

TOKAJ ZONATION, TRADITIONS AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

LA CLASSIFICATION DE LA REGION VITICOLE DE TOKAJ, TRADITIONS ET DEVELOPPEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

1. History and traditions

The recent surface of the limited vineyard area of Tokaj wine district is 5.293 ha of 27 communes. The wine history goes back to 1550, the first aszú wine was produced in 1650. The first regulation was implemented in 1737-ben and the vineyard-site classification was carried out in 1772 first time.

2. Ecologic potential

In Tokaj district the continental climate is dominant, average temperature is 10,5 °C, the rainfall as much as 550 mm/year for long term. The special microclimate is originated in the Zemplén mountains situated like "V" and its slope facing south and south-east protecting vineyards from cool coming from Ukraine, over Carpathian mountains. Basic factors are the rivers flowing at the feet of mountains, called Tisza and Bodrog providing the necessary humidity for Botrytis. Volcanic and sediment soils vary.

3. Wines

In Tokaj the wine are also classified, there are three basic ones such as follows:

- a. *Varietal wines* produced from healthy grapes.
- b. *Szamorodni* (means "as it was born"). *Healthy and Botrytis infected grapes picked together and processed together for dry or sweet ones.*
- c. *Aszú*. *Sweet wines, Botrytis infected berries are selected and put onto base wine or must. According to their sugar rate it may be 3-6 puttonyos, or aszú-essencia aged in barrel.*

4. Grape-vine varieties

Nowadays there are four grape-vine varieties cultivated but there was time listed 20-30 ones including now again tested promising Kövér. Furmint and Hárslevelu are main varieties, Yellow Muscat and Zéta are complementary ones. The last one registered only in 80s.

5. Classification

The recent running vineyard-site classification was set up in 1981. Clustering is based on ecologic investigation of 18 ecological factors resulted in 400 mark system.

6. Recent developments

Now the most wineries produce vineyard-site selected wines. These appellations have become important marketing factors. The legal and technical backgrounds need to be further investigations. At the international stage the Slovakian Tokaj issue seems to be the most difficult to achieve agreement.

RESUME

1. Les traditions

La superficie actuelle de l'ensemble des vignobles est de 5.293 ha qui est répartie dans 27 communes (données officielles du Conseil National des Communes de montagnes). L'histoire du vignoble remonte aux années 1550. Le premier vin d'aszú a été élaboré en 1650. Les premières lois concernant la production ont été mises en vigueur en 1737. La première classification des vignobles a été effectuée en 1772.

2. Les conditions écologiques

Le climat de la région de Tokaj est continental avec une température moyenne de 10,5 oC et une pluviométrie de 550 mm par ans. Le microclimat spécial est conditionné par les coteaux du Sud en forme de V de la montagne de Zemplén. Ces reliefs protègent aussi les vignes contre les vents froids de l'Est. Les facteurs très importants sont encore les rivières aux pieds de la montagne, notamment la Tisza (la Theiss) et la Bodrog, qui assurent une partie de l'humidité pour la pourriture noble causée par le *Botrytis cinerea*. Les sols de la région sont composés de sols volcaniques et sédimenteux.

3. Les produits

A Tokaj on peut caractériser trois types des produits:

- Les vins de cépage sont vinifiés avec les grappes saines.
- Le szamorodni (mot d'origine polonaise: "comme il est né") est obtenu à partir de grappes saines et botrytisées (grains d'aszú) récoltées et vinifiées ensemble. On peut en produire deux type de vin : sec et doux.
- L'aszú est un vin doux naturel, pour lequel les grains d'aszú sont récoltés séparément. Puis on ajoute le raisin botrytisé ainsi obtenu au vin de base ou au moût, et la vinification se fait ensemble. Les catégories d'aszú sont classées selon la mesure traditionnelle, par les nombres de «puttony» (la hotte) de 3 à 6 et pour la qualité supérieure on utilise encore la catégorie «d'aszú esszencia». Les catégories sont définies selon la teneur en sucre résiduel.

