**Chestnut beer, *Corsica-Cola*, and wine bottles: the commodification of Corsican in the linguistic and semiotic landscapes of the island’s drinks industry[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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**Introduction**

The questions of the commodification of languages have been approached from different perspectives, several of which enhance the understanding of the use of Corsican in commercial activity. In an early contribution to this discussion, the German philosopher and sociologist Simmel, writing in 1907, argues that an object is valued because of the values it possesses (2004: 57), and that ‘the same object can have the highest degree of value for one soul and the lowest for another’ (*ibid.*: 59). In Appadurai’s words (1986: 3), value is ‘not an inherent property of objects, but is a judgment made about them by subjects’. Appadurai extends Simmel’s discussion of value into the realm of the commodification of objects, and identifies temporal, conceptual, and cultural frameworks which are, to his mind, prerequisites for the commodification process. Commodification, Appadurai argues, is posited on a set of cultural assumptions and standards, and that in the modern era, the ‘commodity phase’, during which an object enjoys value, is normally temporary (*ibid.*: 16).

The analysis of the commodification of language has evolved from this initial position, and – within sociolinguistics – is articulated in particular by Heller and Duchêne. Heller (2003: 474) asserts that in the new globalized economy, language is commodified as a measurable skill, an inalienable characteristic of group members, and a marker of authenticity. Whilst the ability to speak Corsican is a potential aspect of the commodification of the language on the island, this article will explore in particular the extent to which the Corsican language is a characteristic of Corsican-ness, as well as a marker of value and authenticity in the economic market on the island. Heller and Duchêne (2012) explore critically the evolution of the commodification of languages, highlighting the shift to language as capital in late modernity. In particular, they identify five processes during this commodification process, of which the third, known as ‘distinction’ (*ibid.*: 2012) is most germane to this discussion of the Corsican drinks industry. Distinction is the characteristic whereby value is added to an object, which Heller and Duchêne (*ibid.*: 9) argue is achieved ‘by harnessing identity symbols (or “pride”) to define symbolically distinctive goods and niche markets’. In this discussion, we evaluate the extent to which the Corsican language is an identity symbol deployed by the manufacturers of Corsican drinks. This echoes the link articulated by Tan and Rubdy (2008) between language and value whereby they argue that indigenous languages are imperative in the retention of ‘cultural integrity’, and that, in an echo of Simmel’s original argumentation, in the commodification of language, covert and overt values can be assigned to languages.

**1. The Corsican drinks industry**

In this article, we seek to understand better how the Corsican language is commodified within a specific part of the island’s economy, namely the drinks industry. France’s national statistics agency, INSEE, categorises the drinks industry as part of the food sector, and reports that this area of economic activity accounts for 45% of industry on Corsica.[[2]](#footnote-2) INSEE also notes that, in 2012, the drinks industry was one of the most profitable sectors of the island’s economy, and strikingly more so than its competitors on mainland France.[[3]](#footnote-3) More generally, INSEE confirm that, since the economic crash of 2008, the regional economy has focussed in particular on the local and tourist markets, rather than concentrating on exports,[[4]](#footnote-4) although drinks make up a large proportion of the 15% of the island’s exports accounted for by the food industry in 2007.[[5]](#footnote-5) Pavlenko (2012: 37) finds that Russian is used in the labelling of speciality products, such as tea and vodka, which are found exclusively in contact zones catering for tourists. Although it is of course plausible that visitors to Corsica are potential consumers of wine, beer, and water, we focus here on the commodification of Corsican for a domestic audience. For the purposes of this discussion, we examine the products from a cross-section of Corsican drinks companies. For the water industry, we concentrate on three business, namely *Orezza* (with a turnover of €6.8 million in 2012), *St Georges* (€5.7 million), and *Zilia* (€3.5 million), whilst the brewers *Brasserie Pietra* produce three of the beers and both soft drinks (€14.2 million), in comparison with *Torra*, brewed by *Socobo Ajaccio* (€5.5 million). One of the challenges of this kind of research is the nature of the contemporary drinks market. The breadth of manufacturers is particularly wide, and we do not pretend that the corpus used for this research is complete – given the turbulence of the market, where new brands are launched or old wineries go out of business, it is not only impractical to seek to record all the actors in the market, but such an attempt would provide a peculiarly synchronic evaluation of what is a strikingly dynamic situation. Therefore, we analyse here two carbonated soft drinks, three varieties of bottled water, four brands of beer, and forty-eight bottles of wine. Given the breadth of the corpus of wine bottles and the relatively small selection of other drinks, the approach to this analysis will be a mixed economy. For the water, beer, and soft drinks, we will focus on a close analysis of each label in turn. For the wine labels, we will present an overview of the quantitative data from the corpus, and subsequently discuss the semiotic resources deployed by the various wineries.

