Neil Ascherson about settlements on the northern coast of the Black Sea and reports about the new developments that have happened in Chabag during the last decade. It intends to highlight an aspect of Swiss emigration to Russia, the colony's historical and cultural background at the time of its founding, and the context of other settlements established in the region. It considers some main aspects of the development of Chabag as well as the emergence of Shabo, the new Wine-Cultural Center.

In general the history of Swiss emigration is not well known, except perhaps to regions of the present United States, in part also to France, Canada, some Latin American countries, Australia, and Africa (in connection with missionary endeavors). Only a few historically minded people know of the emigration to Russia. It has been featured especially by a group of young scholars, led by Professor Goehrke. They published several special studies in the 1980s and 1990s while the summary volume *Schweizer im Zarenreich* (1985) presents a valuable overview.² Earlier, Marion Weisbrod-Zürer had featured the story of Zürichthal while my dissertation had explored that of Chabag.³

The settlement was founded by winegrowers of the Swiss Canton Vaud near the northern coast of the Black Sea in Czarist Russia at the mouth of the Dnjester River, situated some 70 miles east of the port city Odessa, one of the Ukraine's large cities. Chabag emerged in 1822, lasted for five generations, but the descendants of the Swiss had

² For a summary view of the Swiss presence in Russia see Carsten Goehrke, Roman Bühler, Heidi Gander-Wolf, Urs Rauber, Gisela Tschudin, and Josef Vögeli, *Schweizer im Zarenreich. Zur Geschichte der Auswanderung nach Russland* (Zürich: Verlag Hans Rohr, 1985). The research group, led by Professor Goehrke of the University of Zurich, has published some ten volumes about Swiss in Russia. For a discussion of the first five volumes, see Leo Schelbert, "Swiss Migration to Imperial Russia: A Review Essay," in: *Essays in Russian and East European History. Festschrift in Honor of Edward C. Thaden*, Leo Schelbert and Nick Ceh, eds. (Boulder, Colorado: East European Monographs, 1995), pp. 181-195.

³ Marion Weisbrod-Bühler, *Zürichthal, eine Bauernkolonie in der Krim. Die Tragödie der Ämter Auswanderer von 1803* (Affoltern am Albis, 1961: <http://www.forums9.ch/doniplatz/aeudhant/Geschichte/Zuerichthal.htm>), and Gander-Wolf, footnote 1.

to leave the village in 1940 and return to their “passport home country.” It was a sad and difficult event because Chabag, first part of Russia, then Rumania, would always remain their “Daheim,” their true home.

It seemed that all that the settlers had successfully built for five generations had vanished into oblivion after World War Two. It had become a walled-in Soviet military camp that lasted until the Ukraine of which Chabag became a part, achieved its independence in 1991. News from the village that had continued to be considered “home” by the returners to Switzerland remained sparse, sad, and discouraging.

I am myself a descendant of the Chabag Swiss but was born after World War II in Switzerland. How I still remember comments of my grandmother and mother: “at home” apricots were sweeter, “at home” the milk had more fat, “at home” watermelons were riper, “at home” grapes tasted better. As a child I learned to live with that homesickness, and I know from others that they had a similar experience. The homesickness of our grandparents and parents and their stories about Russia opened to us children a wholly other world that we could not share with our Swiss playmates. At times the experience was enriching, at others disconcerting. We hardly understood that homesickness since we did not know the difference between life in Switzerland and the life of our parents and grandparents in Russia. We knew of it only through their stories.

Today Shabo, its present name, has become fully accessible again. One may visit it, and one is welcome. For our parents, however, the iron curtain had made such a thing impossible.

The founding of the colony needs to be placed into a broader cultural and historical context. The history of the northern coast of the Black Sea is a history of the coming and going of various peoples over centuries if not millennia. The scholarly work of Neal Ascherson allows one to grasp in broad outline the history of the region’s settlements and the various forms of cultural exchange among the various groups.⁴

The area has a unique history of matriarchy and patriarchy, includes nomads and settlers, pastoralists and farmers, coming from many diverse peoples; in short, it is a region not marked by the central power of a state, but an amalgam of cultural traditions. It raises

⁴ Neil Ascherson, *Schwarzes Meer*. Translated by H. Jochen Bußmann. suhrkamp taschenbuch, st. 2844. Berlin: Suhrkamp, 1998. English edition: *Black Sea. The Birth-place of Civilization and Barbarism* (London: Random House, 1995, 2007).

the question that Herodotus (484–425 BCE) had already asked, the question about civilization and what the Greeks haughtily labeled as barbarism, the question about cultural identity. Also the history of the Swiss colony points to the issue. Although not raised explicitly, it shaped the everyday life of the colony and formed an implied part of its existence.

