

**докторант ЛЮБОВ ИВАНОВА**

ЮГОЗАПАДЕН УНИВЕРСИТЕТ „НЕОФИТ РИЛСКИ“, БЛАГОЕВГРАД

**КЛЮЧОВАТА РОЛЯ НА ТУРЦИЯ ЗА РАЗВИТИЕ НА ВИНЕНИЯ ТУРИЗЪМ НА  
БАЛКАНИТЕ**

**THE KEY ROLE OF TURKEY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WINE TOURISM ON THE  
BALKANS**

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**Abstract:** Turkey is considered to be one of the three countries together with Armenia and Georgia, pretending to be the land of wine. However, wine is not the first thing that could be associated with the idea about a country as Turkey. In spite of these facts, the Turkish wine producers consider that their production can privately reach its consumers. Turkish wines have a number of values, such as new taste, comparatively low prices, and exotic vine scenery. The sixth largest dessert wine producer in the world and probably the pre-original home of the *vitis vinifera* has already realized that accepting and developing of modern viticulture and enology allows the country to make good and even high-quality wines, such as Vincara, Urla, Selendi, Vinolus. The idea about developing wine tourism has also occurred and the Turkish state has ambitiously started to popularize it and the whole wine sector. In the middle 80`s Turkey opened its economy to the world and the tourism development started, which contributed to the wine supply and consumption. The Turkish broadcasts predict that in 30-40 years, the wineries throughout the world will be a part of a gigantic industry or a World Wine League, in which all the participants will be related and will depend on each other.

**Key words:** Turkey, land of wine, Turkish quality wines, wine sector, World Wine League, wine supply and consumption, vity-viny regions, sinful beverage, "Wines of Turkey" WOT/.

Turkey is considered to be one of the three countries together with Armenia and Georgia, pretending to be the land of wine. Each one of these states would win for sure when it comes to the land of wine origin. If the knowledge on their wines was to be extended, it would build up confidence and authenticity for each of them being a wine country.

Not long ago the oldest, ever existing wine-cellar in the world was found in Armenia, dating back to 6 000 years ago. Digged up within 2007 and 2010 inside a speleological system, this wine cellar will throw light on two problems, waiting to be solved:

1/ Was wine a result of an accidental discovery yet in an early stage?

2/ When did exactly people begin to make wine purposefully?

However, wine is not the first thing that could be associated with the idea about a country as Turkey. What tourists associate the country with are beaches and blue sea and the constant fears of the arriving Europeans that have become an object of unnecessary anxiety for the representatives in the tourist service.

In spite of these facts, the Turkish wine producers consider that their production can privately reach its consumers. Turkish

wines have a number of values, such as new taste, comparatively low prices, and exotic vine scenery. Having at disposal magnificent conditions, the wineries' owners are ready to become serious competitors of their European counterparts<sup>1</sup>.

There are many high-quality wine producers in Turkey, who would hardly succeed in finding enough consumers in a Moslem country, yet being a worldly one, where wine is considered to be a devil's beverage. A message is needed to be sent to the wider audience.

According to Boris Gasparian, a researcher in the Archeological Institute of Armenia, "the people who live today in Turkey and the boundaries of the three countries are different enough from those in the Neolith period." He considers that not only the present-day Armenia, but also the present territories of Turkey, Georgia and Iran are supposed to have been the original home of wine production and grapes cultivation. "It is not necessary to mention who was the first or who is the oldest one, that is, a rivalry is not important."<sup>2</sup> What is important is the fact that Turkey appears to be a part of the original home of wine. The question that has to be borne in mind is where the Turks lived 4 000 years B.C., that is 6 000 years ago.

The sixth largest dessert wine producer in the world and probably the pre-original home of the *vitis vinifera* has already realized that accepting and developing of modern viticulture and enology allows the country to make good and even high-quality wines, such as Vincara, Urla, Selendi, Vinolus.

The idea about developing wine tourism has also occurred and the Turkish state has ambitiously started to popularize it and the whole wine sector. Concerning the wine and grapes production, one of the most developed countries is divided into six vity-

viny regions, the most famous and the oldest of which is Doludzha, famous for its wine having the same name, a typical Turkish wine, produced in the most developed vine region in the country – Tekirdag, situated on the coast of the Marmara sea.

Turkey has recently noticed a great movement of wine in the world. It indisputably has been a result of the more liberal state support policy and not so little influence of the main organization – Wines Of Turkey (WOT). Of an exceptional and great interest is the fact that in the year 2012 Turkey marked a boom because of the 5 times' larger production both in grapes and wine, and thus enlarging the wine culture of the country. The excises have been following down and that leads to shrinkage of the black market.

Turkey is a country confessing the Moslem religion, according to which wine is a "sinful beverage" and its distribution and consumption have been a result of the influence of the Christian ritual culture. For this reason, although grapes cover more than 560 000 vine hectares, which makes it the 5<sup>th</sup> largest in the world as it concerns the vine areas, just a small quantity of the grapes have been turned into wine. There are more than 1 200 kinds, but at present just 60 sorts have been vinificated.<sup>3</sup>

There are very interesting practices related to that "sinful Christian tradition" and its marketing. The Islamic wine-makers do not directly sell their grapes to the wineries' owners, as it is considered doing a sin. They rely on a very complicated system, created by them, consisting of middlemen and mediators.<sup>4</sup>

The irony is in the fact that "the only way in which they can give a sign when the vintage starts is by announcing the coming vintage on the microphones of the mosque minarets", mentions Caroline Ghilbi, a private consultant and writer to the wine

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<sup>1</sup> The five best wineries in Turkey, Antalia, № 18, febr. 15, 2011, p.19

<sup>2</sup> Gasparian, Boris, NationalAcademy of Sciences of Armenia, Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography,

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<sup>3</sup> Vinificate – turning the grapes into wine

<sup>4</sup> Caroline Ghilbi, Master on Wine, a private consultant and writer to the wine trade world.

trade world, who has been visiting the Balkans for over 20 years.

