

# ON HISTORY OF COGNAC PRODUCTION IN ARMENIA

*Good brandy should be treated like a woman. Do not assault it.  
Coddle and warm it in your hands before you sip it.*

W. Churchill

## Part I – Before 1917 Revolution

Igor Grigorian

“Don’t tell France, but the world’s best Cognac is flourishing in Armenia. Or, at least, that’s what the Armenians say,” writes Hannah Walhout ([alcoholprofessor.com](http://alcoholprofessor.com), blog post March 31, 2016). Well, let’s agree to disagree; France has known about it since 1900, when the blind testing of the cognac produced in Armenia (part of the Russian Empire at the time) resulted in Grand-Prix at the International Exhibition in Paris (Figures 1 and 1a).

France takes pride in its viticulture, which goes back to the times when the Gauls produced wine from wild grapes; then they further cultivated the grapes. In the third century, Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius Probus (Figure 2) extended the privilege of owning vineyards and making wine to all Gauls. But the origin of grapes comes from ancient Armenia. According to the Bible, Noah descending Mount Ararat (Figure 3) and planted a grape vine, thus starting a process that has lived on since.

So far, the oldest wine production was evidenced in Armenia at a cave in Areni village dating back 6,100 years (Figure 4).

Greek historian Xenophon testifies that beer brewing in Armenia developed at the same time. In the *Anabasis* he wrote: “There were stored wheat,

Figure 1 and 1a.



Figure 2.

barley, vegetables, and barley wine in the craters (clay pots). In upper level of vessels with the edges in the wine floated barley, and there was stuck a reed, large and small sizes and who wanted to drink, had to take a reed in his mouth and pull it through the wine. Not

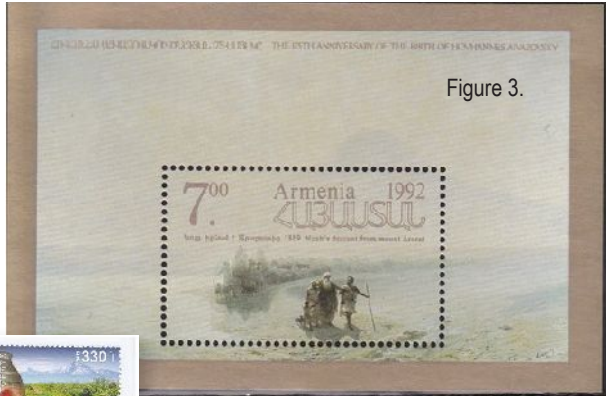


Figure 3.

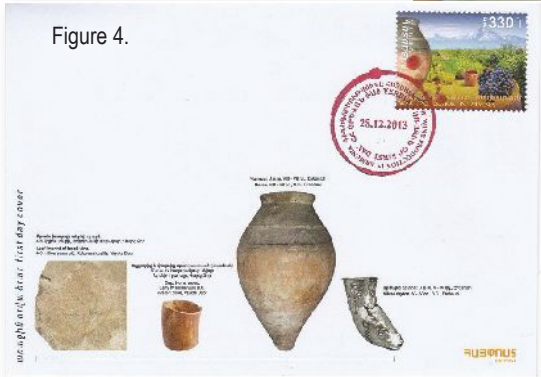


Figure 4.



Figure 5.

mixed with water, the wine was very strong, but for local people it was a very pleasant drink" (Figure 5).

The origin of cognac, per se, goes back to the 16th century, when Dutch merchants came to France to purchase salt, wood and wine. Preserving the wine during the long trip home presented a challenge, and they started distilling the wine into so-called eau-de-vie, which originally meant "water of life" (Figures 6 and 6a).

Eventually, it was realized that a second distilling made the wine an even finer, more elegant and pleasant product, which was called brandy (from Dutch word "brandewijn," burnt wine). In the 17th and 18th centuries, main cognac producers (including Jean Martell, James Hennessy (Figure



Figure 6. Products imported from France included eau-de-vie.



Figure 6a. Original distillation process - France.



7), Remy Martin (Figure 8), and Thomas Hine (Figure 9) further advanced the technology, and, in the 19th century, cognac was not traded in barrels anymore, but rather in bottles, which boosted the glass and cork industries.

Hennessy had its first sale in the Russian Empire in 1825, but it took another 60-some years before the production of brandy started on the Empire's territories. Vodka and wine were so much cheaper and more popular that investing in a double distillery process did not seem feasible for several decades.

