

VITICULTURE AND ROMANIAN WINES IN THE COMMON SYSTEM OF VITICULTURAL AND WINE MARKET

(Abstract)

This 257 pages long paper has the following structure:

Introduction

Chapter I. *Some Historical Facts about Romanian Viticulture*

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Chapter III. *Some Facts about the Founding of Romanian Viticulture as Presented in Historical Records Prior to Phylloxera*

Chapter IV. *Romanian Viticulture and Wines After Phylloxera (The Post-Phylloxera Period), 1884-1945*

Chapter V. *Romanian Viticulture and Wines After Phylloxera (The Post-Phylloxera Period), 1945-1989*

Chapter VI. *Romanian Viticulture and Wines Between 1990 and 2007. The New Perspectives After Romania Joined the EU (January 1, 2007)*

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Bibliography - contains 237 scientific papers, treatises, monographs published in Romania and other countries on the subject of Romanian viticulture and wines. 16 yearbooks and different Romanian magazines have been researched for relevant data, and numerous 19th, 20th and 21st century Romanian laws and regulations dealing with viticultural issues have been cited.

The Purpose of Our Research

Romanian viticulture is among the oldest in Europe. Though the date and methods applied for the introduction of vineyards in Dacia are difficult to determine, some Russian works mention the Greeks bringing grapevines to what will be known as the Romanian territory in the first Greek colonies, between 600 and 500 BC. The vineyards of nowadays Dobrogea are well-known during the Roman colonization, recorded by Vallerius Paterculus, Emperor Tiberius's emissary, who mentions that, in this area, he saw grapevines taller than the ones in Italy, as tall as the trees. During the centuries following the Roman conquest of Dacia, viticulture developed throughout the land, grapevines spread and new methods and varieties were created (I.C. Teodorescu, 1929).

Numerous Romanian wines were highly appreciated through the ages, wine and grapevines being among Romania's treasures in the past, as well as today.

Nevertheless, Romanian viticulture was faced with regression periods, for instance after 1989.

It's very important to know the factors that caused the regression periods and to ascertain the methods through which our viticulture was reborn, especially after Romania joined the EU and the European common wine market. In other words, each country should add its own diversity to the union, and this is why Romania should highlight its own identity among so many different viticultures in Europe.

The purpose of this study is to present the singular aspects of Romanian viticulture in the European Community and to single out the leverage points through which this important branch of

the Romanian economy can highlight its own authenticity and prestige in the inevitable globalization process.

The central objective and fundamental purpose of this study is to present a strategy for the rebuilding and development of Romanian viticulture, for reaching the technical and technological standards of quality and efficiency enabling Romania to be successful in the great competition on the European viticultural market.

General Conclusions

This study was elaborated after researching numerous science works about Romanian viticulture in different ages, economical and juridical regulations of wine production and selling, of the development of the Romanian heritage and viticultural production, after ascertaining the data in viticultural yearbooks and statistics, and studying documents dealing with European and world viticulture, with the purpose of presenting the singular aspects of Romanian viticulture in the European Community and singling out the leverage points through which this important branch of Romanian economy can highlight its own authenticity and prestige in the inevitable globalization process.

The most important conclusions and advice provided by this study are the following:

1. Romanian viticulture is among the oldest in Europe. Due to the excellent quality of Romanian wines and the chance to produce almost all kinds of wines - white and red, dry and semi-dry, sweet and fruity, exceptional muscatel and sparkling wines - Romanian viticulture and wines are well-known and appreciated throughout the world. We can find spontaneous *Vitis Vinifera Sylvestris* grapevines in many places in Romania. It's from this type of grapevine that today's noble grapes were obtained through selection processes. This incontestable fact proves the existence of exceptional conditions favorable for viticulture and the production of good wines, a reality that our ancestors guessed thousands of years ago.

