Romanians in the History of Europe. Syncretism, Synchronism, Synergy

The creation of a vast society, the European Union, requires the exploration of the special framework from the perspective of new expectations of peoples and historical periods, states, and politics. The new framework must reveal international events from the perspective of the community, and the national perspective must interact with the European one.

Any exhaustive study of European history including the Romanian people will focus on individual economic, political, philosophical, and cultural currents, placing events in a general dynamic context. The fundamental features of various European peoples, the events and moments which have highlighted the history of Europe, form a common inheritance which views Europe as a whole, because the history of individual nations is tied to the history of Europe. In this sense, every national experience contributes to the development of a continental perspective and relates to principal European values. The relationship between identity and disparity becomes a given in a United Europe.

In a book recently published in Bucharest ¹, I tried to present the history of the Romanian people within a European context, pointing out the events which marked our common history and selecting several moments of reciprocal interaction with other European peoples, following three historical principles: **syncretism, synchronism and synergy**.
**Syncretism** represents an attempt to reduce differences, to achieve the unity of divergent elements in the areas of culture, arts, philosophy, religion and history, in my view. Thus, the spread of Latin across the continent or the influence of Roman administration and military are widely described in a new Analysis of the History of the Romanian People by the Romanian Academy. Under the Roman influence, differences between the native populations in the areas of material culture or political and religious organization disappeared. Latin became the sole means of communication among various ethnic groups. As in other Roman provinces, in Dacia, Romania's ancient territory, the Roman influence was exerted through colonization, leading to the creation of a Romance language and the assimilation of Roman mores by the Geto-Dacians, the ancient Romanian people.

Syncretism during the process of Roman transformation of Dacia appears in the internal organization of cities, in the types of public and private construction (aqueducts, thermals, temples, amphitheatres, and villas), in the methods and selection of construction materials, in the borrowing of Roman deities, not to mention other aspects of material culture, all highly representative of provincial Roman culture.

In Dacia, like in other European Roman provinces such as Gaul, Spain or Pannonia, the impact of the Roman occupation determined by historical syncretism led to the adoption of material and spiritual values with strong Roman cultural character, the creation of new traditions, and the use of the Latin language. Thus, by transforming native populations who maintained the Roman influence even after the boundaries of the Roman Empire became narrower, new, neo-Latin populations were born in Europe, all using Romance languages:
Italian, French, Portuguese, and Spanish in the West, and, farther away in the East, the Romanian people.

Linguists explain the birth of these populations through ethnic and cultural synthesis, a syncretism occurring between defeated natives (as ethnic substratum) and the Roman conquerors (as stratum). This syncretism led to the creation of Latin speaking Roman populations, such as the Daco-Romans. In time, other conquerors were also assimilated in different proportions, such the Germans in the West and the Slavs in the East, secondary elements (ad strata) in ethno genesis. Some Slavic invaders remained in the former Romano-Dacian province, others moved on to the south of the Danube, while still others marched towards central Europe, literally surrounding the territory occupied by the new Romano-Dacian population.

Historians and linguists explain the persistence of a Latin grammatical structure and basic Latin word stock in the Romanian language by the fact that the Dacian-Roman synthesis proved to be sound, long lasting, and resilient. Its Roman nucleus founded upon the Dacian foundation became the basis of the development of the Romanian people. The Romanians of Latin origin remained isolated among Slavic peoples because their connection to the Byzantine Empire (inheritor of the Roman Empire in Eastern Europe) was cut off by the existence of the Slavs south of the Danube. This helped maintain the use of Latin in the former Dacian province, especially since, in the Byzantine Empire; the official language was no longer Latin, but Greek.
We can therefore conclude that the history of many European countries is based upon a common foundation. This refers not only to the common Roman impact, but to the entire syncretic process which combined various ethnic heterogeneous elements on the European territory, to create the multicultural context of the European Union.