4. Les variétés

Aujourd'hui on cultive quatre cépages dans la région, mais à l'époque on a eu de 20 à 30 variétés différentes, parmi eux, un cépage, le Kövérszolo ("Grappe grosse") est repris maintenant pour réévaluation. Les cépages principaux sont le *Furmint* et le *Hárslevelu* ("Feuille de tilleul") et en plus le *Sárga muskotály* (Muscat de Lunel) et le *Zéta* (une

nouvelle variété) qui sont les seuls cépages autorisés. Ce dernier n'est cultivé que depuis deux décennies, tandis que les autres sont les cépages traditionnels de la région.

5. La classification

La classification actuelle des terroirs a été réalisée en 1981. La base de ce cadastrage est une évaluation des facteurs écologiques sur 400 points.

6. Les développements actuels

La plupart des domaines vitivincicoles produisent des vins sélectionnés par lieu-dits (terroirs). Les lieux-dits et leurs dénominations sont devenus plus en plus un facteur de marché. Mais en matière de l'appellation il faut encore bien clarifier la législation. Au niveau international actuellement la question la plus difficile est de trouver une solution pour le problème de la production des vins sous le nom de Tokaj en Slovaquie.

HISTORY AND TRADITIONS

The recent surface of the limited vineyard area of Tokaj wine district is 5.293 ha of 27 communes (also see the map). The history goes back to 1550; the first aszú wine was produced in 1650. Máté Szepesi Laczkó, protestant priest selected aszú grapes from Oremus vineyard belonging to Sárospatak County. That technology regarding the basic steps is still valid. In Middle Ages the noble families played a very important role in maintaining the vineyards, building famous underground cellars and transporting wines to different directions. One of the most important figures was Prince Rákóczy. In 1655 the Parliament in his act no. 79th paragraph ordered the compulsory aszú grape selection. In 1737 the Tokaj wine district were limited and separate from the others. The first regulation was implemented in 1737 and the vineyard-site classification was carried out in 1803. According to this classification there were vineyard-sites in first class, in second class and third class fundamentally based on the quality of wine tasted and analysed at that time, and soil as well as microclimatic characteristics. The latest modification of the Wine Act was carried out three years ago.

The traditional way of wine transporting was the rivers, loaded ships departed at Tokaj city. The name of the wine district comes from the city for this reason.

ECOLOGIC POTENTIAL

In Tokaj district the continental climate is dominated, average temperature is 10,5 °C, the rainfall as much as 550 mm/year for long term. The special micro climate is originated in the Zemplén mountains situated like "V" and its slope facing south and south-east protecting vineyards from cool coming from Ukraine, over Carpathian. Basic factors are the rivers flowing at the feet of mountains, called Tisza and Bodrog providing the necessary humidity for Botrytis. Volcanic and sediment soils vary.

The territorial structure of the wine district is also important (see the map). We could distinguish 5 sub-zones such as the Kópasz hill, Mád valley, Erdobénye valley, Tolcsva valley and Upper Tokaj. The Kópasz hill is very close to the rivers and Tokaj city is situated at their conjunction, at the feet of the hill. The hillsides are surrendered by vineyards on its slopes enjoying one of the best ecologic conditions of the area. The three valleys run up to the mountains chains and narrowing from the rivers, drawing in morning vapour and daily heat. Upper Tokaj characterised by less steep slopes.

WINES

In Tokaj the wine are also classified, there are three such as follows (see table 1.):

- a. Varietal wines produced from healthy grapes. App. 50-60% of the vintage is varietal wine. The most popular is Furmint then Hárslevelu, but some Muscat has also market success. Now days late harvest wine are also popular what must be distinguished from szamorodni and aszú wines.
- b. Szamorodni (means "as it was born"). Healthy and Botrytis infected grapes picked together and processed together for dry or sweet. The dry one is very popular aperitif drink in Hungary and can be one of the most delicious wine.
- c. Aszú. Sweet wines, Botrytis infected berries are selected and put onto base wine or must. According to their sugar rate it may be 3-6 puttonyos, or aszú-essencia aged in barrel at least two years. Some aszú wines can "survive" 80-90 years staying drinkable and enjoyable. Depending on vintage the most aszú wines can show their best shape in age of 10-25.