It was not until 1889 that Georgian businessman David Sarajishvili (Sarajev, Figure 10) organized the first cognac production at Kizlyar, Dagestan. I recently came across a 5-kopek lettersheet that was

issued by Empress Maria's Orphanage Institutions' Main Office of the Charitable Closed Letters, with advertising, showing Sarajev's cognac factory, advertising its Tiflis, Saint Petersburg and Moscow wholesale warehouses (Figure 11, see arrow).

Figure 7. Cooper's tools of XVII-XVIII centuries on Hennessy postcard.

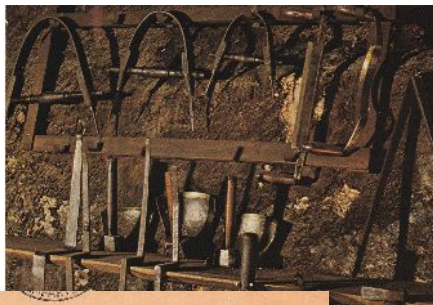


Figure 8. Remy Martin advertising postcard.



Figure 9. Original Hine Cognac label.

Figure 10 (left). David Saradjishvili on a stamp of Georgia.

## Nerses Aghadjanovich Tairov

In Armenia, First Guild Merchant, entrepreneur and philanthropist Nerses Aghadjanovich Tairov (Tairian, Tairianz, Figure 12) became the founding father of cognac production. Born in Karaklis (Karakilisa, modern Vanadzor) in 1833 (Figure 13), Nerses Tairian graduated from the Moscow Agricultural Academy and advanced his knowledge in France. Upon return to Armenia (at the time part of the Russian Empire), Tairian settled in Erevan and, in the 1870s, acquired land within the territory of Yerevan Castle (Figures 14 and 15) from brothers Hairapet and Nahapet



Figure 11. A 5-kopeck lettersheet, front, back and insert (see arrow), featuring Sarajev's cognac factory.

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Figure 12. Nerses Tairrov.

Ter-Hovakimians (the castle was built by Sardar Khan in the 15th century, during the period of Persian occupation). Expanding the territory to include adjacent land, including several Dalma fruit gardens, Tairian established numerous vineyards.

Following the advice of his cousin, Vasyli Egorovich Tairrov, already a prominent Russian viticulturist (Figure 16), on March 6, 1874, Tairian started wine, vodka and doshab (molasses) production, and the factory became known as “Fruit & Grape Fire Plant No. 1 of the Erivan First Guild Merchant Nerses Aghadjanovich Tairrov’s In the City of Erivan on Shosseynaya Street in His Own House,” according to the words of his trusted manufacturer and distiller, Ruben Merabov. Because of the quality, his products enjoyed more and more demand and, in the early 1880s, Tairian invited,

Figure 15. Location of the Factory on the Map.



Figure 13. Karakilisa postmark.

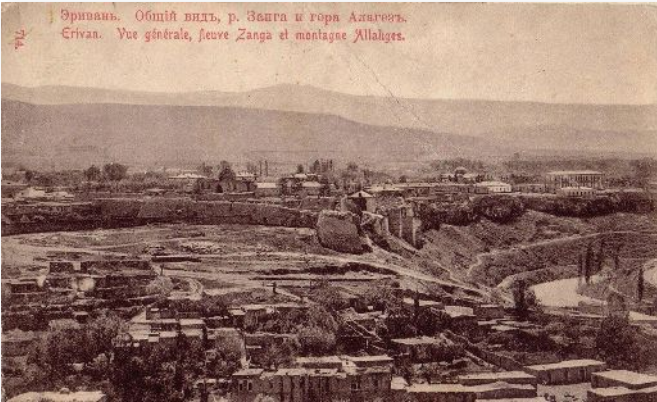


Figure 14. Erivan general view, future factory building is in the lower part of the postcard.



from Tiflis, famed wine-maker Garegin Kharaziants, to improve the distilling process. His factory was in a single-story stone building for distillation, 217 large amphorae for vines, with a total 12,000-bucket capacity and six oak vats of 150-200-bucket capacity each. To improve the quality of his cognac, Tairov invited, from the French city of Montpellier (famous for its wines), a young Yerevan-born graduate of the Academy of Viticulture, Mkrtich Musinian, to serve as a chief technologist. The new production lasted until 1899; despite excellent quality of the product, Tairov was unable to realize a profit. Rather than buying cheap Armenian cognac, people preferred expensive French brands. Facing bankruptcy of what he thought to be a successful enterprise, Tairov pawned his factory at the Bank of Tiflis.