It was the Russian Tsarina Catherine II (1729–1796) who promoted settlements of Europeans, especially of Germans, in the southern parts of Russia. She hoped that they would promote the Westernization of the region, and she granted numerous freedoms to the settlers.⁵ They were guaranteed religious liberty, were freed from taxation for 30 years as well as from military service, and could engage in unrestricted commerce and establish businesses. Also, the Swiss colony Chabag enjoyed these privileges, except they enjoyed the freedom from taxation for only ten years.

Each family received 60 Dessjatine (ca. 66 ha) land. It was allotted the colonists as incontestable and permanent inheritable property, yet not in personal but communal ownership by each colony. Therefore it could not be sold, changed, or divided. The youngest son was to inherit the farm. . . . Not before the Stolypine land law of 9 November 1906 was ownership of the commune abolished and private property introduced.⁶

2. Southern Russia as a Settlement Region

From the 7th century BCE to the 4th century CE, nomadic Scythians, a people of Iranian stock, inhabited the Pontic steppe lands north of the Black Sea, formerly the homeland of the Cimmerians. For several centuries Scythians and Greeks culturally intertwined. From the 4th century on, first the Sarmati, then the Goths, who were followed by the Huns, settled in the region, the latter being especially violent and destructive. In the 8th century, the Chasars founded an independent Khaganat and were important allies of the Byzantine Empire. Between

⁵ Stumpp, Karl. *The Emigration from Germany to Russia in the Years 1763 to 1862* (Lincoln, Nebraska, 1993); especially thorough on the settlements of Bessarabia.

⁶ Ernst Zeugin, *Prattler Auswanderer im Osten Europas*. Prattler Heimatschriften

the 11th and 13th centuries, Turkic speaking nomads known as Cumans occupied the Pontic steppe. They were followed by the Mongolian Tatars, the Golden Horde, and peopled the Crimea from their 15th century emergence until 1944 when they were deported under Soviet rule. Sarai on the middle Volga River had been their capital. After the fall of Constantinople in 1453 the Ottoman Empire reached the northern coast of the Black Sea as well. The Crimean Tatars who had converted to Islam became an integral part of the Empire and the Khanate endured until 1783 when Catharine II had the region conquered for Russia. Thus for centuries the area was marked by change, conquests, expulsion, and new beginnings. At times, however, commercial routes were relatively safe. The Scythians, for instance, engaged in trade, and Greek colonies were established in the region. The maritime silk road of the lucrative trade with Chinese silks also reached the east coast of the Black sea. The ensuing trade involved constant exchange, and besides merchants and traders also pilgrims, monks, soldiers, and scholars traveled the road.

The grasslands of the Pontic steppe cover some 4,000 square miles and reach from the Volga to the Carpathian Mountains. They provided feed for the horses and cattle of nomadic peoples and later were used for the growing of excellent wheat. Ships from Mycenae carried goods such as pottery, finely hammered swords and daggers in exchange for dried or salted fish, and Greek and Ionian vessels plied the seas between the Greek city-states and settlements on the northern coast of the Black Sea to carry back foodstuffs in exchange for Greek artisan goods.

In the view of Neal Ascherson, the northern coast of the Black Sea has been one of the oldest regions where fundamentally different cultures met and that the Greeks haughtily labeled Barbarian. It was perhaps a first “colonial” encounter for people of the West, in that otherness fundamentally challenged the invaders’ cultural identity and led them to view difference as inferiority.⁷

The issues as defined already by Herodotus (484–425 BCE) would remain and continue to define the encounter with cultural otherness. In the Western conquests of the Americas and the 19th century colonial domination of Africa, India, and regions of Southeast Asia, it would serve as justification and would also intensify nationalist competition

⁷ Ascherson, *Schwarzes Meer*, p. 19.
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among the colonizing Western nations. The pseudo-distinction between civilized and “natural and spontaneous” cultural traits would define relationships and turn conquest and extermination into “necessities” of cultural mission.

