

Short report

# A Historical Review on the Oldest Documented Buckwheat Use in Korea

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## ABSTRACT

‘Hyangyakgugeubbang’ has been known as the oldest literature on buckwheat in Korea written in the time of King Gokong, old Korean dynasty. However, by ‘Genesis of Koguryo dynasty’ copied by Mr. Chang Hwa Park, it has been known that buckwheat has been used in Korea from Koguryo dynasty which was a former era of old Korean dynasty. Unfortunately, the original book of ‘Genesis of Koguryo’ has not been kept and thus historians have not approved the copied book as an official history book. Therefore, the oldest record on buckwheat use in Korea has not been recognized as the oldest book on buckwheat in Korea. So, ‘Hyangyakgugeubbang’ is still officially the oldest book on buckwheat in Korea.

Buckwheat was introduced from China to Korea in the time of King Gojong, Korean dynasty (1236~1251). In Asia, Korea is one of the oldest nation that buckwheat was traditionally used for food and folk medicine. ‘Hyangyakgugeubbang’ has been known as the oldest literature on buckwheat in Korea written in the time of King Gokong, old Korean dynasty. It is a widely accepted notion.

However, another literature on buckwheat used in Korea was found, but it has not been approved as an official record. Based on the book titled ‘Genesis of Koguryo dynasty’ copied by Mr. Chang Hwa Park, it has been known that buckwheat has been used in Korea from the time of Koguryo dynasty (B.C 37~668) which was a former era of old Korean dynasty (918~1392). The author of the ‘Genesis of Koguryo’ has not been known. The book was flowed out to Japan in the time of Japanese Empire (1910-1945) and was kept in the library of the royal family in Japan. Mr. Chang Hwa Park got the book from the library of Japanese royal family and copied it by hand writing and the copied book was transferred to Korea from Japan (Photo 1). Unfortunately, the original book of ‘Genesis of Koguryo’ has not been kept and thus historians have not approved the copied book as an official history document. Therefore, the oldest record on buckwheat use in Korea has not been recognized as the oldest book on buckwheat in Korea.

There are a few sentences on buckwheat in the Genesis of Koguryo. A record on ‘Chumogyoung (named also as Jumong)’ who was founder of Koguryo dynasty was described on the page 119 of the Genesis of Koguryo. A younger brother ‘Eulgyoung’ of queen ‘Ryu’ reported to the King Jumong that we have a lot of buckwheat but not have wheat

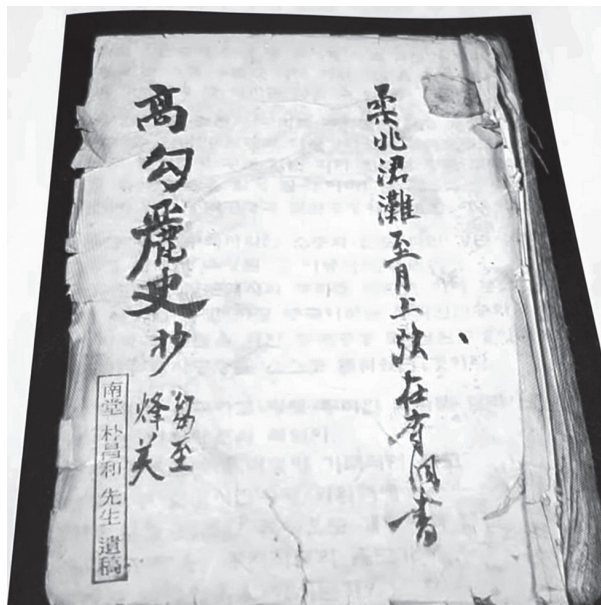


Photo 1. Genesis of Koguryo (Koguryo Sacho) copied by Mr. Chang Hwa Park

or barley. The king said that buckwheat and wheat or barley were not the same because buckwheat was warm but wheat or barley were cool. On five cattle, seven grains, three liquors, and six fruits were written on a page 220 of the book. Seven grains were broomcorn millet, barnyard grass, millet, soybean, sorghum, buckwheat, and beefsteak plant (*Perilla frutescens*, family Lamiaceae). Such truth that there was buckwheat among the seven grains has a meaning that the Genesis of Koguryo was the oldest book on buckwheat in Korea. Moreover, the period that the Genesis of Koguryo was edited 1,200 years earlier than 'Hyangyagugeubbang' that has been officially known as the oldest literature on buckwheat in Korea. However, the original book was not found elsewhere and copied book was not officially approved as a history document. So 'Hyangyagugeubbang' is still the officially oldest book on buckwheat in Korea.

## REFERENCES

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## IZVLEČEK

### Zgodovinski podatek o najstarejšem dokumentiranem viru o uporabi ajde v Koreji

“Hyangyagugeubbang” je bil znan kot najstarejši pisan dokument o ajdi v Koreji, napisan je bil v času kralja Gokonga (1236~1251). Vendar je bilo znano, da so ajdo v Koreji uporabljali že prej, tudi v času dinastije Koguryo (leta 37~668 pr. n. št.). Žal se izvirna knjiga ‘Geneza Kogurya’ ni ohranila, tako zgodovinarji niso mogli potrditi kasnejše kopije te knjige kot pravega uradnega zgodovinskega vira. Zato najstarejši zapis o uporabi ajde v Koreji ni bil prepoznan kot najstarejši vir o ajdi v Koreji. Tako je “Hyangyagugeubbang” še vedno uradno najstarejši vir o pridelovanju in uporabi ajde v Koreji.