

Lì Zhengping

CHINESE WINE

Universe in a Bottle

Translation by Shanghai Ego



CHINA
INTERCONTINENTAL
PRESS

 Cultural China Series

Li zhengping

CHINESE WINE

Universe in a Bottle

Translated by Ego



CHINA
INTERCONTINENTAL
PRESS

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

中国酒: 英文 / 李争平编著; 译谷译. —北京: 五洲传播出版社, 2010.1
ISBN 978-7-5085-1671-4

I. 中… II. ①李… ②译… III. 酒-文化-中国-英文 IV. TS.971
中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字 (2009) 第180871号

CHINESE WINE
Universe in a Bottle

Author: Li Zhengping

Translator: Ego

Executive Editor: Zhang Hong

Art Director: Tang Ni

Publisher: China Intercontinental Press (6 Beixiaomachang, Lianhuachi
Donglu, Haidian District, Beijing 100038, China)

Tel: 86-10-58891281

Website: www.cicc.org.cn

Printer: C&C Joint Printing Co., (Beijing) Ltd.

Edition: Jan. 2010, 1st edition, 1st print run

Format: 155×230mm 1/16

Price: RMB 95.00 (*yuan*)

Contents



Preface 1

The Invention of Chinese Wine 13

Where does Wine Come From? 14

Wine in Sacrifice—a Holy Means of Invocation, an
Offering in the Holy Rite 19

The Varieties of Alcohol and Their

Appreciation 23

Chinese Wine and its Most Famous Types 24

Chinese Spirits and Their Most Famous Types 30

Beer in China 47

Wine Made in China 50

A New Force in the World Wine Landscape 58

Wine Drinking Rituals and Customs 61

Flagon Fine and Goblet Rare 62

Wine Rituals and Wine Morality 70

Drinking Games 77

Folk Customs and Wine 80





Drinking Styles	90
Hospitality and Drinking	93
Wine and Holidays	98
Wine's Therapeutic Value and Regular Usage	106



Legends of Wine 109

Wine and Politics	110
"Lifting My Drink and Singing a Song"	117
Poetry and Wine	122

From Wine Restaurants to Bars 131

Traditional Wine Restaurants	132
Bars—Leisure Venues in the Cities	135
Consumption of Imported Wine	139

Appendix: Chronological Table of the Chinese Dynasties 143



Preface

The Chinese do not see wine as one of the necessities of life, but in their social life the culture of wine as a distinct cultural form has made and continues to make an impact on the way the Chinese live. Chinese alcoholic drinks are chiefly made from grain. Throughout the long history of China, with its large population and long term reliance on agriculture, the ups and downs of the wine trade have been closely bound up with political, economic and social conditions. The fluctuations in the grain harvest were like a barometer for the ups and downs of the wine business. The successive ruling dynasties issued or relaxed restrictions on wine production according to the grain harvests to make sure that people had enough to live on. In some areas the flourishing of the wine business was not just the outcome of general prosperity in good years, but also encouraged and invigorated the social life of the region. In the traditional view, wine had three important uses: to perform rituals, to dispel one's worries and to heal.

Chinese wine making can be traced back as far as about 4,000 BC to the early period of the Neolithic Yangshao Culture. During its long development Chinese wine making has taken on a distinct form—saccharification and fermentation are promoted with a ferment in which the main microorganisms are

Yangshao Culture

The Yangshao Culture was an important Neolithic culture on the middle reaches of the Yellow River. The Yangshao village site after which it is named is in Mianchi County, Sanmenxia City in Henan Province, and was discovered in 1921. The culture lasted from about 5000–3000 BC.



moulds, many-stage fermentations are used, and the fermented matter is sometimes semi-solid. These are the classic characteristics of oriental wine making. Chinese wine is mainly based on grains, and there are only a few wines made from fruit; in recent years beer has been introduced to China and has developed very rapidly. Currently the annual beer production of China ranks the second place in the world. According to the latest national standards, Chinese alcoholic beverages are divided into three main categories: fermented alcoholic beverages, distilled spirits and integrated alcoholic beverages. The fermented beverages are divided into the five subcategories of beer, grape wines, fruit wines, Chinese rice wine, and miscellaneous others; distilled spirits include Chinese spirits and other spirits like brandy and whisky.