In the former winegrower colony of Chabag begun by people from Canton Vaud, such questions were hardly discussed (nor had they been some 2,000 years before by the ancient Greek colonists). They were lived instead, seeking practical solutions based on economic activity such as the selling of fish, the exchange of plots negotiated with officials or neighbors or for purchasing of tree trunks for the building of a church. Life was marked not by keeping separate, but by ethnic mixing. The legal order was local or a matter of the province, not of legalistic central regulation until 1871 when the laws of the Russian State became all encompassing. Thus the Swiss settlers had been able to evolve their identity on the basis of the local system and prospered by cultivating land that previously had been used but marginally. They understood themselves also as Russians, Germans, and French, thus assuming multiple identities though within the European orbit.

3. The Emergence of the Winegrower Colony From the Canton Vaud

It was the policy of Catherine II that initiated the emergence of numerous colonies in southern Russia and the Crimea. The area had been wrested from the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish war of 1768-1774. In 1794 the city of Odessa was founded by a decree of the Empress where since 1440 a small Tatar village had existed. Alexander I (1777-1825) continued Catherine’s colonial policy, and potential settlers were carefully selected. They had to own at least 300 gulden, and no more than 150 to 200 families were permitted to arrive annually.

The Swiss colony Chabag was founded in 1822 near the mouth of the Dnjestr River on the Black Sea by the botanist Louis Vincent Tardent (1778-1836) of Ormont Dessous, Canton Vaud. Before him Jean Jacques Dufour (1767–1827) had followed his youthful dream of founding a winegrower colony, yet not in the European Southeast but across the Atlantic. In 1799 he started a vineyard in Kentucky that failed, but he tried again and in 1802 he founded with his brother Daniel the wine-

grower colony Vevay on the Ohio in Indiana.⁸ In turn, Tardent and his people preferred a move to Russia. It was closer, visits at home over land were easier than the long and dangerous voyage across the ocean, and the conditions offered were attractive. Initially the settlement was to be called Helvetianopolis and the prospective emigrants asked the Canton's Large Council for support which, however, was denied on 5 July 1820. Possibly Louis Tardent also had contacts with Frédéric de la Harpe (1754-1838) who had been the tutor of Tsar Alexander I and was later active in Vaudois and Swiss politics.⁹ With Louis Vincent Tardent he was also listed in the membership list of the Swiss Society of Natural Sciences, founded in 1815, as was Louis de Saloz (1822-1859), later a veterinary in Odessa. These contacts of Tardent, perhaps also the founding of Vevay by the Dufours in the United States, may explain the planning of another winegrower colony abroad. On 22 December 1819, de La Harpe wrote to Tsar Alexander I:

Mr. de Saloz has informed me that there were very neglected vineyards in Bessarabia. Winegrowers of our country are asking whether the Government would be inclined to deal with them concerning their cultivation. They referred me to the signer of the note [of inquiry] whom I know as a botanist. Without details about the project, I am not able to respond. But since he [Tardent] had spoken of sending their proposition to General Bachmétief and who, he tells me, is the Governor of those lands, I felt obliged encouraging him to write to the latter.¹⁰

On 18 June 1822, five men signed an agreement in Vevey that they had registered by a notary and which gives details about the planned emigration. The signatories are Louis Vincent Tardent of Ormond Dessous; Jean Louis Guerry, town councilor of Chexbres; Jacob Samuel Chevalley,

⁸ See Leo Schelbert, *America Experienced* (Rockport, Maine: Picton Press, 2004), pp. 239-254, for documentary detail; also Stuart S. Sprague, "Pioneer Winemaker of the West: John James Dufour of Switzerland, Kentucky, and Indiana," *SAHS Newsletter* 19,2 (1983): pp. 26-39; and Perret Dufour, *The Swiss Settlement of Switzerland County, Indiana* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Collections, 1925).

⁹ On de La Harpe see J.C. Biaudet, M.-C. Jequier, éd., *Correspondance de Frédéric-César de La Harpe sous la République helvétique*, 4 vol., 1982-2004 – M.-C. Jequier, "Frédéric-César de La Harpe: une vie au service de la liberté", in *Revue historique vaudoise* 107 (1999): pp. 5-27.

¹⁰ Cited in Gander-Wolf, *Chabag*, p. 40.

citizen of Rivaz; Jean Caspar Meyer of Aigle, member of the Corporation Vaudoise; and Charles Auguste GrandJean, citizen of Buttes, Canton Neuchâtel. Later other families were joining the colony as well as Swiss and Germans of already existing German colonies of Bessarabia.