In seeking to understand the extent to which Corsican has been commodified in the drinks industry, we have also been guided by the research undertaken by Thurlow and Aiello (2007), who devised a typology for airline tailfins. The question we are seeking to answer here is the extent to which the Corsican language has become a semiotic resource within the Corsican drinks industry. As Cavanaugh and Shankar (2014: 52) contend, ‘capitalist producers use regional identities and aspects of heritage to construct and marker cultural productions they hope will be construed as “authentic” in regional and global markets, and we aim here to gauge the significance of Corsican as a minoritised language in its use in marketing. Moreover, we aim to discern the symbolic capital enjoyed by the Corsican language in relation to other resources deployed on product labelling. Although we do not propose here a hierarchy of these resources – of which the Corsican language is one element – we seek to comment on the relative value attributed to symbols, images, and the regional language by virtue of their presence (and/or absence) on bottles of wine, soft drinks, and cans of beer.

**2. The Drinks Corpus – Soft Drinks**

Within this sub-corpus of soft drinks, we examine the labelling of two carbonated drinks, and three brands of mineral water. Different approaches to the use of Corsican, as well as icons related to the island, are attested within this small corpus, and here we sketch out the ways in which the regional language is deployed, often in relation to images which resonate locally. We investigate the labels for *Corsica-Cola*, the island’s version of the popular soft drink, which discuss briefly elsewhere (Blackwood 2014) and a lemonade, *Limunata Carina*, both of which are produced by the *Pietra* brewery. Both drinks are named in Corsican, although the potential consumer of *Limunata Carina* needs a greater understanding of Corsican. Whereas the Corsican used for *Corsica-Cola* does not require a particularly wide knowledge of the regional language, *Limunata Carina* is distinct from a putative French-language translation of its name (which might be something akin to ‘*Jolie Limonade*’ meaning rather prosaically ‘nice lemonade’). As on the French mainland, bottled water is an important industry, and in addition to international brands, such as *Evian*, *Vittel*, and *Perrier*, there are several local products, of which we will consider three in this sub-corpus. Arguably the most well-known brand is the still water bottled by *St Georges*, based 16 miles (25km) south of the island’s administrative capital, Ajaccio. A newer brand than *St Georges*, *Zilia* is named after the village in which the water is sourced, almost 100 miles (150km) north of Ajaccio. *Orezza* is the most widely sold brand of local sparkling water, which is treated and bottled at its source in the village of Rapaghju, 80 miles (128km) north-east of Ajaccio. The first commercial bottling of the water began in 1856, and eventually ceased in 1995, only to be revived in 2000. The spring is owned by the regional council of the *département* Haute-Corse, but was initially leased to the company *Société Nouvelle d'Exploitation des Eaux Minérales d'Orezza* until 2018, and is under discussion in 2019.

