

Wine region of Zielona Góra

Historical context and perspectives of the biggest Polish wine region

Weinakademiker Thesis

Michał Popiołek

ABSTRACT

Motivation

My passion for wine turned into a professional path in 2018, at which time I was hired as its representative by Saint Vincent Vineyard of Borow Wielki near Zielona Góra. The historical scale and renaissance of local winemaking was previously unknown to me. It turned out that Zielona Góra's winemaking traditions date back to the Middle Ages, and as late as the 20th century the city was still regarded colloquially as Poland's wine capital. It turned out that dozens of winemakers from the region are working hard, in consultation with local authorities, to restore Lubuskie's winemaking to its glory of centuries past. The creation of a work describing the legacy of German and Polish efforts for building a wine culture in the region I considered justified. Although the city is taking many activities and initiatives to promote Zielona Góra winemaking in Europe, the region still remains virtually unknown to wine lovers. Even though more and more German tourists visit Zielona Góra's grape harvest, in a broader sense Poland is still a country of beer and vodka, perhaps mead, but certainly not wine. I saw the creation of this paper as an opportunity to show local winemaking in its historical complexity, as well as to present some of the issues in its functioning today.

Objective

There are two primary objectives of the thesis. The first is to synthetically show the history of local winemaking over the centuries. To indicate the key moments, mixed in connection with the inflows and outflows of people of different nationalities and ethnic groups, strains and styles, which were characteristic of winemaking in Zielona Góra. This piece aims to document and defend the thesis that winemaking in Zielona Góra, now slowly rising from obscurity, was once an important part of the local economy and identity of the region. The second purpose of the piece is to comment on the situation of winemaking in business terms. An indication of its strengths and weaknesses and an attempt to point out its strengths and distinctive features compared to other wine regions of the country.

Methodology

The methodology of the work consisted primarily of referring to literature and articles and websites writing about the Zielona Góra's wine industry. The works referred to both current and historical events. A particularly distinguished person for the description of the historical history of Zielona Góra winemaking is Miroslaw Kuleba. His monograph *Enographia Thalloris* comments extensively not only on the history of Zielona Góra, but also on the entire region. The analysis of statistics on winemaking in the present day refers primarily to data from the National Center for Agricultural Support. Many of the facts and insights come from the author's own experience, having worked for six years for one of the region's largest and fastest growing wineries, the Saint Vincent winery. Being responsible for work on the vineyard, tastings, commercial cooperation with all channels at home and abroad, I have a broad perspective to assess and comment on certain processes and phenomena.

Content

The work consists of two main substantive parts in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. The first is a broad commentary on the history of winemaking of Zielona Góra and, to a lesser extent, the Lubuskie region. Using individual examples and selected events, the history of winemaking is presented from the 12th century and the reign of the Piast princes, through the period of incorporation into the Polish crown, incorporation into Luxembourg-ruled Bohemia, Habsburg rule, the period of Prussian domination, through the days of Polish communism, until the latest times. In addition to the description of places, varieties and events author also finds it reasonable to comment on social and political changes. Particularly important is the 19th century, when the Grempler factory, the oldest producer of Champagne-style sparkling wines in Germany called sekt began operating in the town. In the second part, two subsections provide a SWOT analysis of contemporary local winemaking. It was indicated what are the strengths and weaknesses of winemaking and what risks and opportunities the external environment offers. The next part describes the most important elements that distinguish Zielona Góra from other Polish wine regions. These include the Wine Festival, the Weekends of Open Wine Cellars, competitions of Polish wines, the Lubuskie Wine and Honey Route and high quality cooperation with local authorities. In conclusion, the author, pointing to the good situation and growing wine market in Poland, the rich and increasingly recognizable history of the region and the activity of contemporary winemakers, suggests that Zielona Góra may once again have a time of splendor ahead of it.