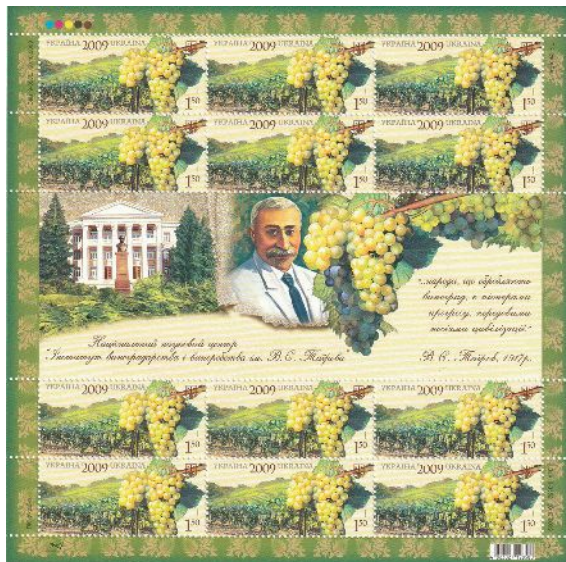


Figure 16. Vasyli Tairov is shown on a 2009 Ukraine mini sheet.

## Nikolay Nikolayevich Shustov

The subsequent history of the cognac production in Armenia is associated with the Shustov family. In 1802 Leontey Shustov, a son of a serf, was freed by his landowner, General Izmailov, and moved to Moscow. Although he was officially registered as a deacon at one of the monasteries, it was his hobby of collecting recipes for liqueurs that created a basis for a future successful company. It was his son, Nikolay Leontievich, who got interested in the alcohol business.

Starting small (one distillery apparatus and three hired helpers) Nikolay L. Shustov, having a fine taste for vodka (it was called bread wine at the time), came up with a motto: "Quality Above All." The Moscow vodka market was extremely competitive, but his enterprise gained recognition and was very successful; small quantities of the product were compensated by its fine quality. When his first male heir, Nikolay, was born (Shustov had four daughters prior to having his first son), he started to think seriously of what his legacy might be and what inheritance he was going to leave behind. In 1881, Shustov and 18 employees produced 3,950 buckets of vodka for a total of 20,100 rubles and was only number 16 in the Russian market.

In 1888, Nikolay L. Shustov officially initiated his son Nikolay into the company and "N.L. Shustov and Son" became the official name of the firm. By 1889, due to the Shustovs' outstanding enterprising abilities, the annual turnover of the company reached 1,150,000 rubles, and production accounted for 13,000 buckets of distilled wine and more than 6,000 buckets of vodka and liqueurs.





Figure 17. The Shustovs.

By 1897, N.L. Shustov and Son owned one vodka and one liqueur factory, two wholesale storage units (one for wine and spirits and one for grape wines). The company's annual turnover reached 3 million rubles and the company would sell around 100,000 buckets of liqueurs and 400,000 buckets of distilled wine that year. The name of the company was eventually changed to N.L. Shustov and Sons Co. (Figure 17), to include the other three sons, and was hailed to be second only to the vodka empire of Peter Smirnoff.



Figure 18. An 1872 postmark from Cognac.

But the most successful acquisition of the company became the pawned factory of Nerses Tairov in 1899, a year after the death of Nikolay L. Shustov. His eldest son, Nikolay N. Shustov, took over the leadership of the company with his brothers, Pavel, Sergey and Vasyli, serving on the board.



Figure 19. Supplement to Budilnik No. 50, announcing Shustov's award at the 1900 World's Fair in Paris, France.

The Shustovs' cognac expansion into Ararat valley resulted in the opening of seven new branches in different parts of Armenia, forcing out small producers and accounting for 80% of Armenian cognac production. The major accomplishment for the company was the 1900 International Exhibition in Paris, France. Well

aware that only spirits produced in the territory of the French province of Cognac were allowed to carry the label “cognac” (Figure 18), Shustov sent (incognito) Fine Champaign Select, created by Mkrtich Musinian, for a blind testing; his cognac was awarded the Grand Prix (Figure 19).

Learning that the producer of this remarkable product was not French, an exception was made from traditional rules to allow Shustov to use the word “cognac” (not brandy!) on his labels. A total of 2,000 wholesalers (K. Depre, A. Arabaji, Yeliseyev brothers and more) were amongst his permanent clients.

In 1899, to manage the quality of the cognac and control over the technology of the production, Shustov invited Kirill Silchenko, a graduate of Nikitinskaya School of Winemaking, to join the firm. He devoted his life to the factory. He was called the Ukrainian son of the Armenian people, which was the highest honor people could attribute to a person of a different nationality.

