

Norman R. Bennett *

«That indispensable article»: Brandy and Port Wine, c.1750-1908

Port wine became one of the foremost wines of the world due to the success of its makers in preparing a product able to satisfy consumer demands in a highly competitive market. Understanding the historical complexities of the port wine system requires detailed analysis of all aspects of the processes followed by growers and merchants. One of the most demanding tasks for participants was the quest for, and proper use of brandy: labeled by an Offley agent as «*that indispensable article*». Its blending with the wine of the Douro made port a special wine. Some drinkers esteemed its strong alcohol content; others discovered a premier-quality beverage. In either case, thought oenologist J.J. Ferreira Lapa, the beverage's high alcohol content was «*o seu primeiro costado de nobreza*»; without it, he concluded, port was of minimal value. Twentieth-century commentator H. Warner Allen concurred about the necessity of port possessing «*those bold qualities of fire and dashing generosity which the wine-lover expects from the fortified wines of the Douro*». This study, a summary of a much longer effort, attempts to survey the changing place of brandy within the port wine system in the era from the mid-eighteenth to the early twentieth century. The period can be divided into three broad divisions. The first, a time of free commerce in brandy – about which I have little information – extended from the mid-seventeenth to the mid-eighteenth century. The second, from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, was dominated by the actions of a government-created organization, the Companhia Geral da Agricultura das Vinhas do Alto Douro (hereafter the Wine Company). The third, reaching from the mid-nineteenth to near the close of the first decade of the twentieth century, was shaped by the impact of serious vineyard maladies and free commerce policies.

The modern port wine system, took shape after the middle of the seventeenth century. Until then almost all wine was an unstable, perishable, commodity. Safe

transport was difficult, and, whatever the ultimate destination, most wine had to be consumed within a year of its making. Contemporary changes that influenced all branches of the wine industry occurred during a period of fundamental transition in the production and sale of wine, an era marked by the creation of the ancestors of now appreciated high-quality beverages. Brandy use was one of the most important components in the newly-emerging wine world. Modern distillation practices appeared in Europe during the twelfth century. The use of brandy to fortify wine was common by the sixteenth century. Increasing technical improvements made mass production of distilled beverages possible from the middle of the seventeenth century. The Dutch, following Venetian examples, pioneered the large-scale use of brandy, both for consumption and wine preparation. The latter measure was vital, especially for port, because the addition of brandy delayed completion of the fermentation process, allowed wines to reach distant destinations unspoiled, and permitted consumers – especially northern Europeans – to receive and enjoy the sweeter wines preferred.

The use of brandy in wine accompanied a drinking revolution. Increasing commercial contacts with other world regions made new, and larger amounts of existing, beverages available to European consumers. During the course of the eighteenth century wine-growers and merchants perfected wine-making practices and, by utilizing manufacturing advances in the production of bottles and corks that allowed the preservation and maturing of their product, met the competition. Brandy, became an integral component of the port wine process, linked with all aspects of preparation, transport, and sales. Its successful utilization by growers and merchants helped port wine to win the preference of consumers in Great Britain, then the world's most profitable wine-importing nation, and to gain a prominent position among premier wines.

Before the beginning of the eighteenth century most British drinkers consumed home-brewed ales. More prosperous citizens drank wine, preferring the produce of the vineyards of Bordeaux and the eastern Mediterranean. But a fundamental change was underway in British drinking practices, especially in the ever-growing London urban area. Higher alcohol-content beverages were wanted. Soldiers returning from war in the Netherlands brought knowledge of a new, sweetish, mass-produced, cheap liquor made from distilled grain alcohol. The notorious gin era was underway. Other products shared in the taste for strong drink. French wine-makers, striving to maintain their place in the market, prepared a mixture of various wines and brandy for «*le goût anglais*». Purists might complain about the resulting product, but as a French twentieth century grower observed, «*the intelligent merchant studies and follows the taste of his customers, however strange and bad it may be*».

