

This paper includes natural-geographical and historical description of one of the oldest and most beautiful site of Georgia – Racha. A reader might obtain quite extensive and exhaustive information on its location, natural-geographical environment, social-economic state and cultural-historical development of Racha, as well as on the factors supporting, or in contrary impeding factors to the traditional economic field of Racha population: winery and viticulture. The paper reflects the modern Racha, its problems and the possible ways to solve them. The purpose of the paper is to reflect the impacts of Racha natural-geographical conditions on development of the traditional viticulture-winery in the region.

The preamble of the paper shortly reviews Racha and Rachvelians, cites are given from expressions on Racha by well-known people. Several versions of the toponym “Racha” is discussed. Afterwards natural-geographical description of Racha follows: its location and borders; geological composition and tectonics; treasure of the soil and resources, relief forms and soils, climate and hydrography; flora and fauna, main landscapes and monuments of natural and material culture.

The paper presents cultural-historical development of Racha from ancient time up to contemporary life. According to periods, the role of Racha, as of one of political units, in the country history is discussed. Significant monuments of architecture, dates of their establishment and photo material are given.

The main and important problem of Racha is migration. Its main reason is the complicated everyday and economic situation. The study and regrettable results of migration are shown in the paper. The author considers development of tourism in Racha as exactly the way of this problem solution. This will support to improvement of financial and everyday conditions of population and stop of migration.

The main field of economic of Racha is viticulture-winery. Those oldest and forgotten traditions linked with development of winery are revived in the paper. Rachvelian peasant follows these fields of economic through centuries. Rachvelian wine “Khvantchkara” gained recognition as in Georgia as outside its borders. This is naturally semi-sweet wine produced from unique vine breeds – Aleksandreuli and Mujuretuli. In 1907 in Ostend city of Belgium a grand-prix was awarded which is stored in National Museum of Georgia, as well as, Grand Gold Medal and memorable badge with the expression of the king of Belgium Leopold II. This was the first international recognition which lasts till today. The paper clearly shows that the specific taste and features of wine are in the direct relations with natural-geographical conditions.

The best wine-producing villages of “Khvantchkara” in Racha are: Khvantchkara, Chorjo, I and II Tola. Furthermore, good vineyards are in Bostana, Kvishari, Tchrebalo and Kveda Zhoshkha (mainly the villages of the right embankment of the riv. Rioni, laid out on sunny, south exposition slopes at 450-750 m height from the sea level). Vineyards are laid

out on the left embankment of the river as well – on the north slopes of Racha mountain range. Due to unequal distribution of sun beams, at the small section of the territory, sugar content in grapes is sharply distinct and accordingly – wine taste as well. The studies approve that the grape of the vineyard located at the left embankment of the riv. Rioni cannot give the high sugar content as less sun beams fall here. The local populations call the wine pressed here “sour one” due to the less sugar content and indeed, this difference is quite striking.

As we have already mentioned, the paper revives those forgotten traditions concerning to vinery-viticulture. The traditional tools applied to lay out vineyards, transportation of grapes, pressing and storing wine are searched for. Today many of them are turned into museum exhibits. The rule of their making is searched for and recorded from elder people. The paper author has looked through and described the family wine-vaults of local elder people and quite extensive list of traditional tools with photo material is presented in the paper. The experienced wine-makers talk about wine-making technology in family wine-vaults.

In the paper a reader might get familiarized with the rules of laying out vineyard. It is known that vineyard does not like excessive damp, loping slopes and surplus water which is charactering for Racha and supports to origination of landslide. This is a serious geo-ecological problem in whole Racha. The author researches the geological and anthropogenic reasons for increasing landslides and searches for the oldest rule for struggle against over-saturation in population. Cutting and frequent cleaning “flow channels” was important. Such channels were cut near vineyards, as needed, and through of them no excessive water troubled vineyards. Ancestors paid great attention to complying with the rules of tilling slopes. In particular, they tilled deeply and tilths were horizontally. After making two traces on the sloping sites the third trace was left untilled. If the slope was more inclined, the size of untilled portion was larger. Such rule of tilling prevents land from sliding down.

Thus, the paper fully presents the natural-geographical conditions of Racha and reflects its impact on traditional fields of economic – winery and viticulture. The research methods, references and list of respondents are included in the paper.