To call Nikolay N. Shustov the King of P.R. is not to give him enough credit. Following the steps of his father, who hired students in Moscow to demand his brand of vodka, Shustov hired young men, dressed them accordingly, and paid for their travel to Europe and America with only one goal: along with a beautiful lady, they were to visit an expensive restaurant, ask for the best food and, when the table was laid, to demand Shustov cognac. When told that the name Shustov was never heard at that restaurant the young men were supposed to offer their apologies to the ladies, pay for the food they ordered without touching it and tell the restaurant

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Figure 21. 1905 Motor wagon on two-axle carriage, Vienesse style, with Shustov Cognac ad across the top (see inset).



Figure 20. The Shustov Bell.

management that they would never visit such an unworthy place again. Within months, restaurants around the globe started offering Shustov cognac, which enjoyed great success among clients. His domestic advertising was even more aggressive. Posters with his company sign, a copper bell (Figure 20), decorated sides of steamers and dirigibles, were screwed into horse carriages and even trams (Figure 21).

A most readable newspaper, *Niva*, would feature Shustov cognac advertising right under its masthead (Figure 22). Anecdotes were printed in newspapers, such as the following:

*Which fires are not to be put off?*

*When a lady is burning of shame.*

*When the flames of love envelope the heart.*

*When love-sick people through amorous glances.*

*When the soul is burning from a desire to savor a shot of Shustov cognac.*

It was also legend that famed Russian actress Tamara (no last name was ever known), while starring *Bespridannitsa* (*Without a Dowry*), a play by Ostrovskii, would demand Shustov cognac as a part of her role text, although when the play was written Shustov cognac was not yet being produced. For this little historical tale she was paid 1,500 rubles a month.

The advertising played its role; pretty soon, not only in Russia but abroad as well, people were talking about Shustov cognac. In 1912, Shustov & Sons Co. was awarded a privilege to become Suppliers of the Court of His Imperial Majesty, an honor that was given to a company that during the prior eight years received no single complaint on the quality of its product.

The 50th anniversary of the company was magnificently celebrated in 1913. Imagine unlimited cognac and wine and 60,000 rubles bonus to each worker! By that time the

annual turnover of the company totaled an enormous (for Russia) sum of 10 million rubles, and its assets were worth 6 million. Who would imagine that this would be the last successful year for the company? The war stopped everything. Production and sale of alcohol was prohibited by State Duma; per a 1915 report on excise duties, none of 14 factories in Erivan province were open.

Then, the October Revolution followed. All assets of Shustov & Sons were nationalized. Nikolay Shustov died in 1917 and his brothers petitioned the government of the Republic of Armenia in vain for return of the Erivan Cognac Factory.

The ultimate fate of the Shustov brothers in the post-revolutionary period is not researched; we only know that they did not emigrate and that Sergey authored a book, *Grape Wines, Cognacs, Vodkas and Mineral Waters*, in 1927.

*[Editor's Note: Part II of this feature, which ran in the February 2021 Enophilatelia, will appear in the November-December issue.]*



Figure 22. Niva newspaper; note advertising just below the masthead.

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# HISTORY OF COGNAC PRODUCTION IN ARMENIA

Igor Grigorian

## Part II – Cognac in Soviet Armenia

*Until you taste ARARAT brandy, you simply cannot understand what is unique about it.*

*Each of their brandies suits a particular moment in life.*

–From ARARAT Factory website

*[Editor's Note: Part I of this feature, which ran in the February 2021 Enophilatelica, appeared in the September-October issue of Topical Time.]*

Shustov's cognac and wine production ceased to exist after the revolution. Petitions of surviving brothers of Nikolai Shustov remained unanswered. Their assets in Armenia and elsewhere were nationalized. So, what happened next?

Revolutionary turmoil was unable to shake the significance of alcohol production. Revolutions are accompanied with looting and pogroms; Armenia was not an exception. Mkrtich Musinian, Kirill Silchenko and Levon Oganov, who were still working at the factory, with personal bravery and decisiveness, protected the spirits still in the aging oak casks. The loss of the reserves could have destroyed the future of the production itself. Global nationalization started and, although it was killing private entrepreneurs, it had a positive effect on the cognac production; nationalization helped the factory to survive. In 1923 the factory, together with