The development of port wine necessarily was influenced by the general cha-

racteristics of the drinking revolution. Wine from northern Portugal was among the many products purchased, with wine from the expanding vineyards of the upper Douro region exported to Great Britain by the mid-seventeenth century. But arrivals were limited, probably because of quality considerations – one observer charged that «*Portugal affords no wines worth the transporting*» – until the persisting hostilities between Great Britain and France, beginning during the 1670s, stimulated British mercantilist policies designed to curtail French imports and open the wine market to other nations.

Port initially developed a reputation as a relatively inexpensive and ordinary quality product able to hold its own against similar competitors, but by the 1720s it had won enough renown to be listed in the cellars of wine drinkers among the nobility. During this era French wine-makers in Bordeaux, Champagne, and other regions proved that British drinkers would purchase quality wine. Port wine system participants met the challenge by utilizing brandy to improve their product and to satisfy British tastes. By the close of the century Portugal supplied about 70% of British wine imports. Port wine had become the British wine of choice.

There appears to be a contest among writers for the awarding of primacy of fortification to a particular wine – Sherry, Madeira, Port, etc. For Port, many speculators endlessly argue about an exact date for the initial fusion of brandy and Douro wine. All should have heeded the sage advice of Marc Bloch: «*there are times when the first duty of a scholar is to admit he does not know*». By the latter half of the seventeenth century experienced wine-makers and shippers were well-aware that port's high natural sugar content made it very susceptible to the dangers of continuing fermentation terminating in a damaged product. They naturally followed the practice of their time by adding brandy to preserve the qualities then preferred in the British market. Although the relative weight given in this process to the factors of travel and taste remains unclear, during those pre-scientific knowledge times port wine system participants surely followed a course similar to other contemporary alcoholic beverage makers and experimented to determine what was necessary for preparing and improving quality. The major step toward the creation of modern port wine, the insertion of brandy before fermentation had finished, probably occurred by the 1720s. A recent analysis of Douro quinta documents demonstrates that before the mid-eighteenth century wine-makers, endeavoring in several ways to satisfy British tastes, were inserting one almude of brandy per pipe during fermentation. Merchant John Croft noted that brandy was utilized both to check fermentation and to preserve wine. The eighteenth-century improvements in port wine preparation allowed a new and interesting wine to earn a leading place in British drinking preferences, but marketing triumphs never are secure. In 1742 a Lisbon consul lamented that one wine contained so much brandy «*as not to be drinkable*».

Many of the techniques followed by growers and merchants were not recorded, or have not yet been discovered in surviving documentation, but the late eighteenth to the early twentieth century sources utilized for this study demonstrate that wide variations in amounts of brandy inserted during and after the vintage process long-persisted. Brandy content clearly changed during the stages of a wine's existence. Arguments occurred for a time over whether to add brandy during or after fermentation. Wine-makers and shippers during different eras did follow generally accepted practices, yet endless approaches were present due to the particular qualities of regional vintages and the reactions of firms to consumer preferences. Wines made by individual growers often went to larger adegas where all were mixed into a final product. They then were left alone to finish fermenting until lota time in November or December when an additional infusion followed. If necessary, more was added when wine went down river to the lodges of shippers. The firms consequently dealt with wine sharply differing in qualities. They mixed in varying amounts of brandy to prepare a firm's particular marks. Brandy was used to cover the defects of harvests producing lesser quality wine. Shippers often also utilized so-called covering wines, products possessing «*colour, flavour and strength*», to create a blend «*fit for the foreign market*». In 1870 one such wine held three almudes of brandy. If more treatment was necessary, especially for lower quality marks, jeropiga was used «*to soften & cover over defects*»; during the early 1890s five almudes of jeropiga, made up of one-third non-grape alcohol and two-thirds brandy, were mixed into a pipe of wine. If wine remained in lodges, it required continuing treatment. Finally, more brandy was inserted both when the wine left Porto, and after arrival in merchant vaults in Britain.