2. After researching old documents recording the beginning of Romanian viticulture prior to the spread of phylloxera, one is impressed with a lot of significant aspects. One of these aspects is the fortunate distribution of our viticultural regions that enables us to get the best out of this diverse territory between the Carpathian Mountains, Danube and The Black Sea, in such a way that excessive climatic characters caused by the continental position can be removed during active vegetation. The result is a surprisingly beneficial climate when it comes to maturing grapes and quality wines. A lot of varieties cultivated today are indigenous, carefully selected in time from the wild species, and then constituted for each particular vineyard. The adaptation of cutting systems and branch disposition prove once again that all these very scientifically important elements could not be simply copied or borrowed from somewhere else, nor could they be the result of blind improvising. They are among the oldest in the world, original and not owned to anybody else.

3. In the old age, prior to phylloxera, we can discover the first recorded viticultural activities and the first rudiments of a system. We owe all this to Dimitrie Cantemir (1716), Ion Ionescu de la Brad (1842; 1848; 1868; 1869), Petre S. Aurelian (1874), B.P. Haşdeu (1874), Vlad Cârnu Munteanu and Corneliu Roman (1895), Dobre Rădulescu (1869), Corneliu Şumuleanu (1911), Gheorghe Niculeanu (1901; 1910), Vasile Brezeanu (1907) and others.

4. The entire economical establishment of viticulture and wine production in Europe and Romania, and, implicitly, the oenological activities, destabilised by two major events in rapid succession – the onset of phylloxera and World War One – were faced with numerous and serious

difficulties. In addition to the damage and destruction caused by military operations on vineyard domains, the phylloxera lice were attacking the grapevines with disastrous effects. Even though the viticultural regions stayed the same, the judicious singularity of the old varieties, the traditional harvest day and particular vinification methods were lost, and, as a result, typicality was also lost, the well-known personality of wine due to its particular oenological characteristics. The numerous new varieties imported from different countries and climates, with their unknown needs and production capacities, questioned the foundation of indigenous methods that had been applied for centuries. To make matters worse, there was an increasing number of nurseries and seedling sellers eager to make a quick buck through irresponsible advertising, and also an invasion of Hybrid Direct Producers and other dangers.

5. As a consequence of the Land Act (1921), the vineyards disintegrated into small parts. Sowing sprouted fragments of HDP branches proved to be the simplest method of recovery, but it led to an even greater evil, „the calamitous invasion of HDP, especially in the great planes of our country”. During this period, fraud and fake wine and liquor production registered unprecedented diversity and frequency. Knowing all these difficulties, the efforts and measures taken during this period in order to normalize our wine production and commerce and in order to create better conditions for the viticultural study and research are greatly appreciated. All these efforts were actively supported and guided by oenologists.

6. After 1944 and until 1989, Romanian viticulture went through a period of great accomplishments accompanied by some deficiencies.

After World War Two there weren't many large vineyards containing grafted and indigenous grapevines that could produce quality wines. There were in fact numerous small vineyards cultivating very diverse and random varieties, with different technological qualities and maturation periods, as well as a mix of white and red varieties; HDP were the majority, cultivated for the first time in vineyards from hilly regions previously empty.

Mostly empirical methods were used for grape vinification and wine cellaring.

7. During this period the most important technological and economical measures are taken in order to modernize the production process and create great viticultural enterprises. Romanian vinification reaches a modern, scientific level, using the same technology as other countries renowned for their viticulture. As a consequence, viticulture becomes an important branch of national economy, supported by a strong network of research and education. Romania exports great quantities of wine in numerous countries, including some that are known for their great wine production (Germany, USA etc.).

8. Even though between 1944 and 1989 numerous noble varieties were created in the Romanian research and education network, these varieties were not cultivated in major vineyards, except the Victoria grape variety, created in the Drăgășani Research Institute by Victoria Lepădatu and Gheorghe Condei, a variety that is being massively cultivated nowadays in Italy (6000 ha), Greece, South Africa, Australia, Turkey etc.