Varietal wine producers use regular bottles, but for szamorodni and aszú wines the special bottle is colourless 0.5 l so as to let consumers to see the colour of wine before purchasing. Regular and wax capsule are also available, but the first is dominant. The yellow colour is dominant on labels too.

The deep underground cellars built in many cases three, four floors, shaping tubes some kilometres long, having barrel rows at both sides is also important part of the quality factors. The temperature is so balance at 11 C° through the year. The Cladosporium cellarium covers the walls of the cellars living on alcohol being in the air, indicating the perfect conditions for aging.

As a matter of fact for aszú wines the classification is rather difficult because for aszú grapes the bottom of slopes are better, for base wine the upper part of the hillside can guarantee better quality. The latest research projects on Tokaj wines have concluded that the quality of aszú wines is mainly rely on the quality of aszú berries and only in second way on base wine.

GRAPE-VINE VARIETIES

Now days there are four grape-vine varieties cultivated but there was time listed 20-30 ones including retested promising Kövér. Furmint and Hárslevelu are main varieties, Yellow Muscat (also called Muscat lunel) and Zéta are complementary ones. The Zéta has been registered recently. Now there is no further intention to expand the list of grape-vine varieties in Tokaj area.

CLASSIFICATION

The recent running vineyard-site classification was set up in 1981. Clustering is based on ecologic investigation of 18 factors (soil characteristics, temperature data, surface, exposition, elevation, etc.) resulted in 400 mark system. According to the classification Tokaj area has the highest ecologic potential for grape growing with regards to late harvest wines. The method limits land surface for grape-vine being homogenous according to 18 quality factors what may be very small e.g. 0.2 ha or extended up to some hectares as well. This evaluation is the basis for wine district limitation as well as planting rights. The system is based on 1:10000 map descriptions as well as on electronic database. (Table 2.)

In 2001 we have finished the national vineyard registration in harmony with EU system, including Tokaj wine district of course, but the final outcome of the data process is expected within few weeks. It will also clarify the conditions of vineyards in Tokaj, e.g. ages, trellis-training systems grape growers use, rootstocks, surface of vineyards planted in mixed varieties or with one variety, vineyards locations according to vineyard-site registration and the overlapping of two registrations will be thoroughly analysed so as to know the ecologic potential used up fro grape-vine.

There is massive professional and public demand towards to the administration to support replanting some famous vineyard-sites abundant for quality and better landscape reasons as well.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Now the most wineries produce vineyard-site selected wines. These appellations have become important market factors. The legal and technical backgrounds need to be further investigations. At international stage the Slovakian Tokaj issue seems to be the most difficult, because before the border modification as the result of Trianon peace contract in 2 communes, Szoloske (49 ha) and Kistornya (119 ha) some 178 ha of vineyards belonged to Tokaj wine districts before. Now in 6 communes the surface has been multiplied. The basic problem is that they produce wines in accordance with different wine laws, including different regulations. This is why the Hungarian Tokaj wine and the wines produced in Slovakia looks and taste different. The other aspect is that "Tokaj" as a geographical indication is the name of a city, located in Hungary

We also know there are so many countries, namely 14, in the world somewhere as Tokaj, or Tokay, or Tocai wines are circulated. The last one we have discovered is Albania.

Recently here in Tokaj is the only state owned winery in Hungary called Tokaj Trading House Co. integrating small-scale grape growers of the district. There are several medium size foreign joint ventures from Germany France, Great Britain, Spain, Japan (wineries called Dégenfeld, Hétszolo, Royal Tokaji, Disznóko, Oremus, Megyer, Pajzos, Királyudvar). They have been searching for new technologies and have reached significant results in case of variatel wines. There is plenty of also rapidly developing family enterprises in Tokaj claiming high prestigious wines marketed from their traditional as well as well equipped cellars.

It is an active dispute between the Hungarian wine sector and EU officials concerning EU zone system adapted to Hungary. From the Hungarian side there was an unofficial plan for opening a new so called Carpathian zone integrating part of Austria, Slovakia, Transylvania, and North-Croatia. It is because the basin belongs to neither Mediterranean nor Atlantic zones, having continental influence as well. CIA zone was officially proposed by Hungary, but from Brussels the idea of divided system into three zones is also negotiated. It may have determining effect on Tokaj wines as well.