Since utilizing brandy was a primary factor in creating a popular wine, attention to its cost, quality, and availability became an essential component of merchant and grower labors. The determination of vintage cost calculations demonstrates that the price of brandy was a major determinant of a wine's market value. Significant amounts of capital were required for purchases. Sandeman's Frederic T. Cobb in November 1875 projected that about £14,000 was required for the firm's approaching Porto and Douro brandy requirements. Offley's records offer the opportunity for several approaches for providing examples of brandy's importance for determining wine costs. I have attempted, using figures that appear to describe the amounts used in their Gaia lodge, to determine the annual amount and value of brandy during the 104 years between 1779 and 1902. Widely varying amounts were recorded for brandy expenditures, from lows of 3,200\$000 (1842) and 3,256\$000 (1849) to 39,050\$000 (1793). The amounts of course depended upon general market conditions and fluctuating monetary values. Seven of the under 10,000\$000 years occurred during the dull business times of the 1840s. The seventeen seasons when totals went over 30,000\$000 include ten of Offley's very

prosperous activities before the general economic disruption caused by the French invasion of 1807. The figures also provide a useful seasonal picture of price fluctuations per brandy pipe.

In another statistical effort I have compiled general vintage statistics covering fifty seasons between 1853 and 1902. The figures allow a calculation of the percentage cost of brandy in relation to the general amount Offley expended on wine purchased at the vintage. 1861 and 1864 were the only seasons when the percentage fell under 10%. During six years totals were between 11% and 14%, all but one falling between 1856 and 1867. For twelve vintages, spread over all the decades, numbers ranged from 16% to 20%. The 21% to 28% spread encompassed twenty-six years between 1854 and 1899. The remaining three vintages were from 33% to 38%. Amounts expended varied according to the circumstances of each vintage from a low of 1,866\$665 (1860) to 24,538\$840 (1873). Only two other vintages – 1890 and 1899 – exceeded 20,000\$000. A more precise calculation of the percentage of expenditures for the brandy in wine bought at the vintage emerges from Offley figures covering thirty-four vintages between 1866 and 1902. The wine purchased totals are the result of subtracting the amounts for wines listed with brandy content from the general vintage totals. In only four seasons did wine with brandy content fall below 27% of the annual total. During twelve years the figures were between 27% and 29%, and during seventeen, 30% and 35%. Three vintages were higher: 36% to 39%. A final approach to analyzing vintage date to shed light on brandy's important share of the cost of preparing port wine can be gained by determining the percentage of brandy expenses in Offley's total vintage expenditure during thirty-two seasons between 1870 and 1902. The total includes all the sums advanced for materials and labor related to a vintage. During twenty seasons brandy expenses amounted to between 20% and 25% of total vintage expenses. Another ten ranged between 12% and 19%. Two reached 30%. The various statistics clearly indicate brandy's prominent position in determining the price of port wine. By the time wine was exported, brandy expenses during the first six decades of the nineteenth century often reached more than 20% of an individual pipe's total value.

A rough working-out of prices for brandy paid by merchants and growers may assist in following the themes developed in this study. The maximum and minimum prices paid during a year are drawn from all of the sources utilized, and must be regarded as merely a tentative listing that will be modified when other sources are examined. During the periods of Wine Company monopoly control that organization sold brandy of varying quality at established prices. In its initial years the first quality price oscillated between 84\$000 and 110\$000. The latter amount soon prevailed, whatever the results of the vintage. European war-time influences sent the maximum price to 140\$000 during 1799. For the continuation of the hostilities,