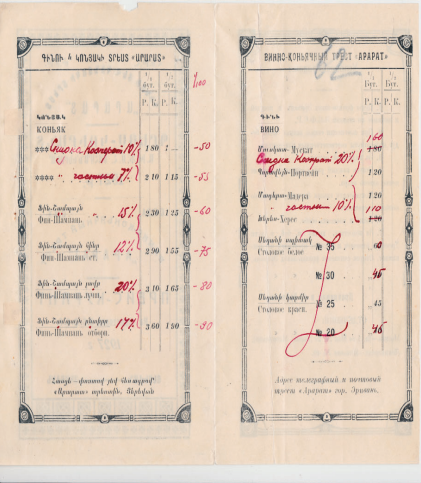
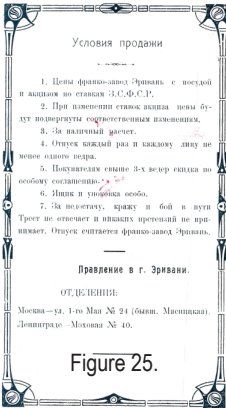
other alcohol-making companies, joined (or were they forced to join?) the newly established Ararat Trust. Figure 23 depicts barrel storage at the Ararat Factory (lithographed picture postcard published in France, photo by Baudiniere circa 1920s). Nothing had yet changed at the time in the process of pressing grapes (Figure 24 shows grapes being put in pressing machine).



Figure 23.



Figure 24.



One of the gems of my collection is a 1927 price list of the Wine & Cognac Trust Ararat (Figure 25), which regulated prices in the territory of the Transcaucasia Soviet Socialist Republic. It also states that the Trust had departments in Moscow (at 21 1st of May Street, previously Myasnitckaya, and in Leningrad at 40 Makhovaya Street). At the time, cognac produced at the Ararat Trust factory in Yerevan was divided into the following categories (Figure 25a, left column): The right column of the inlay showed prices for the wines also produced by the Trust. As we are referring to only cognac production, that part is out of the scope of this article.

*** 3 stars	1 ruble, 80 kopeks	1 bottle
**** 4 stars	2 rubles, 10 kopeks	1 bottle
	1.15 rubles	½ bottle
Fine Champaign	2 rubles, 30 kopeks	1 bottle
	1.25 rubles	½ bottle
Fine Champaign Old	2 rubles, 90 kopecks	1 bottle
	1.55 rubles	½ bottle
Fine Champaign Better	3 rubles, 10 kopecks	1 bottle
	1.65 rubles	½ bottle
Fine Champaign Selected	3 rubles, 60 kopecks	1 bottle
	1.90 rubles	½ bottle

Figure 25a.

In 1928 Maxim Gorki (Figure 26), the revolution singer and poet, associate of Lenin and Stalin and number

one writer of the Soviet period, visited the Armenian land. During his stay in Yerevan he was offered a tour of the Ararat wine



Figure 27.





Figure 28.

factory, in the basement of which the admired guest abundantly tasted the strong content of the barrels. They say that he pronounced his well-known words in this very place, “Maybe it’s easier to get on Ararat mountain, than from the basement of Ararat.”

A new period of cognac production in Armenia began in 1927 when

Margar Sedrakian (Figure 27) started working at the Ararat wine factory. Born in 1907 in Kharakonis Village, Van Vilayet, Ottoman Empire, he was raised in an orphanage after his parents were massacred during the genocide. He did not know his last name, only his first (Margar) and his father’s name, Sedrak, so he was given a last name derived from this: Sedrakian. While working at the factory, M. Sedrakian graduated from the Yerevan Agricultural Institute in 1930.

Margar Sedrakian created his first cognac in 1937. He wanted to name it Armenia, but the famous Armenian poet and writer Avetik Isahakian (Figure 28) talked him out of it; scary times of mass repression, executions and exiles were behind the doors. To avoid being charged with nationalism, Sedrakian named the cognac Jubilee. He created his Armenia later, in 1940.



Figure 29.

Many legends are told about Margar Sedrakian. Anastas Mikoyan, a prominent Soviet political figure, called him “A Man Who Cheated Stalin.” The story goes that during WWII all USSR factories producing alcohol were considered to be of military importance, as they were delivering spirits to the soldiers. Officers, in turn, were supplied with cognac spirits. Stalin decreed that all spirits were to be shipped to the army, leaving at the factories only ready-made cognac (which was, of course, of much lower proof). Margar Sedrakian,



Figure 30.



Figure 31.

being a member of the Central Tasting Committee, had a trusty relationship with another member, Comrade Snegovskaya. They made a plan to print 1,000 labels of a non-existent cognac, Artashat, and approve it, backdating it to March 1941. Thus, the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic was able to preserve all its reserves of cognac spirits.

Another legend is related to creating Dvin cognac (Figure 29). In 1937, Papanin was about to embark on an expedition to the North Pole (Figures 30 and 31). All Soviet republics took part in supplying the team with various goods and products: Belarusians provided warm clothes, Ukrainians salo (fat or pig lard), Armenians – cognac. There was an article printed in the *Pravda* newspaper displaying the Papanin team photograph next to



Figure 32.

a barrel of cognac and a letter where the team complained that the 42-proof cognac was not keeping them warm enough. A question was raised before cognac producers: Was it possible to create higher-proof cognacs? And Margar Sedrakian brilliantly answered the challenge by creating his 50-proof Dvin cognac.