At the end of 1820 Tardent travelled to Odessa and Chabag in order to get to know the region and to be able to report reliable details about conditions on his return. In the fall of 1821 he wrote a letter to those willing to emigrate that they should get on the way in order to be able to do the spring planting in the Russian fields. But the potential emigrants hesitated, wanting Tardent first to return and to give his account in person. In the fall of 1822, a first group of 30 people went on the way. They traveled via the Bukovina, a historical region of central Europe located between the Ukraine and Rumania, reached Kishinev, the capital of Bessarabia (and of present-day Moldova) and received the government's support. General Insov, in charge of the settlement process, is reported as having been most helpful. As Tardent observed in a letter of 26 June 1823 to his lady benefactor in Vevey, in the harsh winter of 1822/23 the newcomers had been well housed with families in the town of Akkerman.

4. Chabag's Development

Although initial difficulties, illness, and deaths marked the first half century of the colony, it began to prosper. In 1971 my husband and I were able to photograph the "Rapports," a kind of community books that were kept in the Krajevetschesky museum in Bjelgorod Dnjestrovsky (Akkerman). Under difficult circumstances we then were able to take the copies to Switzerland. Although 40 years have passed since, I am thankful still today to Jeanna Mosolova and Mr. Krivolap for their help. Those valuable sources highlight an aspect of Swiss emigration history and allow the reconstruction of Chabag's development. They also identify issues the immigrants had to face, such as the allocation of land, the dealing with thievery and, although rather rarely, the bad behavior of fellow settlers. Although an official settlement committee chaired by General Insov was charged with the placement of the arriving farmers and winegrowers, in many respects the immigrants could make decisions by themselves. It appears that especially in the early years Vincent Louis Tardent had been their decisive voice. The books

indicate also that the settlement had not been able to fill the quota of 120 settlers, and thus was obliged to return some of the allotted land. The French-speaking immigrants also had to accept German-speaking Swiss and people of German nationality. While during the first decades the entries in the communal record were made in French, after 1860 they were entered increasingly in Russian. In 1874 military service also became obligatory and, as André Anselm claimed in the centennial anniversary book, they did it honorably:

We know on the basis of reports that the Swiss colonists did their service as well as other subjects of his majesty, distinguishing themselves as their ancestors had by loyalty and faithfulness to their given oath.¹¹

After 1874, the administration of Chabag was like that of other Russian communities and the settlement flourished. In 1892, it founded the daughter colony Osnova on the banks of the Dnjeper and somewhat later New Chabag on the Crimean Peninsula.¹² Conditions for a prosperous development had been given such as good soil, and the port Odessa was in easy reach for exports.

Several families had become well to do. At the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893¹³ even wine from Chabag was displayed, and Louis Gander received a medal of recognition.¹⁴



Figure 2. *Louis Gander's Medal awarded in recognition of Chabag Wine, World's Columbian Exposition, 1893, Chicago.*

¹¹ André Anselm, *La colonie suisse de Chabag* (Cetatea Alba 1925), p. 69.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 70.

¹³ The exhibit opened on May 1, 1893, and attracted over 26 million visitors. For a study see Perry Duis, *Chicago: Creating New Traditions* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1976).



Figure 3. *Costumed Chabag Singing Group.*

Families of Chabag were able to build small vacation homes on the shores of the Black Sea, and some sent their children for a time to school in Switzerland. A rich social life developed, based on associations that promoted singing, playing, and hunting. Even traditional Swiss costumes and the hand-harmonica were popular.

Secondary schools of the prosperous German colonies were accessible also to the youth of Chabag. Relations with the surrounding communities were good and employment positions available, especially for farmhands and maids who were generally well treated. One ate at the same table the same local foods and spoke Russian, since 1870 the official language, but communal efforts were also made to preserve French and German. The people of Chabag were further interested in getting good pastors and teachers from Switzerland, at times with good success. They worked together on projects such as the establishment of a mill, an oil press, a fruit store, and a cheese factory. In 1843, for instance, large quantities of wine and fruits were brought to Odessa where the Greek merchant Stamaki sold the produce on the market. Chabag's people also produced champagne, hard liquor, and tobacco.¹⁴



