



Korean Wine History

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Before the discovery of the American continent there was one sort of European grape (*Vitis vinifera*) in Eurasia.¹ In Asia there were ten sorts of wild grapes which didn't seem to be cultivated or used for food. The earliest literary reference to wine in China is the account of General Zhang Qian who was seen by many to be the 'father of the Silk Road.' According to the *Shiji* or *Records of the Great Historian*, compiled by Sima Qian in the 1st century BC, grapes and alfalfa were introduced to China from Dayuan following Zhang Qian's embassy:

"The regions around Dayuan make wine out of grapes, the wealthier inhabitants keeping as much as 10 000 or more piculs stored away. It can be kept for as long as twenty or thirty years without spoiling. The people love their wine and the horses love their alfalfa. The Han envoys brought back grape and alfalfa seeds to China and the emperor for the first time tried growing these plants in areas of rich soil. Later, when the Han acquired large numbers of the 'heavenly horses' and the envoys from foreign states began to arrive with their retinues, the lands on all sides of the emperor's summer palaces and pleasure towers were planted with grapes and alfalfa for as far as the eye could see."

In Tang period, Tang Taizong (r. 627-650) conquered Gaochang which was famous for its production of wine, cotton, honey, and silk. He introduced viticulture and brewing into China and enjoyed drinking 8 kinds of wine with his princes and subjects. In 674 wine was made from Turkish grapevines. But the viticulture went into rapid decline soon after the collapse of Tang dynasty (618-907). Wine brewing was sometimes described in Chinese records, but it was related to the way of making wine with rice malt and grape juice. By the Mongol conquest, European wines were introduced to China under the rule of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). Thus, large scale vineyards were spread out over Hebei, Shanxi, Henan, and Winnan provinces, but there was not a vestige of them. Because of lacks of documents we don't know exactly when and how wine was by way of China transmitted into Korea. In the late period of Chosun dynasty (1392-1910), there was a document on wine but it is uncertain whether it refers to Western-style wine or to native wild grape wine (made of malted rice and grape juice). Judging from another document that Yuan Emperor sent wine to Koryo king in 1285, we believe that the first Korean to drink Western-style wine was King Chungryol (r. 1274-1308) of Koryo dynasty (918-1392). Two Korean books *Thesaurus of Eastern Medicine* (Donggeui Bogam) and *Topical Discourses of Jibon* (Jibon Yuseol) presented respectively wine from Xiyu (西域, collective name for modern Xinjiang and former Soviet central Asia) kingdoms. In the 12th year of King Injo's reign (1636), Korea's vice-delegate Kim Se-ryom drank Western-style wine with the chief-governor of Tsushima in Tsushima Island. The Dutch sailor Hendrik Hamel who landed on Cheju island in 1653 offered red wine to the local governor. Breaking through the national isolation policy (1864-1873), the German merchant Opelt brought a great variety of Western wines (Bordeaux wine, Spain sherry, champagne, brandy, port, rum, gin, whiskey, etc.) into the Hermit Kingdom (Korea).

Firstly, this paper is to examine Korean wine history from antiquity to present which started ironically in the heyday of Korean isolation policy in comparison to Chinese/Japanese wine history.

Since the import liberalization, Korean wine market has made rapid growth. The quantity of Korean wine consumption has increased from 9 720 000 bottles of 750ml in 2000 into 11 100 000 in 2002. In Korea imported wines control now (and in the future) more than 95% share of the domestic market. Secondly, we envisage drawing some practical plans to revitalize Korean wine market through the popularization of wine consumption and the quality improvement & differentiation strategy of Korean domestic wine with reference to Chinese/Japanese cases. For your guidance, Chinese/Japanese domestic wine market share is estimated at 80% and 40% respectively.

¹ The European Grape, *Vitis vinifera*, was cultivated as early as 6000 BC in the region between the Black and Caspian Seas near present day Northern Iran. There in the Zagros Mountains, clay vessels containing grape residue have been found dating back to 5000 BC. Grape cultivation progressed south and west from there.