On the evidence of vessels for making and containing wine unearthed by archaeologists, the years from the early Yangshao culture to the beginning of the Xia dynasty (2070–1600 BC) were the formative years of Chinese wine making. In this period people took the clue from the natural fermentation of fruit wine and began to steep fermented grain to make Fermented alcoholic beverages,



The Jiaxing Ancient Town in Zhejiang (Fangxin/CFP)



gradually standardising the fermentation method. From the Xia to the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BC) wine making techniques in China advanced by leaps and bounds, and government officials set up a special bureau to manage wine production.

Because of the distance in time there are no written records of this early wine making available for our scrutiny. But in 1979 in Shandong Province archaeologists excavated a grave of the Dawenkou culture, and found a set of wine making vessels from 5000 years ago, 100 or so pieces in all, including vessels for boiling the ingredients, for fermentation, and for straining and storing the product. There were also several different kinds of cups for consumption of the wine. This discovery shows that wine making techniques at that time were already fairly advanced.

With the steady development of wine making techniques, the drinking of wine slowly became more popular. This is confirmed by the large number of bronze wine vessels which have been unearthed. During the Shang dynasty (1600–1046 BC), reveling and carousing were fashionable among the aristocracy, and, according to the Basic Annals of Yin (i.e. Shang) in *The Records of the Historian*, in the last years of the dynasty the ruler King Zhou, who was much given to drinking and sensual pleasures, had a pool of wine made in which he got naked men and women to chase each other, and this and the heavy all-night drinking precipitated the fall of the dynasty. Learning a lesson from the fall of the previous dynasty, the first ruler of the Western Zhou (1046–771 BC) promulgated an abstinence order in Wei Kingdom, the place of origin of the Shang, thus issuing the first anti-wine regulation in Chinese history, the Proclamation on Wine. At the same time the authorities established a set of offices to keep the production and consumption of wine under strict management. Under the Western Zhou wine was divided into three categories. One was the wine specially prepared for ritual offerings, which was fermented for a comparatively short time and then used immediately. The second was the wine which had been kept to mature. The third was the





wine which had been strained. This categorization of wine shows that production techniques had already developed to quite a high standard.

According to the saying, “the ferment is the backbone of the wine.” Way back before the Qin unification, the early Chinese invented the technique of using a ferment to make wine, a definite advance in wine making methods. The major ancient classic *The Book of Rites*, which describes the ritual system and ritual ceremonies of that period, records six important things to watch for when making wine: the grain used must be ripe, the ferment must be added at the right time, while steeping and boiling everything must be clean, the water must be good, the containers must be ceramic and selected for their quality, and the heating time and temperature must be right. A notable feature of the way in which the culture of wine had developed in the pre-Qin period are the links which often appeared between wine and the political and military affairs of the various states. In some incidents wine even played an important role. There is a saying which refers allusively to a historical event: “The wine of Lu is scanty and Handan is besieged.” This refers to a story which connects wine and politics. In the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BC), after the state of Chu had claimed hegemony over the south, its arrogant ruler King Xuan ordered the various feudal rulers to come to his court bearing wine. Duke Gong of Lu was late for some reason, and did not bring very much wine. King Xuan was extremely angry and insulted him in front of a lot of onlookers. Duke Gong did not take kindly to being insulted in this way, and said: “I am the descendant of Duke Zhou and a distinguished servant of the royal house; for me to bring you wine was already demeaning and a violation of ritual, and yet you go on to reproach me and say that the wine I prepared was inadequate. You should know when to stop.” He then departed without taking his leave. Because of this King Xuan decided to send an expedition to attack Lu. King Hui of Liang, who had long wanted to invade the state of Zhao but had been afraid

< At the Dragon Boat Festival in 2007, Nanjing netizens celebrated the festival in the tradition way by the Xuanwu Lake. Pictured here is the scene of the master of ceremony sprinkling the Xionghuang Liquor to pray for blessings. (Focus/China News)



that Chu would come to their aid, seized his opportunity and sent a force to besiege the Zhao capital Handan. So it was that when the wine of Lu was scanty the Zhao city of Handan became the innocent victim of the power struggle between the feudal lords.