*2.1. (Almost) Duplicating Translations*

*Corsica-Cola* is interesting both from the perspective of the product’s semiotic landscape, as well as the manufacturer’s approach to multilingualism in labelling. In terms of language choices on the cans, the producers of *Corsica-Cola* make extensive use of both Corsican and French, and based on the corpus discussed here, this is unique in the Corsican drinks industry. France is well-known for its highly prescriptive language management strategies; Spolsky (2004: 63) describes the country as ‘the paradigmatic case for strong ideology and management’. This reputation has been earned and maintained by the language legislation passed to govern the use of languages in the commercial activity. As discussed elsewhere (Blackwood & Tufi 2012), the most notable law is the Toubon law of 1994, which mandates for the use of French in the sale and operation of commercial goods, whereby all information given in any language must also be provided in French, and as legible or intelligible as the text in the other language. Brand names are exempt from the provisions of the law.

In terms of the linguistic landscape of *Corsica-Cola* products, the manufacturers largely adopt a duplicating approach to the translation of information cans of the cola drink (Reh, 2004: 8), whereby the same text is repeated in more than one language. The instruction to serve chilled is present in both French, ‘*Servir frais*’, and in Corsican, ‘*Da serve frescu*’. Information on the expiry date is also given in both languages. Only the ingredients and the advice to keep the product out of direct sunlight appear only in French. From the perspective of a code hierarchy (Scollon & Scollon 2003: 119), the fact that the writing runs vertically up the sides of the can mean that it is not straightforward to identify whether French or Corsican is in the dominant, upper position. However, when information is presented side-by-side, such as the product’s expiry date, the French language version appears vertically, and above the Corsican-language text. *Corsica-Cola* complies with legislation on the use of languages other than French, but ultimately privileges the national standard language in its labelling in three ways. First, from a quantitative perspective, more information is given in French than in Corsican. Second, using Reh’s typology, fragmentary multilingualism characterises the cans, where the full information is provided in French and only parts are also given in Corsican; specifically, the ingredients, the manufacturer’s address, and the storage advice are only given in French. Third, in terms of the code preference, whilst the company exploits the ambiguity of writing vertically, meaning that it is more difficult to discern an upper and a lower position in the hierarchy, when the two languages are placed together, French appears first.

The translation strategy for *Limunata Carina* differs from that of *Corsica-Cola.* Whilst the information as to where the product is made is given in French and then in Corsican (‘*Fabriqué par / Fatta pà:*’), as well as the best-before date, the address is given in French, as are the ingredients, and the drinks tag-line: ‘*Limonade corse aux arômes naturels de citron*’. As with *Corsica-Cola*, space is given to Corsican on the labelling, but the full information provided on the labels is given in French, with only a partial version in Corsican. On the back of the bottle, the label providing extra marketing information about the manufacture of the drink, and the intended pleasure to be derived from its consumption, is given in French only.

*2.2. Splashes of Corsican*

The labelling of bottled water has, in some cases, been revisited over recent years, and in the case of *Zilia*, has increased the use of Corsican on its bottles, indexing a rise in the value of the language. Earlier incarnations of the labels on *Zilia* water supplemented the name of the brand by a slogan in French, not Corsican: ‘*L’eau de source des montagnes corses*’ (‘Spring water from Corsican mountains’) Initially, therefore, there was no place for the regional language, and the identification of the water with the island was explicit in the slogan, rather than articulated through the commodification of the language. However, in the new labels from 2014, an outline image of the island of Corsica appears behind the wording, and an alternative tag-line is present in Corsican, which reads ‘*Acqua di Surgente Muntagnola Nustrale*’ (‘Spring water from our mountains’). There is a clear but subtle change in the significance of the Corsican-language version, where the first-person plural possessive adjective is deployed, thereby appropriating the mountains as belonging to both the manufacturer, *Zilia*, and the (potential) consumer. Not only is the Corsican language commodified in the new labelling for *Zilia* water, but for a domestic audience, the product is lexically localized in a way in which the French text is at the very least ambiguous in terms of its referential relationship.