into 1815, prices fluctuated between 120\$000 and 286\$000, and in the succeeding five years from 180\$000 to 240\$000. The successful process of removing the company from the brandy market following the 1820 revolution reduced prices, during 1821 into 1823, to between 100\$000 and 180\$000. The failure of the liberal cause negated the reforms, with the company charging, by the close of 1823, 214\$100, although, claimed an Offley agent, «*we could easily obtain brandy for 70\$ or 80\$ less per pipe & of a superior quality*». Prices were between 115\$000 and 214\$100 from 1824 until the siege of Porto began in 1832, and then fluctuated from 57\$600 to 180\$000 until its conclusion in 1834. With the abolition of the Wine Company role, from 1834, and with its reduced market influence after its 1838 return, when private sales also occurred, amounts for the remainder of the decade, and through the 1840s, went from 33\$000 to 140\$000, with the lower sums becoming common from the early 1840's. Prices rose somewhat at the beginning of the 1850s, with sales transacted between 50\$000 and 150\$000 until the effects of oidium were felt. From 1850 through the rest of the decade into 1860 prices remained over 135\$000, soaring over 300\$000 to as high as 370\$000 in 1856. For the rest of the 1860s they were between 110\$000 and 261\$000. During the 1870s brandy was purchased from a low of 90\$000 to a high of 192\$000. The 1880s continued in similar fashion, from 76\$000 to 162\$000. The 1890's purchases went from 89\$000 to 250\$000. The first decade of the twentieth century through 1908 saw prices between 60\$000 and 250\$000.

There were regular seasonal price changes. The strongest demand for brandy normally occurred during important stages in the port wine-making process. Brandy was required at vintage time in September or October, although the expected outcome during a specific season regulated amounts used. Poor economic times often influenced vintage prices and caused growers not to invest in brandy for making their wine. Such decisions later made much wine available for distilling. During the next stages in the preparation process, occurring in November or December in the Douro and Gaia, prices rose again. When these tasks were finished, they declined. A few months later brandy demand intensified once more while wine was prepared for transfer downriver to Gaia. The condition of the river or excessive heat might delay transport and endanger wine safety and thus increase brandy requirements. Once arrived, wine began initial treatment in merchant lodges.

Numerous standard factors determined brandy prices. All were shaped as the season's weather determined the quantity and quality of the vintage in the Douro and other Portuguese wine regions. Among the major influences were quality, alcohol content, origins, age, place and date of purchase, delivery costs, payment in cash or paper currency at once or over time, and local consumption demands. Each might vary at a particular moment. And, since brandy flowed to the Douro

from nearby regions, demand from competing Portuguese markets influenced availability. The requirements of wine consumers in the populous Minho always influenced the brandy market. When its vintages did not satisfy local consumption needs much Douro wine went to the Minho. The appearance of oidium and phylloxera from the 1850s further complicated the market. Then the price, quality, and availability of imported alcohol, mostly not produced from grapes, became an important factor. Non-grape alcohol, from Britain, Germany, and Portugal, became a permanent part of the port wine system process as wine-makers, some with great reluctance, strove to meet the competition for producing the lesser-quality ports that were an important component of a firm's business. In 1856 and 1857, for example, the British product was about 100\$000 cheaper than Douro-made brandy. Also important were the demands for ordinary wine from Brazil and phylloxera-stricken France. The many factors made sure that brandy-seekers during the nineteenth century became regular investigators in all regions of Portugal.

Intervention by the Portuguese government was a primary factor in brandy matters. By the mid-eighteenth century the chain of individuals involved in the port wine system quarreled concerning the responsibility for a major crisis. Expanding vineyards produced more wine than the British market could absorb. The consequence was the entry of Portugal's absolutist government into the port wine system. The Wine Company was awarded broad powers over the entire port wine system. From December 1760 it alone had the right to purchase wine for distilling and to produce and sell brandy; both transactions were ruled by company-established prices. The presence of the Wine Company quickly complicated the functioning of the brandy market because of persistent conflict between port wine system members and often inefficient and corrupt officials. Among the many regulations introduced were the closing of privately-owned distilleries and the prohibition of the import of foreign alcohol. Other edicts prevented growers from making brandy from their own stocks before the first of May, a damaging condition since most farmers storing wine faced the ever-present reality of spoilage. Even if growers managed to hold out, they then had to secure company agreement about amounts of brandy made, and, when finished distilling, had to offer their product to the company at an imposed price. Only if purchase was declined might growers enter the general market. The regulations naturally led to frequent evasion efforts. Most growers, deprived of the opportunity for free market participation, were vocal, but powerless, company opponents. Merchants of all nationalities also constantly complained of the inferior quality and high cost of the company product, but the predominance of the British in the trade made their position a reoccurring issue in diplomatic discussions.