Although Sedrakian worked hard and had friends in the higher echelons of the Soviet government, he was not exempt from false accusations and repression. In 1946 he was arrested on the pretense that he had works by Yeghishe Charents (who was arrested as a public enemy and died in a prison hospital, Figure 32) in his library. The fact that Sedrakian was ordered to mine the factory, which he refused to do and returned explosives to the KGB, also played a role in his arrest. He was ordered to exile to Siberia, but his friend Anastas Mikoyan falsified documents and sent him to the Ukraine instead, to give a push to the cognac factory. There Sedrakian created two brands, Odessa (1948) and Ukraine (1949).



Figure 33 (above).



Figure 34 (below).



remained in Odessa for the rest of his life, but fate decided differently; he returned to Yerevan in a few years due to Winston Churchill's interference, per another controversial legend. The fact that Churchill tasted the Armenian Dvin cognac is undeniable, but whether it happened at the Tehran (Figure 33) or Yalta Conference (Figure 34) of the Big Three is debatable. It is said that Churchill appreciated the drink and Stalin ordered a quarterly delivery of 10 boxes of 20 bottles each to him. While Sedrakian was in exile in Odessa, the reserves of the Dvin blend were depleted and the current personnel in the factory did not know its recipe.

In the late 1940s (per other sources, in 1951), Churchill noticed that the taste of the drink had changed and asked his staff to relate this to Stalin. (Other sources say he wrote him a letter, which is not supported by any archive documents).

Stalin ordered an investigation and was told that Sedrakian was exiled to Siberia, but could not be found

Figure 35.





anywhere there. During a meeting with Stalin, Mikoyan told him that Sedrakian was arrested, based on a ridiculous charge and was currently in Odessa. Stalin demanded his return to Yerevan. What Margar Sedrakian did was unheard of – he would agree to return on the condition that his arrest record was squashed and his years in Odessa were counted as a business trip. The condition was honored and Sedrakian returned to Yerevan to continue working on the creation of new brands of the Armenian cognac. He was also awarded Hero of Socialist Labor (Figure 35) in 1971.

The following is a list of all brands created by the Master (Figure 36 and listing):

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1937: Jubilee (Hobelyanakan, 43 proof, aged more than 10 years) | 1949: Ukraine  |
| 1939: Selected (Entir, 40 proof, aged 7 years)                  | 1955: Festive (Tonakan, 42 proof, aged more than 15 years)                                     |
| 1940: Armenia (45 proof, aged 10 years)                         | 1957: 40-year-old (40 proof)   |
| 1941: Artashat (see next, never created)                        | 1967: Akhtamar (40 proof, aged 10 years)   |
| 1942: Dvin (50 proof, aged 10 years)                            | 1967: 50-year-old (40 proof)   |
| 1947: Yerevan (57 proof, aged 10 years)                         | 1977: Vaspurakan (created based on his recipe, released posthumously, 40 proof, aged 15 years) |
| 1948: Odessa  |  |

After his death in 1973, Sedrakian's legacy was immortalized by yet another memento – a monument to the Master was erected near the Ararat Cognac Factory (Figure 37). The 105th Anniversary of his birth was widely celebrated in Yerevan, and the invitation to the festivities depicted a bottle of Dvin cognac (Figure 38 and 38a).

Towards the end of the 1940s the demand for the production increased as the cognac became extremely popular in the USSR. The territory

Figure 36.

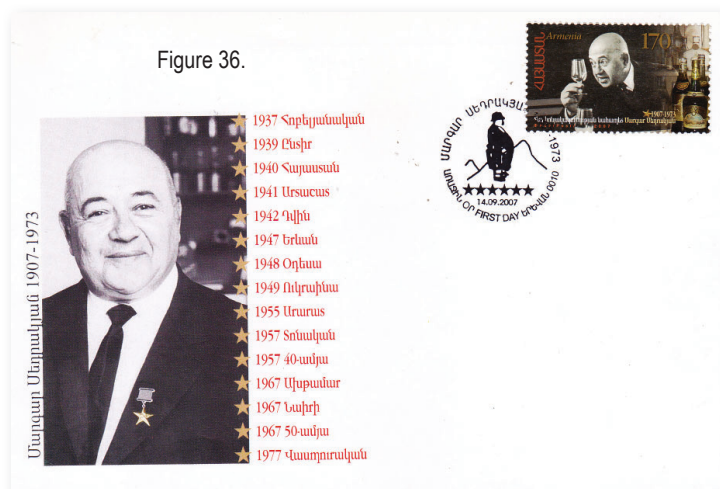


Figure 37.