The label on *Orezza* is dominated by the name of the village where the water is bottled, and a blue-and-white image of the nineteenth-century fountain house built over the spring, a stylised image of which is reproduced above and below the name. Barely legible is a line of French and Corsican, which reads ‘*Source Sorgente Sottana*’ – a duplication in French and then in Corsican of the term ‘spring’, qualified in Corsican by the expression for ‘down there’ or ‘below’ used as a toponym. The spring is named as ‘the spring down there’ or such an equivalent, but the term for spring is first iterated in French, not least to index mineral water to a francophone consumer. Much more prominent is the French explanation at the top of the label, although there is a visible flash of multilingualism on each bottle, where the label includes the three words ‘Sparkling – gazeuse – frizzante’ – in English, French and Italian. In other words, the label design is not doggedly monolingual, and the appeal of the product to a non-francophone public is acknowledged with the key information – namely the variety of water – provided in three languages. Even the shared ownership between the public and private sectors has not prompted a greater use of the Corsican language – since the 2009 publication of the Corsican Language Charter by the island-wide authorities, islanders, businesses, and local government have been encouraged to make the regional language more visible in the public space. However, this has not heralded a change in the design of labels for *Orezza*; as a resource, Corsican is barely present on the labelling for this sparkling water. Greater visual importance is given to the images which index the history of *Orezza* as a drink of long-standing, rather than to the island’s regional language.

*2.3. Hiding the Regional Language*

In 1998, *St Georges* took the decision to rebrand their packaging, using the famous Parisian agency Philippe Starck. Initially, the rebranded bottles included a single line in Corsican: ‘*Acqua linda di i nosci muntagni*’ (‘Fresh water from our mountains’), but a decade after the initial rebranding exercise, the labels were modified again and the tag-line in Corsican was dropped. Each bottle now only carries the line in French ‘*Eau de source corse*’ (‘Corsican spring water’). Unusually, the Corsican-language slogan has now been placed on the inside of the label, and can only be seen and read if the label is removed; it is not even visible whilst you drink the contents. There is no invitation on the label to peel it back to reveal the Corsican-language phrase. Whilst the product is still identified explicitly with Corsica, *St Georges* has erased the regional language from the visible aspect of its product. In Appadurai’s terms, in the eyes of the manufacturers of *St Georges*, Corsican no longer enjoys the ‘commodity candidacy’ (1986: 13-14); in other words, the value of the language appears to have decreased in commercial terms, prompting its erasure from a privileged and highly visible position. The reconfiguration of languages on the labelling coincides with *St Georges* expansion beyond the island’s market and across mainland France, suggesting that whilst the Corsican language adds value on Corsica, it does not carry the same currency across the Ligurian Sea in continental France.

For *Zilia*, the value of the Corsican language has increased during the same period when its value was felt to have decreased for the manufacturers of *St Georges*. This suggests that the commodification of a language is not universal, even within a relatively small community, such as the internal Corsican market on an island of 320,000 individuals. Instead, there is a relativity to the value ascribed to language in the economic market, and for *St Georges*, that value is diminishing.

*2.4. Moor’s Heads and Island Outlines*

As for the semiotic landscape of the soft drinks sub-corpus, the cans of *Corsica-Cola* each feature the Moor’s Head, the superlative icon for representing visually the island and one which is used by many businesses, associations, and civic authorities as pictorial shorthand for Corsica. This is the first visual element to be identified for the typology of semiotic resources used in the Corsican drinks industry. Since the Middle Ages, the emblem of the Kings of Aragon has been the Moor’s Head, and whilst Aragon failed to conquer Corsica successfully, the motif has come to represent the island. As Carrington (1984: 201) highlights, Pascal Paoli in his capacity as leader of an independent Corsica in the 1790s adopted the emblem as the flag of Corsica. The Moor’s Head enjoys widespread value as a semiotic resource, and despite identification with nationalist movements during the 1970s, has been reappropriated by Corsican civic society, and features now as the legal emblem of Corsica, as seen on car number plates and on flags flown from official buildings, including local government offices, schools, and public buildings. In conjunction with the use of the Corsican language, we can therefore argue that a Corsican identity is twice commodified by *Corsica-Cola.* First, there are the examples of duplicating translation, which feature the prestigious national standard language and the valued regional language; second, we note the visual dominance of the emblematic Moor’s Head on the product labelling.