9. The indigenous grape varieties were severely diminished, only the following ones survived: Grasa, Feteasca Alba, Feteasca Regala, Feteasca Neagra, Busuioaca de Bohotin, Tamaioasa Romaneasca, Babeasca Neagra, Cramposie, Galbena de Odobesti. They were cultivated in smaller vineyards, except Feteasca Regala, which proved to be more productive.

10. Remarkably, the HDP varieties are cultivated on more restricted areas.

11. Even though during the 1944-1989 period Romanian viticulture and oenological industry became highly modernized and wine export proved to be very profitable, our wines did not acquire authenticity on the wine market because Romania exported great quantities of bulk wine;

additionally, the majority of these exported wines were not registered according to their origin, including information about some places well-known for the quality of their wine (Vânju Mare, Orevița, Pietroasa, Sâmburești, Segarcea, Nicorești etc.). They were bottled and conditioned in major export centers (Murfatlar, Jidvei, Focșani, Oradea, Arad), bearing their names and the specifications requested by the importer.

12. The Vineyard and Wine Act (21/1971) is promulgated, establishing the same high standards of great European viticultures, especially Germany. This act served as a guidance in 2002, when the Vineyard and Wine Act in the Common Wine Market (244/2002) was promulgated.

13. After 1990 important transformations occurred due to our new market economy system, replacing the centralized market and as a consequence of the Land Fund Act (18/1991) revised by 1/2000. The most important aspects of this period are the following:

- restricted vineyards producing noble grapes, especially for consumption;
- massive production of HDP varieties that could severely affect Romania's reputation as a country with a long viticultural and wine export tradition; Romanians are forced to consume poor quality wines;
- restricting and then ceasing cultivation of new grapevines, which leads to ageing and decreased viticultural potential;
- a major decrease in internal grape consumption, very small quantities of grapes being exported;
- decreased quantities of exported wine and, as a direct consequence, decreased convertible values;
- severe reduction of seedling production once many nurseries were liquidated and wiped off and numerous vine grafting centers were abandoned;
- research institutes are not financially supported by the state, and thus the viticultural genetic base is endangered and grape producers cannot receive much needed scientific counselling;

14. After 2000, Romanian authorities started paying more attention to viticultural activities and structuring of the common wine market; a complex set of laws regulating grape and wine production was elaborated.

Great viticultural countries support Romania's efforts to elaborate relevant laws and accept Romania's adding major viticultural areas to the community, but our success depends on Romania's ability to attract European funds and use this money to reconstruct our viticultural patrimony after 15 difficult years (the spread of HDP, aged grapevines, very restricted enterprises, lack of indigenous varieties, lack of seedling material, lack of specific varieties for every vineyard etc.)

15. Romanian wine market depends on the following:

- restructuring the individual sector, which may create better raw material and better grapevines, decreased production costs;
- a more controlled wine production and distribution, especially when it comes to bulk wine; smaller prices for bottled wine;
- good strategies adopted by firms for better quality, better managing of production, smaller production costs, restructuring and development of distribution, better national and international advertising;
- serious efforts to combat fake wines, especially varietal wines protected by their origin;
- better wine marketing;
- creating more alternatives on the wine market and better distribution structures;

16. Based on historical and modern studies and research, areas that proved their potential for quality original wines should be precisely determined.

17. The Romanian government should legally encourage economically convenient viticultural enterprises (50 ha areas or more) and support vineyards producing noble grapes, especially indigenous ones, in areas renowned for their quality wines.

18. The Romanian government should apply more diverse methods for supporting wine producers in their efforts to attract European funds and use national funds for the reconstruction and reintegration of our viticultural heritage, as requested by the European Community. Thus Romanian viticulture will provide a substantial financial addition to the national budget.

19. Romanian viticulture will find its place on the competitive international market only by offering quality products. Thus it needs a competitive research and technical network supported by the Romanian government.