Tableau 1

Tokaj wines/ product classification

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	Varietal wines	Szamorodni		Aszú				
		Dry	Sweet	3 putt.	4. putt.	5. putt.	6. putt.	Aszú esszencia
Harvest month	IX.	X.-XI.	X.-XI.	X-XI.	X-XI.	X-XI.	X-XI.	X-XI.
Grape	healthy	botrytis	botrytis	botrytis	botrytis	botrytis	Botrytis	botrytis
Harvest method	total	together	together	selected	selected	selected	Selected	selected
Wine process				Aszú grapes + base wine/must				
Origin	one	same	same	different or same				
Ugar c. g/l		-	30	60	90	120	150	180
Sugar free extract g/l	-	25	25	30	35	40	45	50
Min. alcohol content	-	13 %/v	13 %/v	-	-	-	-	-
Min. aging* years	Not regulated	2+1*	1	2+1	2+1	2+1	2+1	2+1

Note: 2 + 1* = 2 years wood + 1 year bottle as the minimum standard

Tableau 2

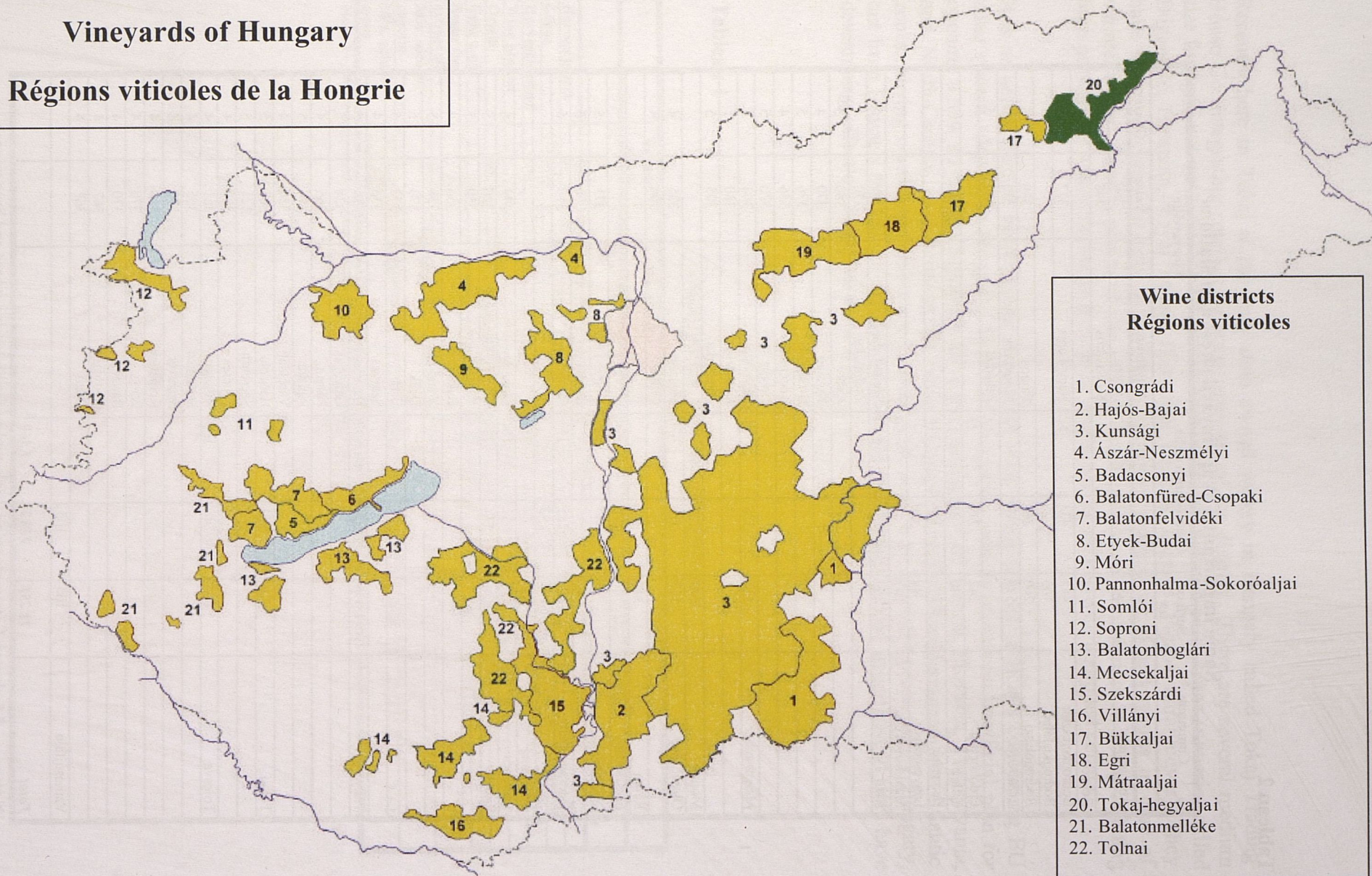
Some important Tokaj vinyard-sites' appellations