In the Han dynasty (202–220 AD), progress in agriculture led to an increase in grain production, and this provided the material basis for a boom in the wine industry. Because of developments in ferment making, different areas used different grains to make ferments, and the range of alcohols became more varied. There was inexpensive “ordinary wine,” there was “sweet wine” which used a small amount of ferment for a lot of grain and was “ready overnight;” there was a pale wine called *han*, a red one called *li* or “under the lees,” and a clear one called *li* (pronounced in a different tone). The people of Han Dynasty called wine “heaven’s bounty,” a gift given to men from heaven above. It was good for conviviality and also for drowning your cares, something which could both delight the palate and deepen experience. From the Warring States Period to Han Dynasty many drinkers, because of these qualities, drank with great abandon and got drunk, enjoying the wonderful uninhibited feelings that wine gave them. In a Han period wall painting discovered in Shandong province, there is a scene of wine making, a panorama of how wine was made at that time. A kneeling figure is breaking up ferment with a pestle, one is lighting a fire, one is splitting firewood, one stands next to a steamer stirring rice, while one strains a ferment solution into cooked rice; elsewhere another two have the job of filtering the wine, and another figure uses a ladle to transfer wine into an amphora.

At the end of the Eastern Han period (25–220), the Counselor-in-Chief Cao Cao (155–220) made a gift to Liu Xie, Emperor Xian of the Han, of some “nine-stage spring wine” produced in his place of origin, Bozhou in Anhui. Along with this gift he presented a memorial explaining how the wine was made. During the fermentation period the ingredients were not put in at once,



but were added in many different stages. First the ferment was immersed, then one dan of rice was added in the first instance, and then a further one dan was added every three days until this had been done for nine times. Cao Cao claimed that wine made by this method was rich, mellow and fragrant, and that was why he presented it as a tribute wine to his emperor and recommended the production method.

In the following period (220–589), when the Wei Dynasty gave way to the Jin and then a succession of different dynasties ruled north and south, peasants from the north fled south in large numbers to escape disaster, bringing advanced production methods with them and increasing the labor force in the south. As a result agriculture in the south of China saw an overall improvement, and the economic development provided the basis for rapid improvements in wine making. The transfer of northerners to the south caused the wine cultures of north and south to merge, and a number of famous wines emerged in consequence. Jia Sixie, a famous ancient Chinese agriculturalist whose exact dates are unknown but who lived under the Northern Wei, wrote a famous treatise on agricultural and other rural technologies, the *Qimin Yaoshu* (*Essential Arts for the People's Welfare*), which has extensive sections on techniques for making wine. He sets out 8 ways of making ferment and more than 40 methods for making wine, a comprehensive summary of the techniques used since Han times.

Under the Sui (581–618) and the Tang (618–907) dynasties, wine making continued to develop. Sui policies on making wine were fairly relaxed; they no longer limited private production of wine and they abolished the wine monopoly, so that ordinary people could make and sell wine freely. In the earlier period of the Tang Dynasty, Sui policies were continued: no wine monopoly was established, and there was no tax on wine. But in the Middle and Late Tang, because the national treasury's coffers were empty, a monopoly on wine was reinstituted to increase the revenues of the central government.





The Qing Dynasty painter Su Liupeng (1791–1862) painted *Li Bai Getting Drunk*, representing the story of how the poet Li Bai (701–762) got drunk in a reception hall of the Tang Imperial Palace yet was still able to compose an answer to a letter from a barbarian kingdom.



By the Song Dynasty (960–1279) wine making techniques after over a thousand years of practical experience had come to constitute a complete theoretical system, and in particular the production process, technical apparatus and production equipment for Chinese rice wine had in that period already taken a settled form. From the Southern Song (1127–1279) there is a book called 'Record of Famous Wines' which describes in full a hundred or more famous wines from all over the country. Some of these wines were made in the imperial palace, some in the households of great ministers, some in wine shops, and some in the homes of ordinary people.

In the Yuan (1206–1368), the Ming (1368–1644) and Qing (1616–1911) Chinese wine making reached its peak, and the theory of wine making came close to maturity. The Ming scientist Song Yingxing (1587–1663) in his main work *Tian Gong Kai Wu* (*The Exploitation of the Works of Nature*) describes how a red ferment is made and includes illustrations of the process, a precious contribution to our knowledge. The ancient Chinese medical encyclopedia, *Compendium of Materia Medica*, also has a lot about wine, and divides it into three main categories, wine made from grain, distilled spirits, and grape wine; it also collects together a great number of recipes for medicinal wines.