Any expectation that the Wine Company, a typical structure of an eighteenth-century European absolutist government, might function efficiently and without

corruption was unlikely. Portuguese observers have recognized that the company was formed to give Portugal's government control over an important sector of the economy and to protect the interests of a dominant societal group. Further insights into the company's role can be gained from considering similar operations in other societies. As Richard Herr observed for Spain, the «*structural weakness*» of its monarchy, especially the lack of an independent bureaucracy, left members of society subject to the machinations of unregulated officials. The problem became even more acute when chartered organizations provided major financial resources for their state. David Christian, in a stimulating analysis of the monopoly over vodka existing in Russia, describes such states as «*transitional societies*» polities «*where there was, as yet, no clear distinction between public and private spheres*». When governments sought access to revenues that their bureaucracies could not supply, the result was a system of accepting «*obligatory corruption*», through the creation of a monopoly system, «*a machine for exploitation*» that benefited elite classes at the expense of others. Conditions in Portugal matched those in Spain and Russia. In Portugal corrupt officials were a fact of life. «*It is difficult, if not impossible altogether, to resist empenhos in this country*», lamented a Porto merchant-consul.

All of the Wine Company tactics influenced the availability and price of brandy. Company defenders, often individuals profiting from its policies, claimed that the system, even admitting its faults, operated for the benefit of their nation. British merchants had a different opinion. The brandy monopoly was a source of unending friction between officials and wine-makers. As early as 1760 British merchants claimed that pre-monopoly brandy was one-third cheaper in price than the company product, and that the organization made a forty to fifty per cent profit on each pipe. The recurring problem of the company's failure to supply adequate amounts of well-made brandy – often previously paid for – to growers and merchants frequently complicated wine-preparation.

The Wine Company monopoly had a broader significant impact because, by the mid-eighteenth century, the port wine system reached far beyond Douro vineyards and Gaia lodges. The necessity of utilizing wine for producing the brandy incorporated in port concealed the actual amount of Portuguese wine exported. By 1850 it was reported that 30,000 pipes of wine were required for the brandy included in the port and jeropiga sent to Great Britain. The Douro therefore flourished only with the support of surrounding regions. Before the mid-nineteenth century vine disease crises struck, the brandy needs of the port wine system were met by the produce of the Minho, Beira, and Trás-os-Montes. Estremadura later became an important supplier. Contraband Spanish brandy provided additional help.

The many factors discussed influencing the brandy market in Portugal required

that merchants and growers devote equal attention to both wine and brandy. Well before the beginning of the nineteenth century, the melding of brandy and wine to improve quality and keep wine sound was accepted as an «*article of belief*» in the port wine trade. An Offley agent's comment in March 1793 that wine of the previous vintage was «*very deficient of brandy*», thus requiring additional amounts, is an indication of an accepted method of preparing port. Twentieth-century system participants eventually reached general agreement on amounts of wine and brandy. In 1900 Robertson's agents judged that 100 pipes of brandy were necessary for 600 of wine; Visconde de Villarinho de S. Romão reported the use of 125 liters per pipe. Other commentators stated that, mixes might include from 100 or 110 liters of brandy and 440 to 550 of wine. But a continuing absence of specificity in the processes followed by growers and wine-makers during the era before 1908 makes it very difficult to determine how much brandy was added to port wine between the vintage and the time of export. The brandy content of port mentioned in most accounts indicates the percentage when leaving Portugal. Before that moment, individual wine-makers, both farmers and merchants, consistently reacted to the perceived requirements of a particular vintage by inserting widely varying amounts at different intervals.