Commune	Surface ha	Classification c., ha		Vineyard-ite						
		I.	II.	Appellation	Value	Cluster *				
Abajíszántó	281	281		Agyag	360	5				
				Kassaváros	348	5				
Bekecs	54	54								
Bodrogkeresztúr	485	433	52	Nagy-Lapis	322	5				
Bodrogkisfalud	105	20								
Bodrogolaszi	260	260		Pajzos	339	5				
Erdobénye	576	504	72	Mogyorós	336	5				
				Fehérkút	369	5				
Erdohorvati	242	219	23							
Golop	40	28	12							
Herceghút	246	128	118							
Legyesbénye	90	90								
MakkoshoTyka	107	57	50							
Mád	1 280	1 280		Szent-Tamás	379	5				
				Zselinszky	370	4				
				Király	380	5				
				Kovágó	370	4				
				Birsalmás	376	5				
				Középhegy	356	4				
				Urágya	370	5				
				Mezozombor	332	328	4	Disznóko	304	5
								Kapiteto	380	5
								Zomborka	305	5
Monok	293	293								
Olaszliszka	543	473	70	Meszes	335	4				
				Csáki	344	4				
Rátka	347	347								
Sárazsadány	312	298	14							
Sárospatak	744	565	179	Megyeri teto	371	5				
				Királyhegy	306	5				
Sátoraljaújhely	453	285	168	Oremus	310	5				
Szegi	193	193								
Szegilong	82	64	18							
Szerencs	635	531	104	Elohegy	379	5				
Tarcal	824	577	247	Terézia, Mézesmáj	320	5				
				Mestervölgy	350	5				
				Bakonyi	356	4				
				Mandulás	358	5				
				Deák	373	5				
				Barát	373	5				
				Szarvas	336	4				
				Tállya	1 378	1 286	92	Hasznos	371	5
								Galyagas	374	5
								Palota	365	4
				Pipiske	376	5				
				Vároldal	350	4				
Tokaj	410	390	20	Hétszolo	367	5				
				Szerelmi	321	5				
				Lencsés	309	4				
Tolcsva	814	708	106	Kincsem	361	4				
				Budaházi	355	4				
				Szentvér	370	4				
				Kutpatka	370	4				
				Peto	370	4				
				Bartalos	370	4				
				Gyopáros	367	4				
				Cseto	367	4				
				Vámosújfalú	105	105				
Total	11 251	9 882	1 369							

Notes: * 5 cluster: Extremely good, high quality for both aszú grapes and base wines.
4 cluster: High quality