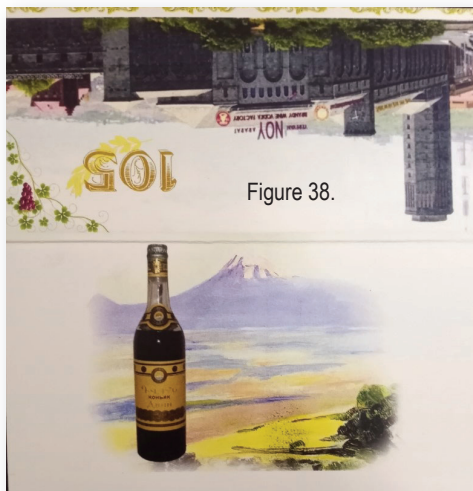


Figure 38.

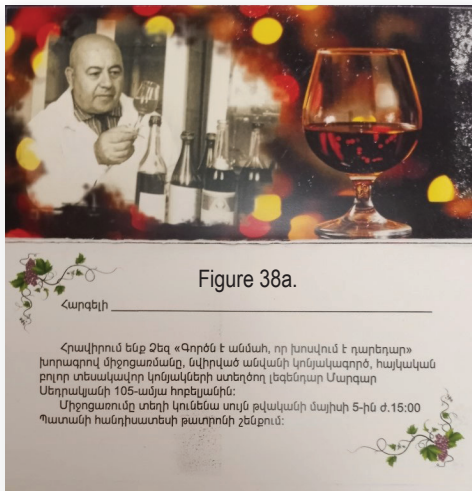


Figure 38a.

Հարգելի

Հրավիրում ենք Ձեզ «Գործն է անմահ, որ խոսվում է դարերդար» խորագրով միջոցառմանը, նվիրված անվանի կոնյակագործ, հայկական բոլոր տեսակավոր կոնյակների ստեղծող լեգենդար Մարգար Սեդրակյանի 105-ամյա հոբելյանին:

Միջոցառումը տեղի կունենա տյժն Բժականի մայիսի 5-ին ժ.15:00  
Պատանի հանդիսատեսի քատրորնի շենքում:

of the old factories and workshops became inadequate for effective operation and, in 1953, cognac and distillation combined workshops moved to a factory that was specially designed for cognac production, thus creating Yerevan Cognac Factory. The building was constructed on a hill where Sardar's Palace was situated before the revolution (Figure 39). The territory of the new factory occupied eight hectares (roughly 20 acres) in the center of Yerevan. The new building is presented on a 1982 postal stationery item (Figure 40) and the architect, Hovhannes Margarian, on a postal card mailed intercity Yerevan (Figure 41).

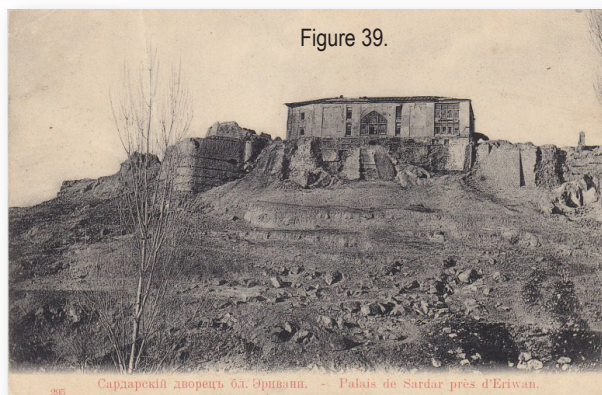


Figure 39.

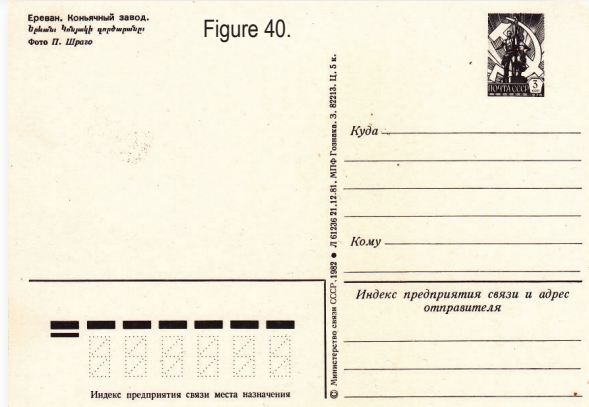


Figure 40.