*Limunata Carina* makes extensive use of another resource in the typology of semiotic symbols used by the island’s drinks industry, namely the outline of Corsica; on the labels, it appears as a lush, green island, surrounded by the bubbles from the lemonade. With a Corsican-language brand name, an image of the island, and a tag-line which indexes explicitly Corsica, the manufacturers clearly perceive a value in identifying the drink with its Corsican production. This approach is deployed by *Zilia* who use the image of a mountain as the background to the label, and furthermore articulate semoitically the link between the water and its provenance through the background outline of Corsica’s coastline in an echo of the labels for *Limunata Carina*.

**3. The Drinks Corpus – Beer**

In terms of alcoholic drinks, there are four main beers bottled on the island, three of which (*Pietra*, *Colomba*, and *Serena*) are produced by the same brewery, *Pietra,* which is also the parent company for *Corsica-Cola*. The fourth beer examined here is branded as *Torra*, brewed by *Brasserie de Corse.*

*3.1. International vs. Local Multilingualism*

As with the sub-corpus of soft drinks, labelling on beer is not monolingual, although the extent to which the Corsican language is deployed on cans of beer is less than for water or carbonated drinks. The beers investigated here are named in Corsican; *Pietra*, *Colomba*,and *Serena* are proper nouns, whilst *Torra* means ‘tower’. The island’s best-selling beer, *Pietra*, is named after the village in which the company’s proprietor was born, although *Pietra* is the Tuscanized version of the village Petra, meaning that the brewery have selected a Tuscan-French rather than a Corsican name for the beer. Nevertheless, *Pietra* employs the most Corsican on its label, including in the subtitle of the product name: *‘Pietra – biera corsa’* (‘Pietra – Corsican beer’). In addition, the labels bear the legend ‘*Biera accumudàta cù a castagna*’ (‘Beer made with chestnuts’) on the left-hand side, with the same information duplicated in French on the right-hand side. Within Scollon and Scollon’s code preference hierarchy (2003), this places the Corsican version in the prestigious, dominant position, challenging the traditional hegemony of French in product labelling in France. Beyond the duplication of information in Corsican and French, along the very top of the labels reads a description of the contents in Italian, German, English, and Spanish. Here, the presence of other languages indicates a presence on an international market where multilingualism has added value, unlike the case of *St Georges* where the use of Corsican and French on the labels was slimmed down to include only French. The details on the label on the back of the bottle do not include the Corsican language, and Italian is also dropped from the repertoire. *Pietra* is clearly a product designed for the international market, and is indeed available in the UK, and one which accentuates its Corsican identity through the regional language, and other semiotic resources. Unlike *St Georges*, for whom Corsican has lost its commodity candidacy, *Pietra* use multilingual labels that accord a key role to Corsican, although not, for example, in the conveying of the ingredients.

Bottles of *Colomba* feature no Corsican language on them, despite being brewed and bottled by the same business as *Pietra.* The labels on this beer are not monolingual, and include information in English, German, Italian and Spanish, in addition to French. However, not a word of Corsican (not even the word for beer) is to be found. The third beer brewed by the *Pietra* brewery is *Serena,* a malt beer. The text conveying this information is written in French, as is its description a lager. The labels for *Serena* also bear the legend ‘*Biera corsa*’ (‘Corsican beer’) in Corsican, but do not use the regional language elsewhere in the labelling. Like *Pietra* and *Colomba*, these drinks are prepared for retail on the international market, and *Serena* features the same four languages as *Pietra* does along the top of the labelling, noting in Spanish, Italian, French, and English (but not German this time) that the bottle contains beer. From this, we conclude that there is a role for Corsican in localizing the beer and indexing Corsica in terms of its provenance, but the regional language does not extensively perform a communicative function.