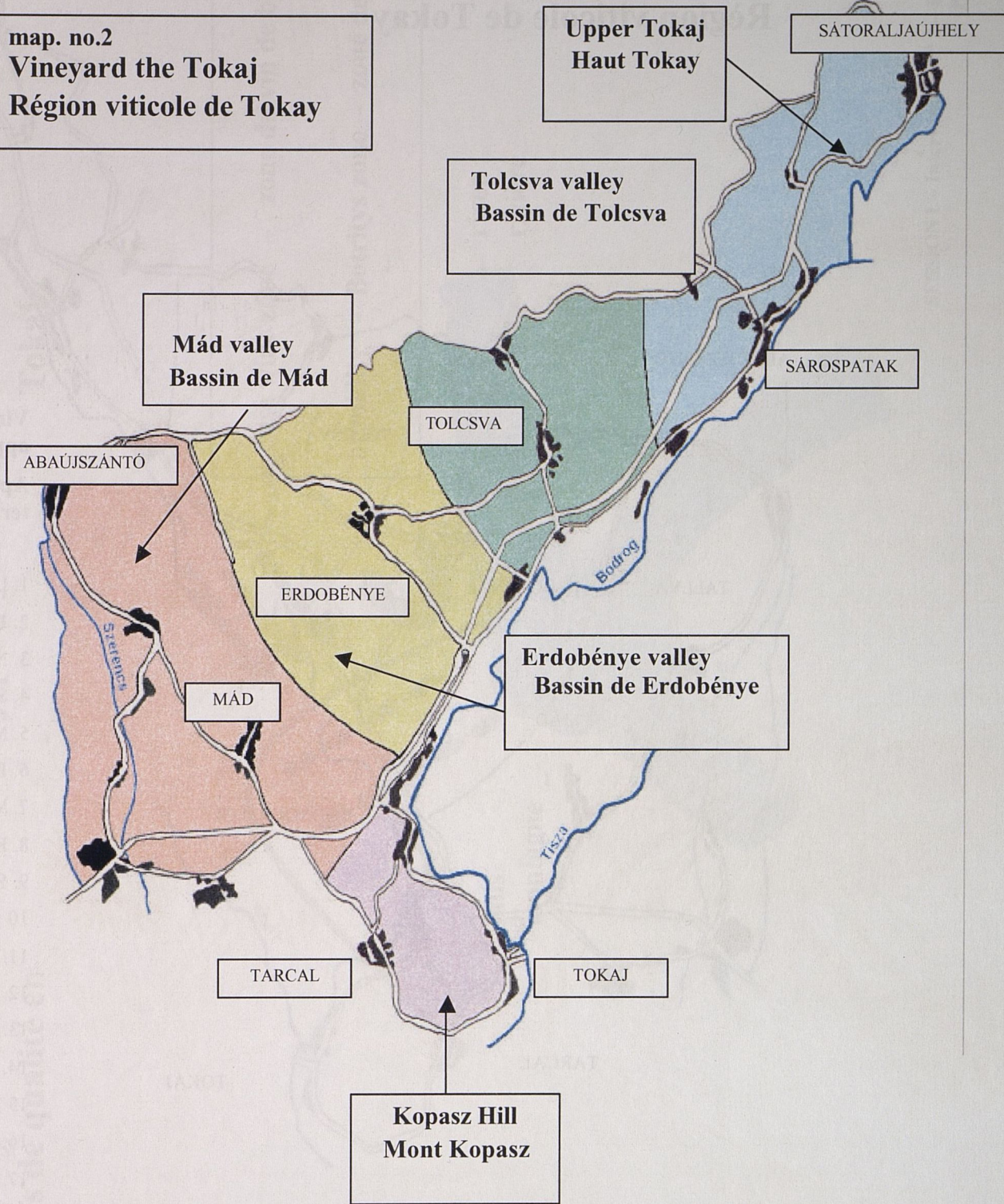
Source: Hungarian Nation vineyard site cadastre, Kecskemét