There are a lot of factors influencing the development of the wine sector in Turkey, which have been influenced by different historical events.

At first place, the modernization of the country after the reforms held by Ataturk which up to his death in 1928 deeply affected all the economic sectors.<sup>1</sup>

Till the end of the 60's, the electricity got in the country in a mass scale, so much important for the producing of a quality wine.

In the middle 80's Turkey opened its economy to the world and the tourism development started, which contributed to the wine supply and consumption. The first quality wine of a local sort was also produced in that period.

In the middle 90's the first world sorts wines were produced.

In 2004 the import was privatized and liberalized.

In the year 2008 the first wine organization in the country was founded – the “Wines of Turkey” /WOT/.<sup>2</sup>

Wines in Turkey started to be promoted by the Fidelity Consulting, an organization founded in 2004 by Taner Ogyutoglu, which appears to be a basis for coordinating the platform of the future WOT. In 2008 Ogyutoglu became its director and declared that “the WOT mission is to develop the wine culture and to enlarge the export of the Turkish wines, imposing a single brand of origin, related to quality wines.”<sup>3</sup> It is exactly WOT that has laid the basis of the Turkish wine promotion abroad.

The first act of the organization is the participation in London Wine Fair, which appears to be a prerequisite of turning the industry into a long-term perspective. The motto of its staff is “love wine” and the aim

of their career in that field is to develop knowledge and experience and their growing interest.

There is one more functioning organization – The Wine Producers Association, which does not appear to be a rival of the above mentioned, as they share their experience and work, as well as common members.

The number of wine cellars on the territory of Turkey varies between 130 and 150.

Their owners, being members of the organization, give approximately 90 % of the quality production and account for 90 % of the export. The partnership and the cooperation of the wineries has been a complicated process, which has been realized by 99 % family business, run by different type of people, self-willed and egocentric. These are “players” that do not believe each other. They cannot “play the game as a team”. “The first steps we needed in order to convince them that they can work together and to have benefits from that, were to work out small and simple projects.”<sup>4</sup>

Another important factor for the development of the wine business is the factor “Generation”. Currently, the business has been managed by a third generation of wine- makers, in whose hands the great chance is.

The tendencies that the present-day generation follows have turned out to be positive, as it is convinced in the necessity of passing from local to global way of thinking, realizing that rivalry is necessary, that each winery is not a unique one, but it needs to show interest to the other wineries. What misses is the partnership among the wineries, which appears to be an obstacle for the development of a long-term strategy.

Ogyutoglu states that the development of wine production and the wine culture are financed by the WOT members, and their incomes come from different projects, which

<sup>1</sup> Karahasan, Ibrahim, Turkey – исторически и географски справочник, 2000

<sup>2</sup> Dlvino magazine, Karakonova, Marina “ Турция – новият играч във винената лига”, 06-07, 2012, p.71

<sup>3</sup> An interview with Taner Ogyutoglu, Dlvino magazine, July, 2012, p.72

<sup>4</sup> An interview with Taner Ogyutoglu, Dlvino magazine, July, 2012, p.72

ensure extra budget as well as participation in different expos and conferences.

Turkey has also a state organization, which represents the interests of the Turkish wineries – Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Authority. It was created to regulate the activities of the wine cellars and the wine business itself, but its management is still quite conservative and that is why its functions are rather controlled.

It has turned out that the religion is neither an obstacle, nor a barrier for the development of wine tourism in the wine regions. It is a challenge for the Turkish wineries, the ambitions of which are expressed in a long-term plan by organizing and holding three Expos: PROWEIN, LIWF, VinExpo.

Turkey, having in mind the growing tourism development, seems to overcome the seasonality problem. The country organizes and takes part in conferences, wine tasting and other events throughout the year.

Another future tendency is the conference in the frameworks of London Vinopolis “Discover the roots from Vitis to Vinifera”, which is held in different places of the world.

An initiative which must not be neglected is the conference, held in 2012, titled “Digital Wine Communications” in the city of Izmir.

According to the statistics from 2011, Turkey has got 52 medals from IWC, 31 from IWSC, 67 from Decanter, or in total 150 medals from LIWF in London.

In 2012 in his report at the conference Vin Ce, Garri Vainerchuk states:

“Turkey has the great chance to become a “big player” in the following 3-4 decades.”

WOT does not have a defined strategy yet, but it is building up its future intentions. Its strategic role is expressed in its Euro-Asiatic geography. Turkey is a part of The Grand Terrain, spreading out from Caucasus to Mesopotamy, Libanon and Israel and from Greece to Moldova. And it is Anatoly that proves to be in the heart of that enormous terroir. It forms one Eastern Mediterranean region, whose wines must cross the boundaries; and the WOT has exactly the key role of realizing this initiative

The Turkish broadcasts predict that in 30-40 years, the wineries throughout the world will be a part of a gigantic industry or a World Wine League, in which all the participants will be related and will depend on each other. And it is necessary to have in mind the geographical position of the country as well as its wine potential. And these are the Turkish wine organizations that may prove to be the main strategic players in that league.

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