Judgments about brandy began at vintage time. The perceptive Heinrich Link provides during 1798 a good starting point. The still fermenting wine, he claimed, received brandy amounting to a twelfth-part of its total. Gaspar Pereira, after a broad survey of sources, concludes that until 1820 most growers used less than an almude. At mid-century British consul Edwin Johnson explained that it was, «*common to throw a considerable quantity of brandy into must during fermentation, often during its first fermentation*» to retain the qualities desired for first class wine. More was added later to ensure preservation. A. Girão reported at about the same time that the addition of from one to two almudes per pipe of must was the general practice among better growers, with two to three more added after fermentation. Nonetheless, brandy-free wine continued to be made. Many growers, often motivated by economic necessity, had little choice but to do so.

A general interpretation can be drawn, based both upon observers' notes and wine-maker practices, that, during the period extending into 1908, Douro wine-makers' alcohol infusions given to wine at the vintage ranged from amounts under 5% to near 40%. A widely-accepted mean long hovered between one to a bit over two almudes (25.44 to around 60 liters) to a pipe of wine, roughly between 5% to 10% its contents. But, as the century passed, brandy percentages increased. Offley's purchasing accounts for wine with known brandy content, covering thirty-six of the seasons from 1779 through 1902, support a steady climb in percentage. The statistics for a particular vintage – 1866 – demonstrate how conclusions were reached. The firm purchased 594,397.08 liters of wine; 277,057.2 liters of the total

contained 38,092.08 liters of brandy (14%). Individual purchases included from 7% to 27%. Many purchases did not record a brandy content. For the entire period of vintages, six years during the 1870s and 1880s ranged between 9% and 11%. During twenty seasons the brandy content went from 12% to 14%. Eight of the vintages occurred during the 1860s and 1870s; the rest stretched from 1880 to 1899. The 15% to 18% group had one representative in 1872; the remainder went from 1889 to 1902. Sandeman's data for thirteen scattered vintages between 1850 and 1884 demonstrate a similar elevation. In 1850 and 1851 wine held a 4% brandy content, raising to 8% in 1852 and 15% in 1853. From 1865 through 1868 the one vintage was at 7%, the other two at 10%. 1879 contained 9%, while from 1880 through 1884 there were four at 13% and 14%, and one at 17%.

Other Sandeman records confirm the rising brandy vintage percentage. Data gained from Sandeman's ledgers allows a determination of the amounts of wine with brandy content purchased from individuals and firms. Calculations are made for a total of 2353 vintage transactions during fifty-five seasons between 1846 and 1912. The accounts show a steady elevation in the amount of brandy inserted at the vintage. During the nineteen years from 1847 to 1875 wine containing from 1% to 4% figured in 82 of 657 purchases, during nine years reaching above 10% of the annual sales total. The high mark was in 1850, a year of limited activity, at 44%. After 1875 wine with 1% to 4% brandy virtually disappears; it was present only in 1879 and 1911. Until 1884 wine carrying from 5% to 8% brandy, with major variations in amount – from 2% (1854 and 1873) to 69% (1851) of the total – was present in 115 of 1120 transactions. A sharp drop followed, with only 1904 reaching 11% of the total. The long popular addition of from 9% to 11% brandy remained important in Sandeman's purchases – 373 out of 1208 – until 1886. During the thirty annual transactions only four were under 10% of the annual total; in two other years no sales occurred. In 1873 they soared to 89%, in five other seasons reaching from forty to 49%. The large number of purchases of 1887's vintage began a permanent decline in the 9% to 11% category. Only once, in 1899, did they gain 10% of the total.