Figure 4. *The Protestant Church of Chabag.*

The building of a church had been planned from the start. In the beginning, however, the colony was under the tutelage of the Lutheran parish of Grossliebenthal near Odessa. The building of a church was achieved with the special effort of Pastor François Louis Bugnion (1822–1880) from Belmont, Canton Vaud, and completed in 1843 at the cost of some 3000 rubel. Support from Switzerland which he had collected as well as a fortunate circumstance allowed the building of a church by making excellent lumber from Carpathian fir trees available. They had been destined for shipbuilding in Odessa, but the transport ship capsized. The owner was ready to sell the lumber to the people of Chabag who had helped getting it to the shore and could purchase it at an affordable price.¹⁴ The building made of wood, stone, and tiles was consecrated on 3 October 1847. The steeple was adorned by a cross as well as a rooster, the latter being customary for Protestant houses of worship.

After World War I, Chabag's political and economic situation changed significantly. The region had become part of Rumania. The borders to Russia were closed as well as access to the port city of Odessa. Now products had to be brought to Galatz, Braila, or Reni, and

¹⁴ Anselm, *Chabag*, pp. 51-52.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 59.

Rumanian became the official language as well as of schooling. Only the kindergarten was still using French.

5. The End of the Swiss Colony Chabag, June 28, 1940

“Then came World War II and ruined everything,” the people of Chabag would later declare. Russia had adopted a new political system, and people were forced to give up all they had built over generations. Abruptly, Chabag’s people had to leave, “and within 24 hours we lost everything,” they would say over and over again. The Swiss embassy had sent a telegram to Georges Girod, its representative who resided in Chabag, that on June 27, 1940, Bessarabia, a part of Rumania, had again become part of Russia. It meant the end of the German colonies of Bessarabia, including Chabag. The settlers moved with horse and wagon to Akkerman where the district prefect M. M. Stratan requisitioned a train compartment for them. David Besson wrote:

Finally, at two o’clock in the afternoon, the train begins to move. One still hears the ringing of the cathedral bells. On the top of the bell tower under the cross, the red flag fluttering in the wind has been raised. The Russian Army of occupation enters Cetatea-Alba [Bilhorod-Dnistrovskiy].¹⁶

Almost all inhabitants of Chabag had left. The Church was not to be used again for its proper purpose for more than a half century and became sadly dilapidated. Individual initiative was replaced by the kolkhoz, by collective farming, as part of a planned economy. The quality of wine suffered, and for those who remained, difficult times included murders and decay.

But Chabag has continued to live on in the memory of the Chabag people who had returned to Switzerland, especially at annual meetings in Lausanne, the so-called Schaslick. The events were enlivened by the sounds of the Balalaika, of French, Russian, and Rumanian, of marvelous Russian songs, and spiced also by the accustomed dishes.

Was Chabag a peaceful place of varied cultures and religious persuasions? It seems to have been a matter of course and not a topic of

¹⁶ David Besson, *Résumée historique de Chabag* (Lausanne: Imprimerie Georges

discussion. The bells of the Orthodox Church also tolled, regardless of persuasion. The difference between the outlook of French and German-speaking people was certainly real, but was generally mastered for the sake of unity. For five generations, Chabag had been inhabited by Swiss, but there was no chance of returning there. Like numerous places abroad, Chabag had emerged as a “Switzerland somewhere else,” and had been well planned on the northern coast of the Black Sea as had been the colonies of the Greeks and Romans centuries earlier. It was symbolized by Greek amphora that were occasionally discovered in the vineyards. In the 19th century, land on the shores of the Lake of Geneva had become the most expensive in the whole of Europe, likely a reason for the otherwise voluntary move of the emigrants. But their return had been in response to disaster. “Luckily we were able to go back to Switzerland,” the people of Chabag would often say gratefully. Yet they also sorely missed what they had built up for generations, but had been forced to leave.

6. The Wine-Culture Center SHABO Today

In 2003, like a phoenix from the ashes, a new winegrowing center¹⁷ arose out of the Soviet kolkhoz at the site of the previous Swiss colony. It is beautiful and large and it attracts some 30,000 visitors annually. It was established by private initiative and generous investors and the owner, who lives in Chabag, hails from the Republic of Georgia.