map no. 1
Vineyards of Hungary
Régions viticoles de la Hongrie



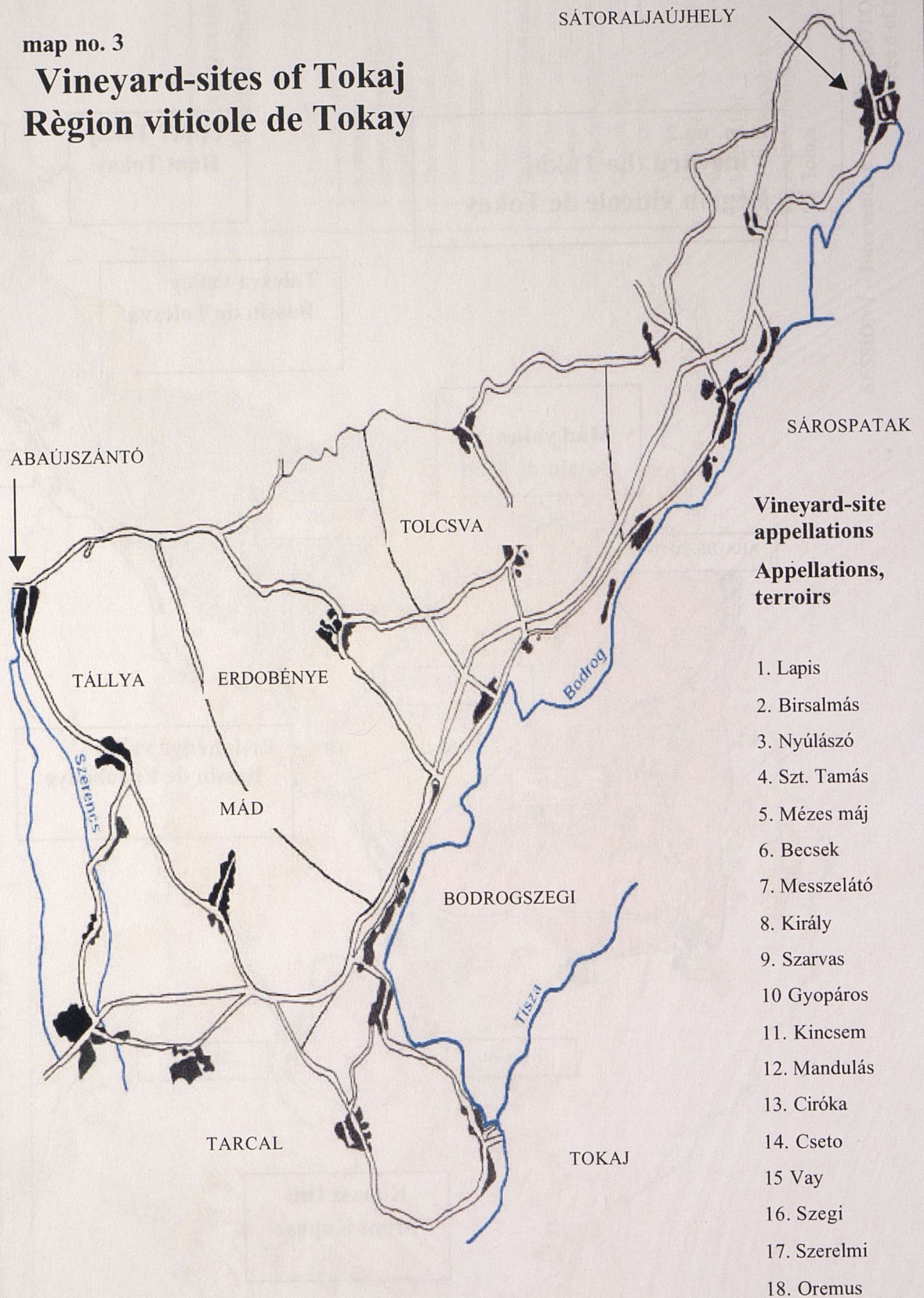
- Wine districts**
Régions viticoles
1. Csongrádi
 2. Hajós-Bajai
 3. Kunsági
 4. Ászár-Neszmélyi
 5. Badacsonyi
 6. Balatonfüred-Csepaki
 7. Balatonfelvidéki
 8. Etyek-Budai
 9. Móri
 10. Pannonhalma-Sokoróaljai
 11. Somlói
 12. Soproni
 13. Balatonboglári
 14. Mecsekaljai
 15. Szekszárdi
 16. Villányi
 17. Bükkaljai
 18. Egri
 19. Mátraaljai
 20. Tokaj-hegyaljai
 21. Balatonmelléke
 22. Tolnai