*3.2. Flora and Fauna as Semiotic Resources*

*Torra* introduces new resources into the typology for Corsican drinks labels, namely the maquis (the dense shrubs which grow wild across the island), and a mouflon, a breed of formerly wild sheep found across Corsica. The small bunch of arbutus leaves on the label reinforce to a Corsican audience the link between the beer and the flavour of the indigenous shrubs that cover the island, and realise a double function of highlighting the specific flavour of drink as well as underscoring the explicit Corsican-ness of the beer. Heller and Duchêne (2012: 10) remind us of the Romantic notion that nature equates to authenticity, which is seen not only from the use of the maquis on *Torra* labels, but also from the appearance of the mouflon heads. The mouflon are the first examples of fauna used on drinks labelling, and these are interchangeable on *Torra* labels with Moor’s Heads – some labels for bottles of *Torra* feature Moor’s Heads, others a stylised version of a mouflon’s head. The mouflon is a highly localised semiotic resource since they are not widely known as specifically Corsican sheep beyond the island. On Corsica, they are limited in terms of habitat to two mountain ranges: Cinto in the north of the island and Bavella in the south (Maillard et al. 2007: 17). The combination of the mouflon and the maquis on the label speak to a wider trope of Corsican cultural identity, namely pastoralism (Candea 2010: 10-13). This is something to which we return below when examining the corpus of wine labels, but it suffices to note here that the numerous semiotic resources arranged on the labels for *Torra* reinforce its provenance from the island, and anchor the beer in an explicitly Corsican trope, articulated visually in particular.

*3.3. Localized Architecture*

As noted above, *Torra* is the Corsican word for ‘tower’, highlighting the resonance of the regional language in terms of marketing a product, and the name of the drink is reiterated in the image at the heart of the label which features a Genoese tower, echoing the coastline punctuation marks of which the Genoese constructed almost 100 during the sixteenth century. According to Thompson (1978: 264), the towers signal the start of coastal urbanization, initiated by the Genoese in Bonifacio (in 1195) and Calvi (1268), and thereby index the transformation of Corsican society from its pastoral roots to its modern incarnation. Beyond the linguistic landscape, *Pietra* labels feature a stylised map of the island, filled with traditional Corsican dwellings. Both the semiotic and linguistic landscape of *Pietra* anchor the product in its Corsican-ness. Distinctive Corsican urban housing, which complement the use of the Genoese tower deployed on *Torra* labels, is another example of pictorial shorthand for the Corsican-ness of the product, framed on this occasion by the outline of the island, an image we have already attested on other products.

*3.4. Authenticity without the Regional Language*

*Colomba*, a wheat beer, is eponymously named after the heroine of the Mérimée short story, first published in French in 1840. However, *Colomba* beer is not without its clear links to Corsica, however, and its label includes not only the name of the novella’s heroine, but the image identified with the woman: an olive-skinned, dark-haired young woman in a traditional Corsican headscarf. This echoes the assertion by Heller (2003: 474) that authenticity can be commodified without a direct link to language. From the perspective of language revitalisation, *Colomba* beer does not place Corsican in the linguistic landscape, and consequently does not contribute to what Barni and Bagna (2010) define as language vitality. However, *Colomba* bottles exemplify what Jaworski and Thurlow (2010) seek to establish in their discussion of semiotic landscapes, namely the interaction of visual images with written language. For these bottles of beer, whilst the language choice anchors the product in a francophone space, the visual image and the brand name itself index Corsica, although not necessarily Corsican.