When the construction of the Government Building No. 2 was completed (around 1953) Ararat Trust moved into that building (architect H. Margarian, with M. Grigorian S. Safarian). Figure 42 shows that building on a postcard mailed circa 1960 from Yerevan to France with correct international airmail postage of 1r 60kop.

We also know that Yerevan Cognac Factory used to have a special cover for advertising and business matters. All my efforts to find one used during the Soviet times



have been in vain. In 2003, when a cognac-grape stamp was issued by Armenia, several such covers appeared on the market in Armenia. Probably, somebody had a few envelopes from the old times and used them to create philatelic items. I was able to obtain one (Figure 43 and 43a, front and back of cover), which was mailed intercity Yerevan as registered, although the postage was substantially overpaid (300 dram instead of required 85 dram for a registered postcard).

During the Soviet period, Armenian winemakers were at the height of fame. In 1940-85, cognac production increased 17-fold. Almost



Հովհաննես ՄԱՐԳԱՐՅԱՆ, 1901-1963. Հովհաննես ՄԱՐԳԱՐՅԱՆ, 1901-1963. Հովհաննես ՄԱՐԳԱՐՅԱՆ, 1901-1963. Հովհաննես ՄԱՐԳԱՐՅԱՆ, 1901-1963.

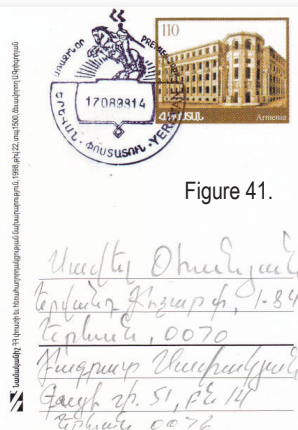


Figure 41.



Figure 42.

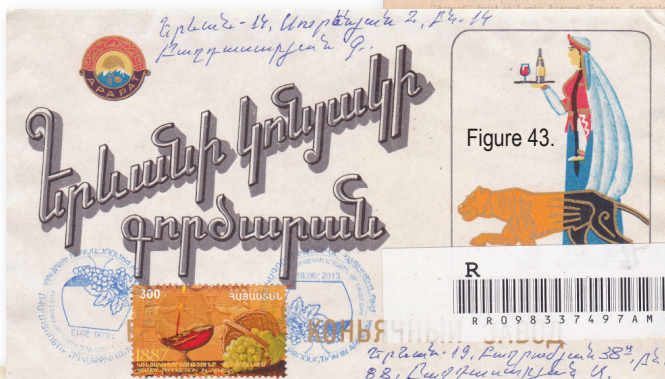


Figure 43.

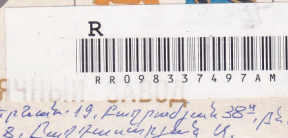


Figure 43a.

every brand produced at Yerevan Cognac Factory received high-level international awards at regular and blind tastings.

So what makes Armenian cognac distinct from cognac produced in other countries? The secret of flavor is that Ararat cognac gently affects all five senses, thanks to its unique characteristics: deep amber color, vivid aroma, rich taste with a velvety texture and long aftertaste.



The other secret is the climate. Long-term observations in the Ararat valley (Figure 44), located at 700 m above sea level, have shown that the valley enjoys 300 sunny days a year. These conditions cause a high concentration of aromatic substances and sugars in the grapes.



Figure 44.



From top: Figures 46, 47 and 48.



Figure 45.

In addition, there are nearly 30 soil varieties in the Ararat valley. As a result, the same grape variety can have multiple taste nuances, which is another characteristic of the Ararat cognacs. Almost always (except for several years after the collapse of the Soviet Union)

Ararat cognac was produced from local grape varieties, such as Voskehat (translated as Golden, Figure 45), Kangun (translated as Stable, Figure 46), Mskhali (Figure 47), Garan Dmak (Yeanling Fat Tail, Figure 48), Chilar, and Rkatsiteli (Figure 49). Transplanted to other areas these grape varieties either do not take root at all or lose their unique character. These grapes' intense aroma and rich taste transform into a delicate, long aftertaste, with notes of vanilla, dried fruits and chocolate. The color varies from pale flax in young cognacs to a deep, darker amber in aged cognacs.



Figure 49.

which grows in Armenia. Such barrels were used almost exclusively, but manufacturing from the Caucasian Oak was interrupted in 1990s and was resumed only in 2002. Famous in Europe for its dense rose-tinted structure, barrels made of Armenian oak complement the taste of vanilla, chocolate and dried fruit already present from the distilled local grape varieties.

The 1990s saw a big change in the way cognac was produced in Armenia, but this will be a topic for another time. ☐