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***A ONE THOUSAND YEARS OLD "VITIS VINIFERA SILVESTRIS"
HAS BEEN FOUND IN SARDINIA (ITALY)***

UN « VITIS VINIFERA SILVESTRIS » DE MILLE ANS D'ÂGE
A ETE TROUVE EN SARDAIGNE (ITALIE)

—————
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The *Vitis vinifera silvestris* is the ancestor of around 99% of cultivated grape varieties in the world. For millions of years the *Vitis vinifera silvestris* grew spontaneously in the forest, but according to the Bible, after the Flood (about ten thousand years b.C.), Noah started for the first time to cultivate it on the Ararat Mountain. The wider acclimatization and the human selection led to the development of hermaphrodites and the emergence of "*Vitis vinifera sativa*" Thus more than twenty thousand selected varieties appeared for the first time in the Neolithic age (six thousand years b.C.) in Caucasus, Mesopotamia and Anatolia, and went on the following thousands of years 'till it reached the central Europe during the Roman period.

Acclimatization of the *V.v.silvestris* is therefore not restricted to one area, and varieties have different genetic origin, that the Russian Negrul has classified in three major groups called *Proles orientalis*, *Proles pontica* and *Proles occidentalis*, the last two named being the most internationally predominant. The American and Asian varieties have been discovered more recently.

The acclimatization of *V.v.silvestris* all over Italy started three thousand years b.C. with the selection of the native grape varieties. In Calabria, Lazio, Toscana and Sardinia regions we can still find *V.v.silvestris*, some very old; but also in the North of Italy in Alto Adige region close to the Castle of Katzenzungen there is a pergola of *Vitis vinifera sativa*, Versoaln variety, which is 350 years old.

Therefore it's not surprise if in Urzulei (Sardinia region) at the bottom of a wooded valley known as Bacu Bidalesti, shepherds know since centuries about this *V.v.silvestris*, thousands of years old, huge growth, with a real liana shape, having a trunk of 135 cm circumference at the base and from there some large and twisted trunks branch off and may be longer than 40 meters, and their branches stand above the foliage of the supporting trees in the wood (figures 1, 2, 3). The age of the vine has been evaluated from the following observations :

- The circumference of the main trunk and the secondary trunks, in general relation with the number of ring-ages, and also the length;
- The presence of wild grapes attested by the local people and the traditional culture, in particular among generations of shepherds of goat and sheep;
- The vicinity of archeologic antiquities belonging to old civilizations;
- The ¹⁴C dating of pips of *V.v.silvestris* classified of the bronze age (1350-1150 a.C.) in the SaOsa site in Sardinia (Occhesu et al., 2014).

This extraordinary example is a male (unproductive), but close there are about 20 females and hermaphrodites that carry bunches. The grapevines are likely to come from grape seeds strewed by birds. You may well distinguish between males, females and hermaphrodites especially if you pay attention to flowers, seeds, berries and leaves (whole in the spontaneous ones, penta-lobated in the hermaphrodite ones).

Ancient communities (these called civiltà nuragiche) have inhabited the area where this thousand years old *V.v.silvestris* has been found (in Ogliastra district - Sardinia), and signs of various villages have been found here and one of this is considered to be established by deported converted Hebrews during Tibere's reign. These Hebrews built the Sant'Aronau Church and nowadays you can see only the ruins of it. Maybe this old *V.v.silvestris* has grown from a seed in the waste, just like a sit happened for the *V.v.silvestris* in many other countries.

After a long walk on an old mule track (see annex), one of my past Cattolica University student and I reached the place where the *V.v.silvestris* is, and during the following successful conference held in Urzulei (Sardinia) I put forward some proposals for the safeguarding and enhancing this *V.v.silvestris* both for genetic studies, research (e.g. the not simple dating of the find with the carbon-14 dating) for nutraceutical wines and products considered the high level of resveratrol, polyphenols, and touristic reasons (for example a "*Vitis silvestris* museum").

Considering that in the Urzulei municipality there are lot of very old plants and lot of environmental, material and intangible heritage coming from the farming culture, one could also draw up a report / application in order to register in the list of the UNESCO Heritage even including the other areas of Sardinia where there are other *V.v.silvestris* (Lovicu,Bacchetta et coll.).

I would like to highlight that this thousand years old *V.v.silvestris* is an outstanding UNESCO World heritage, and it's the only one so old in the world and therefore worthy of such UNESCO Award.



Figures 1, 2, 3. Different views of the very old *Vitis vinifera silvestris* of Sardinia. Notice the development of the trunks.

Annexe

Le PAV imagines like this the wild grape prospector travelling on donkey-back or mule-back.