Across these four beers, we can see a range of semiotic resources exploited to index authenticity and the Corsican nature of the product. Within the beer market, there is an added value ascribed to the drink when it is linked to Corsica, either through imagery or, less regularly or consistently, through the regional language.

**4. The Drinks Corpus - Wine**

There is a much larger corpus of wine labels than for cola, water and beer combined. Based on fieldwork in a wine merchants’ in Ajaccio, *Chemin des Vignobles*, we recorded 47 different estates producing wine; we do not pretend that this is corpus is exhaustive, and according to the Union of Corsican Wines,[[6]](#footnote-6) there are some 124 individual vineyards on the island. A number of these produce a white, red or rosé wine, and where this is the case, we consider them collectively, rather than as three separate labels. From the 47 labels, we counted 87 instances of some kind of semiotic resource; each label featured some level of text, which accounts for 47 of the 87 counts of semiotic resources (or 54%). 16 labels (34% of the corpus) feature nothing other than the text; on six labels more than one symbol appears. Table 1 breaks down the distribution of semiotic resources across the corpus.

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| --- | --- |
| Semiotic resource | Count |
| Text | 47 |
| Coat of arms | 9 |
| Moor’s Head | 7 |
| Flora | 6 |
| Genoese tower | 5 |
| Building | 4 |
| Fauna | 3 |
| Corsican language text | 2 |
| Topography | 2 |
| Personality | 1 |
| Numerals | 1 |
| Total | 87 |

*Table 1. Distribution of semiotic resources on corpus of 47 wine labels*

From the discussion of beer, water, and carbonated drinks, we have already noted the use of the Corsican language, buildings, shields, a personality (in the form of literary heroine Colomba), and a Moor’s head. On the wine labels, the Corsican language appears on its own on only one label, that of *Primu Vinu* – an inexpensive blend of grapes sold in supermarkets. One vineyard, *Vaccelli*, sells its *Unu* wine with French labels, each of which bears the legend in Corsican ‘*Primu vinu*’ or ‘first wine’, meaning the first wine to be taken out of a wine cellar. Beyond these two examples, the Corsican language is not employed as a resource in any of the wine labels, leading us to conclude that in terms articulated by Bourdieu (1991), Corsican does not enjoy cultural capital from a linguistic perspective. For the presentation and marketing of wine, the Corsican language is not commodified, in that the value attributed to the French language – closely identified with high quality wine from the perspective of western social representations (Moscovici, 1984) – overshadows completely the potential commodity candidacy of Corsican. The cultural framework by which the value of wine is measured places value on French (and, by extension France) but, based on this study, this value is not embodied by the Corsican language. This point is further reinforced by the use of toponyms to identify the wine-growing regions of the island. The famous AOC status (‘*Appellation d’origine contrôlée’* or ‘verified designation of origin’), whereby certification is granted to products in France whose origins are both confirmed and comply with the approved standard of production, is accorded to eight wine-growing areas of Corsica. The AOC status is, in the words of Heller and Duchêne (2012: 11), ‘the full force of pride in the service of profit’ as part of an authenticating localization of produce. Certification requires the citing of the AOC in French on the labels, meaning, for example, that the wine produced by vineyard *Clos Capitoro* within the Ajaccio AOC gives the toponym of the winery in French, rather than in Corsican. As a consequence, all the vineyards with AOC accreditation provide the toponym in their French rather than Corsican variant; for example, rather than ‘*AOC Patrimoniu*’ on the label of wine from the *Leccia* vineyard, the French toponym is used: ‘*AOC Patrimonio*’.