The vineyards of the impressive cultural wine center cover some 1,200 hectares, and produces 6,600 tons of grapes. In 2013, it made 77,442 hectoliters of wine and 94,340 hectoliters of liquor. In September 2012, the wine center invited political officials and winegrowers of Canton Vaud, the Swiss ambassador in Kiev, EU-representatives, local tourist agents, and descendants of the previous Swiss colony to a great festival that commemorated 190 years of winegrowing in Shabo. A private airplane brought the Swiss guests to Odessa. All were impressed by the size and beauty of the establishment, the generosity of the entrepreneurs, the hospitality provided, and the attention given to detail. The descendants of Chabag are delighted that the village continues to flour-

¹⁷ <http://shabo.ua/en/main>
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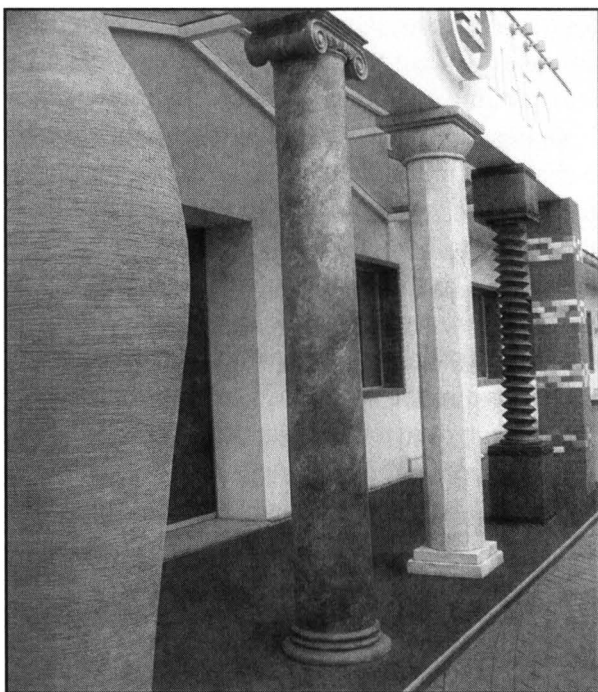


Figure 5. *The five Georgian, Greek, Turkish, Swiss, and Soviet Columns at the Museum entrance.*

ish and that good wine is made again which in 2013 received special recognition.

There is also an excellently designed museum as part of the establishment that commemorates the history of Chabag and honors its winegrowers. The old wine cellar of the late winemaker Thévenaz, where the King of Rumania had tasted the wine, is now part of the cultural wine center. At the museum's entrance stand five columns: A Georgian—Georgia is supposed to have been the oldest place of winemaking in the world—a Greek, a Turkish, a Swiss, and a Soviet one. Despite frequent political change they are to symbolize the enduring millennia old history of viticulture on the northern shores of the Black Sea.

The dilapidated previous Protestant church is supposed to be renovated and become part of a larger cultural institution but will remain free standing. A cornerstone was laid on October 18, 2013, and the plans are promising.

The artist Hugo Schär and his wife Iryna Schär have designed and are constructing the new and impressive Shabo cultural center. Besides a museum, video center, and exhibition hall, they already have created a

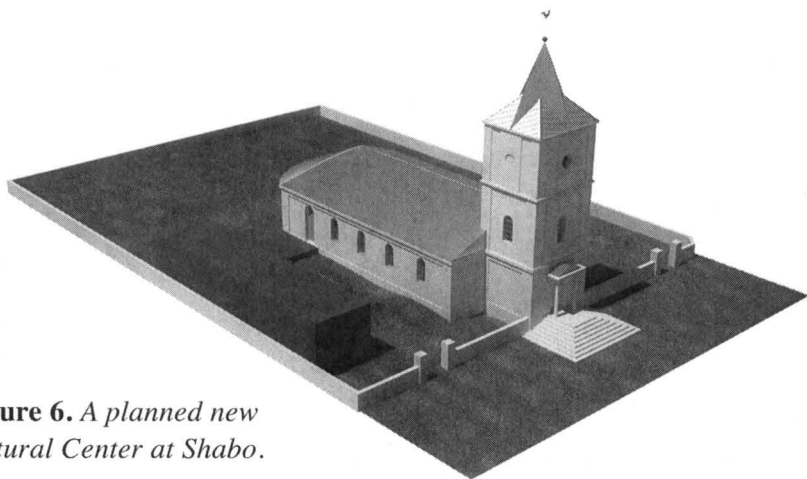


Figure 6. *A planned new Cultural Center at Shabo.*

Dionysos-Fountain in honor of Louis Tardent and are working on establishing a convention hall that includes the previous Protestant church as an integral part.