The Ming Dynasty was an important period in the history of China's urbanization, when the development of industry and commerce brought a great increase in the urban population. Demand for wine grew steadily, and wine making gradually ceased to be a part of agriculture and became an independent craft industry. In the Ming Dynasty this industry spread all over China, and it is recorded that in Hengyang of Hunan Province alone there were as many as 10,000 small workshops making wine. The existence of this multiplicity of small producers caused the industry to develop as never before, and distilling techniques also matured. The Ming period not only abounded in famous wines, but was also set apart from earlier periods by a notable characteristic, the variety



and scale of production of wines for health and healing.

The Qing Dynasty surpassed previous dynasties in the demand for wine and the number of varieties available, and the industry reached new heights. In eating and drinking habits the Qing was a continuation of the Ming. In a synthesis of China's ancient food preparation techniques which was compiled under the Qing Dynasty, the *Tiao Ding Ji* (*The Harmonious Cauldron*), there are more than 100 entries on wine, and it is worth noting that it includes a comprehensive description of the techniques for making rice wine. In addition, many miscellaneous jottings also record the cultural environment of wine consumption in that period.

In the Ming and Qing Dynasties, along with the continuous development of the industry came a maturing of people's ideas about drinking wine. While emphasizing the virtues of wine



Detail of Qing Dynasty painting *Evening Banquet with Pupils* by Ding Guanpeng.



and moderate drinking, they thought that drunkenness can do great harm to one's health as well as bringing joy. In the late Qing China's traditional wine making arts began to merge with newly introduced techniques for making 'foreign wine'. The result was the profusion of varieties and flavors that can be found in Chinese white spirits, beer and grape wine. Despite all these, China's alcoholic beverage manufacturing industry largely remained a cottage industry, characterized by rudimentary equipment, low productivity, a small operating scale, and unstable product quality. Production was largely manual, and there was no laboratory, no large-scale mechanical equipment, and even no electricity or tap water. The complex production techniques were passed down by word of mouth, and there were no industrial standards. In 1949, China produced merely about 100,000 kiloliters of spirits, 25,000 kiloliters of yellow wine, 7,000 kiloliters of beer, and less than 200 kiloliters of wine.

Following the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Central Government increased its support for the alcoholic beverage industry. As a result, a number of state-owned distilleries, including the Beijing General Distillery Plant, were built; many traditional enterprises and brands were placed under government protection and received investments; great strides were made in the technological innovation of the alcoholic beverage manufacturing industry; and the traditional cottage industry gradually switched to mechanized, automated industrial production. After China began economic reforms in 1978, the transformation of the economic system catapulted the nation's alcoholic beverage industry into a period of rapid growth; the industry's operating scale quickly expanded and various large-sized enterprise groups emerged. Since 1993, dozens of enterprises in the alcoholic beverage industry have obtained listings on stock exchanges. In 2008, nationwide there were more than 38,000 spirits makers, including nearly super-sized modernized distillery conglomerates with an annual production capacity of more than





The China-France Chateau Vineyard in Shacheng, Hebei features lush vines, fresh air and enchanting natural landscape.

10,000 kiloliters, and there were over 30,000 white spirits brands with a combined total production of 5.6934 million kiloliters, representing a nearly 60-fold increase from 1949. In the same year, beer production totaled 41.0309 million kiloliters, representing a 5,800-fold increase from 1949; yellow wine production totaled 809,300 kiloliters, representing a more than 30-fold increase; and wine production totaled 698,300 kiloliters, representing a nearly 3,500-fold increase. Since China's accession to the WTO, due to the influence of Western consumerism, new consumer needs have been emerging in quick succession, and the demand for alcoholic beverages other than spirits has surged; as a result, a fundamental change has taken place in the structure of alcoholic beverage products in China; beer, wine and yellow wine are enjoying steadily rising market share, and beer has surpassed white spirits to become the highest-selling kind of alcoholic beverage in China. In the new century, China's traditional alcoholic beverage culture has embraced elements of modernity and fashion.