The purchases of wine bearing higher amounts of brandy increased. During eighteen annual transactions for wine in the 12% to 14% brandy category before 1875, four were under 10% of the total, eight from 11% to 20%, and five between 28% and 58%. Beginning with 1875's harvest, 62% of the total purchases ranged between 31% (1884) and 62% (1875) during sixteen of the following eighteen years. Wine carrying from 15% to 17% brandy similarly became more popular. Before 1875 no purchases were made at nine vintages, and five had under 10% of the total. For the thirty-eight vintages from 1875, only the small purchase years of 1907, 1910, 1911, and 1912 did not include that category. Two years of the annual sales totals were under 10%, eleven from 12% to 19%, seven from 24% to 29%,

and the remaining fourteen from 32% to 63%. Purchases of wine with 18% to 20% brandy were minimal through the twenty-five seasons ending in 1881. Only three of the annual sales (11%, 13%, and 19%) were over 10% of the total; nine seasons did not include a sale. The 18% to 20% category became more popular from 1882. Until 1892 seven of the eleven of transactions ranged between 11% (1869) and 18% of the total. A marked increase then continued during the twenty vintages through 1912, with fourteen reaching between 42% and 75% of the total. Although the number of sales in the 21% to 23% brandy in wine category was never large – the high point was 15 transactions in 1898 – and did not reach as much as 25% of the annual total until 1898, in a five out of fourteen subsequent seasons of limited sales it gained from 20% (1905) to 46% (1907) of the total. Annual purchases of wine with over 23% brandy were not a significant part of the totals except for seasons (1852, 1878, 1893, 1906-09, 1911) when minimal Sandeman purchases occurred. The increase in brandy percentage was the result of the changed vineyard conditions caused by oidium and phylloxera and by merchant efforts to produce a port suitable for the British market. Thus, although it has been suggested, by António Barreto, that the process of alcohol use in port wine had reached a «*forma definitiva*» by 1850, the system still obviously was then evolving, with many participants making differing decisions involving the amounts and timing involved. Port wine had not, as far as its brandy component was concerned, reached a definitive form when the nineteenth century closed.

During the second half of the nineteenth century unfavorable international wine market conditions, plus the continuing ravages of phylloxera, brought immense economic and social distress to Douro region inhabitants. Douro growers, a group including widely disparate economic and social divisions, organized a movement aiming to alter port wine system operations resulting from the 1865 decision for free trade. The brandy situation was a secondary focus of their arguments, but the amount of duty levied on foreign brandy and spirit imports became a permanent feature of the debate. So did the use of southern Portuguese wine and brandy, and of industrially-produced alcohol. One attempted solution to the hard times was a move to restrict the brandy used in port to the product of distilled wine. Proposals to limit the southern Portuguese role in the port wine system naturally roused that community and made them a major participant in the debate. Southern growers had seized advantage of wine production declines in other regions to expand vineyards. Often suffering from the effects of overproduction and variations in demand, they tenaciously fought to protect their market among port wine-makers, major consumers of southern brandy. The debate persisted because southern and northern Portuguese growers and distillers, striving to protect their differing interests within the port wine system, fiercely contested or supported sporadic government efforts to regulate supply or lower prices and import

duties. Growers in all regions wanted the opportunity to sell wines for distillation when other alternatives failed.

The consequent uncertainty contributed to soaring prices and brandy shortages during the next decade. The efforts to solve the continuing crisis ended with the government legislating a fundamental restructuring of the port wine system. New regulations appeared in May 1907 and September 1908. Despite vociferous Douro opposition, they included a prohibition on making brandy within the demarcated zone. *Ridley's* correspondent reported a general ignoring of the restriction. «*É claro*», lamented a northerner, that the south through the new regulations was able to act «*como senhor de terras conquistadas*». The reformed Douro regulations of 1907 and 1908 had little immediate impact on brandy issues since the market conditions – overproduction and weak demand – continued until the onset of World War I brought new conditions. The influences of twentieth-century historical currents, and the differing nature of wine company sources – use of the telephone and telegraph greatly reduced correspondence – require additional study before the continuing importance of brandy within the port wine system can be analyzed.