No fewer than about one thousand people are employed at the wine center, wages are among the best in this part of the Ukraine, work clothes are provided, and a day nursery has been established. The village now counts about 10,000 people, many of whom work at the winery. One-

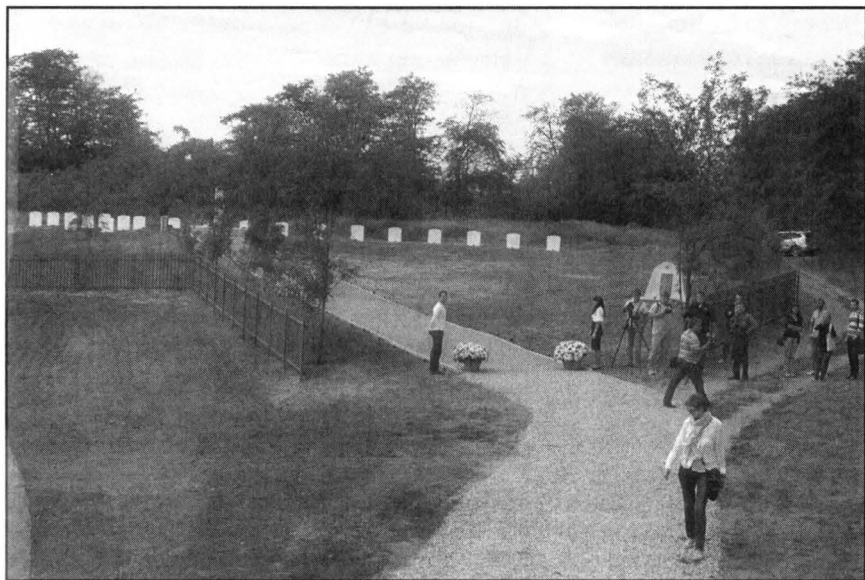


Figure 7. *Gravel Path with Grave Stones Toward the Old Cemetery*
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story cottages going back to the first settlers are still standing as well as private wine cellars with barrel vaulting. New houses with several stories have been built and the roads improved. Before the old overgrown and barely recognizable cemetery a memorial has been established that consists of 20 white tombstones, ten on each side, that commemorate the first settlers and may be reached by a clean and bordered gravel path.

7. Final Comments

For millennia the northern coastal lands of the Black Sea have been meeting grounds of diverse peoples. From the Asian plains of the East hailed nomadic or semi-nomadic groups: Sarmati, Goths, Huns, Cumans, Tatars. Settlers on the northern coasts of the Black Sea came mainly from the Middle East or West: Greeks, Romans, Persians, Syrians, Genoese. It was a coming and going based on good pastures, fertile grain fields, and commercial possibilities as well as on ousting and superseding those who were already there. Political formations and colonies emerged while cultural patterns intermingled and commercial opportunities such as fishing beckoned. Among the numerous and diverse people of the 19th century, some Swiss had also been attracted to the region suited for winegrowing, yet their settlements are now history but not forgotten.¹⁸

Postscript

Throughout the ages, a succession of peoples and nations have claimed the northern part of the Black Sea region where in the present-day southern Ukraine, the previous Swiss settlement Chabag has re-emerged as Shabo. Now the area is again caught up in conflict. It is my fervent wish that peaceful accommodation will emerge and that the new Chabag/Shabo may further prosper in a region that is rich in natural resources and offers people great opportunities for living.

¹⁸ I thank Leo Schelbert who invited me to submit this sketch, written in Hong Kong, to the *SAHS Review* and who translated it from German into English. Our scholarly exchange began in the fall semester of 1970 when he gave a lecture course at the University of Zurich. We also occasionally exchanged views about the structures and aspects of human migrations that proved useful for my writing the history of Chabag, a history that my parents and relatives as well as those of my husband had lived and endured. 16



Figure 8. *Memorial Plaque of Chabag: “To the Memory of the Founders of the Swiss Colony Schabo and of Their Descendants Buried at this Place 1822-1940.”*

Appendix:

Bibliographical Note on Swiss Eastward Migration

compiled by Leo Schelbert

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Russia

INTERNET:

<http://www.hist.uzh.ch/oeg/RSA.html>

An archival collection of the records of some 5,600 returners from Russia after 1920, representing perhaps two-thirds of Swiss who had migrated to Imperial Russia.

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