map. no.2
Vineyard the Tokaj
Région viticole de Tokaj



map no. 3

Vineyard-sites of Tokaj Règion viticole de Tokay

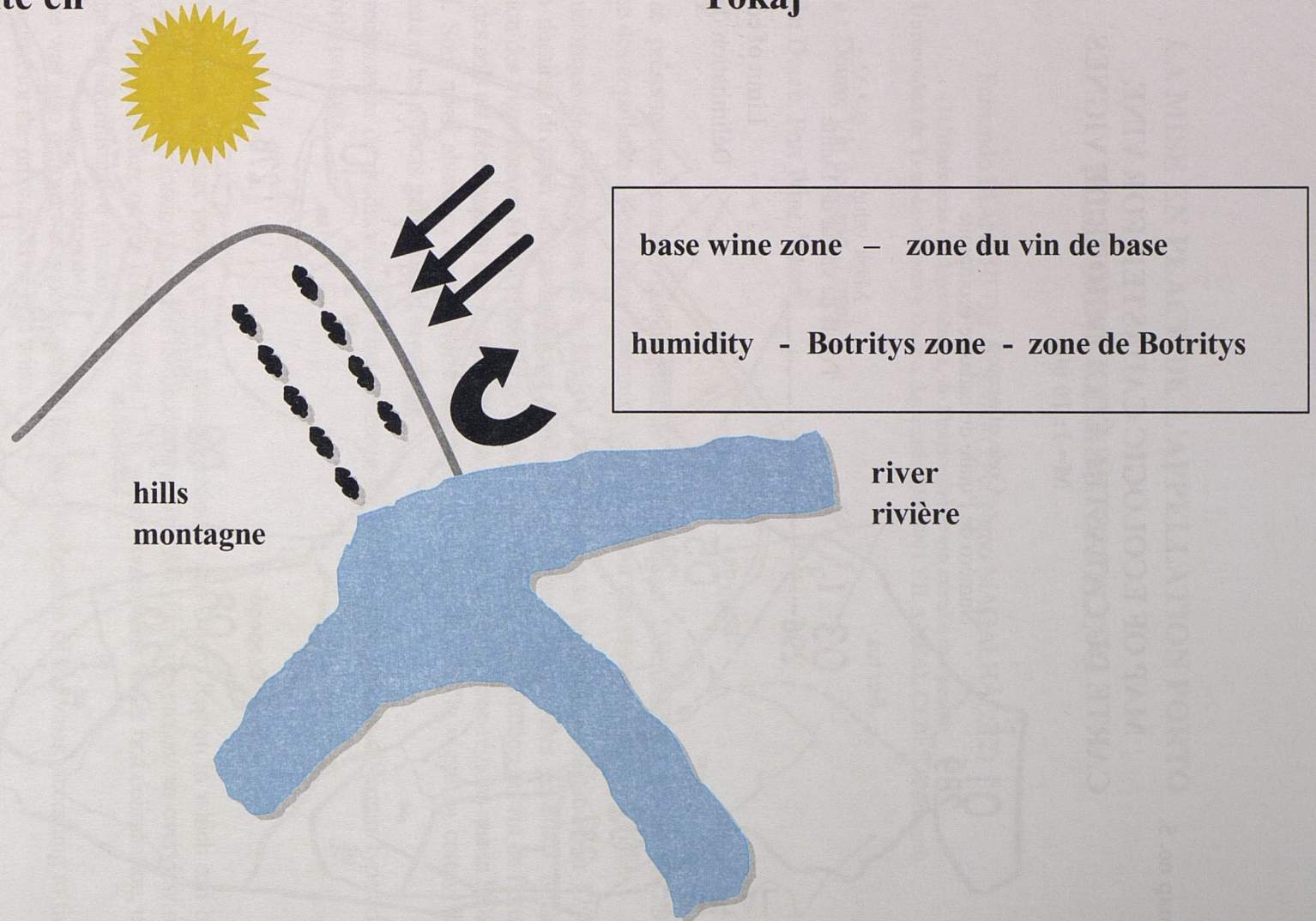


map no. 4

Facteurs de qualité en

Tokaj quality factors

Tokaj



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map no. 5.

MAP OF ECOLOGIC CADASTER FOR VINE CARTE DU CATASTRE ÉCOLOGIQUE DE VIGNES

M= 1: 10 000