In terms of the other resources used in labelling wine, the second most widespread image is a coat of arms, sometimes authentic, on other occasions invented for decorative purposes. The Moor’s Head, first seen in this discussion on cans of *Corsica-Cola* and bottles of *Torra* is deployed in the labelling of wine, and clearly indexes visually the wine’s origins in Corsica. It is the Moor’s Head which is used in conjunction with other symbols within this typology, usually in a coat of arms (as in the case of the expensive wine from the *Leccia* vineyard in Patrimonio, and the much cheaper table wine *Le Roi du Maquis*). Architectural imagery is used on a number of bottles, most notably Genoese towers (discussed above), which appear on bottles of wine from the vineyards of *Pieretti* and *Clos Nicrosi*. Equally, buildings, such as the convent of Alzipratu, which features on the labels of *Pumonte* wine, or *Spin’a cavallu*, the Pisan bridge which crosses the Rizzanese river outside Sartène and adorns the labels of *Fiumicicoli*, index specific places on the island and, for a domestic audience or those who know Corsica, localize in imagery as much as in words the origins of the wine. However, as noted above, for wine bottles, the regional language is not used for this purpose.

There are then the smaller categories that are much less widespread, such as the use of the outline of the island, or numerals (namely *1769*, which is the year that saw the defeat of the short-lived independent Corsican Republic, and the birth of Napoleon Bonaparte), or even geographic features. For *Pero Longo*, the famous rock formation of the Lion of Roccapina is replicated on the label. Each of these semiotic resources requires an ability on the part of the potential consumer to read this ‘grammar’ (to use Thurlow and Aiello’s 2007 term) of wine labels in order to understand fully what is being signified by the label.

**Conclusion**

When we compare the use of symbols for wine with beers and soft drinks, the balance in the corpus changes, and the use of the Corsican language becomes more prevalent. The regional language is more widely used in labelling for beer, water and carbonated drinks, and this inclusion of these drinks provides a new perspective on the value placed on all the images from the typology. It is useful to consider the minoritisation of Corsican – which has taken place over centuries – in this discussion of commodification. This minorisation is at its most acute and pertinent when considering the place for Corsican in the labelling of wine. As Barthes (1957: 76) quips, wine ‘graces the most minor of ceremonial events of French daily life’ and to this end, the status of Corsican suggests it cannot compete with the French language in the linguistic market when it comes to the construction of authenticity. To return Barthes (1957: 74) wine is considered by the French as something that belongs to the French nation, and the peripheralisation of regional languages – Corsican in this case – means that they do not generate cultural value in the way French does. As such, prestige and economic value play a part in the commodification (or lack thereof) of the Corsican language. The wines and water – namely *St Georges* – to which value is attributed share the characteristic that they are presented to the consumer as French, rather than Corsican, products. The Corsican language has a value in terms of social representation, but its value is not as great as that of French when it comes to quality and prestige in this particular market. It is possible to suggest, therefore, that in a different market, and in particular non-elite consumables, social representations are different, and that the potential clientele is not the same as for wine. The appeal of these drinks is different, which means that the labelling can be managed using different icons, images and representations.
We have established that the labelling of drinks is an area which lends itself to a linguistic and semiotic landscape approach. The typology we have sketched out gives us an indication of the kinds of representations favoured on the labelling of Corsican wines, beers, and waters, but it also highlights that no additional imagery other than the basic text in French is the most widespread way of labelling these drinks. Despite revitalisation activities, the minorisation of Corsican in the public space is echoed in the marketing of drinks. There is also a small but significant role for the Corsican language – the commodification of the regional language is taking place in this aspect of the economic market, but its role is still limited. Most vineyards eschew the potential to reflect the Corsican-ness of the wine in their labelling, other than through the toponym given as part of the AOC accreditation, whereas for beer – in particular – and water, the tendency is to commodify a Corsican cultural identity, if not always the Corsican language itself.

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2. <http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=6&ref_id=15205> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. <http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?ref_id=19238&reg_id=6> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. <http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?ref_id=20067&reg_id=6#t1> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. <http://www.insee.fr/fr/themes/document.asp?reg_id=6&ref_id=15205> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. <http://www.vinsdecorse.com/index-fr.html> [accessed on Jan. 2015] [↑](#footnote-ref-6)