Another contributing element reducing the diversification produced by the Middle Ages among the countries, was the creation of a **historical synchronism** in their evolution, caused, to a large extent, by an all-European economic and political development. Under the auspices of this historical synchronism events took place separately, without apparent connection, yet in parallel. Such were, between 1820 and 1830, the revolutionary movements in Italy, Spain, France, Sardinia, Russia, and the Romanian Principality. They were generated by different ideals: the idea of a democratic and unified republic in Italy; an armed insurrection in Spain; the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in France; the achievement of independence in Belgium, the recognition of Serbian independence; the removal of fanariot regimes imposed by the Ottoman empire upon the Romanian Principality; the declaration of Greek independence, or the removal of monarchic absolutism and medieval rule in Russia. All these simultaneous European revolutionary movements led to a stronger sense of national consciousness among peoples, and the acceleration of capitalist development throughout the entire European continent.

There were also moments of European induced synchronism when, in the 19th century, extended travel and exchanges of ideas allowed the slogan of the French revolution, *Liberte, egalite, fraternite*, to resound all over. The economic, social, and political obstacles which
stood in the way of capitalist development and prevented the growth of industry and trade, the maintenance of absolutist regimes and national oppression created in Europe an atmosphere favorable to the 1848 outbreaks. Induced synchronism had not only a chronological effect (meaning that the revolutions occurred during the same year in Paris, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Berlin, Venice, and the two Romanian Principalities), but also indicated large similarities in their adopted platforms, temporary forms of government, constitutions, rights and freedoms, even the appeal to armed force. That the revolutions were all defeated in 1849 yet continued to have a wide resonance, many consequences and effects is the result of historical synchronism.

In the 19th century, another proof of synchronism is evidenced by a new concept developed among intellectuals, European courts, and peoples: the concept of nation. In the efforts and struggle for the establishment of European national states, an important part was played not only by national consciousness, societal evolution, and the need for modernizing institutions, but international conjecture which led some countries to help the creation of national states mostly in order to minimalize the power, influence, and domination of other countries over those states. Regarding this synchronistic process lasting for over a decade, the Romanians were the first to form a national state. They were followed by Italy and Germany, three new countries reflected by the map of Europe, uniting historical provinces sharing common ethnicity, territorial, linguistic, and cultural characteristics.

In the new national states, Romania included, historical synchronism went on based upon common legislation, appropriate institutions, and economic, social, and legislative reforms.
All these led to a uniform, homogeneous, political and economic framework within which European countries evolved towards the 20th century. This chapter should calm euro skeptics: the European Union is not an entity with real differences. To the contrary, as the emblem of the European Union proclaims, *unity within diversity*, it has deep historical roots, a common past which must not be idealized, yet must not be minimalized either.

The phenomenon of *synergy* is clearly reflected in history, where associations, alliances, connections, understandings, and partnerships complete the generic meaning of the term and represent the essence of historical activity throughout time, particularly during the last several centuries. Bilateral or multilateral alliances concluded during the 20th century, from the League of Nations, the Little Entente or the Balkan Pact, and the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis, have attracted the support and cooperation of one country with another, sometimes to the benefit of those countries, other times, however, mere synergetic alliances leading to the start of huge European and world wars.

A strange instance of synergy occurred during the Second World War, represented by the alliance between the United States and United Kingdom on the one hand, countries fighting in the name of democracy and freedom, and a totalitarian, revisionist state, the USSR, which used force against neighbors through annexation of territories, as was Romania's case. Even though it represents a bizarre synergy, the alliance can nonetheless be given a generally acceptable explanation: only by acting synergistically, by association, the two were able to confront the powerful German war machine.
To conclude my discussion of **syncretism**, **synchronism**, and **synergy** as forms of manifestation of history's advancement, I must point out that the beneficent year 1989 returned a large part of Europe (Romania included) to the family of democratic countries. It contributed to the rebirth of the democratic state, the shift to a market economy, the reappearance of political pluralism, and respect for the rights of man. This evolution of the countries from the old communist camp, including Romania, their ability to absorb the benefits of democracy from the example of the countries with a longer tradition in this regard represents a type of historical **syncretism**. Furthermore, the fact that the evolution of the countries which manifested their desire to join the European Union follows common criteria for adherence established at the Copenhagen summit, and include the creation of a functional economic market, the ascertaining of the stability of institutions guaranteeing the survival of democracy, human rights, the protection of minorities and the fulfillment of obligations regarding political, economic, and monetary objectives, as well as the adoption of the common **aqui** represents a manifestation of historical **synchronism**.

Lastly, the most persuasive example of historical **synergy** is illustrated by the dynamism of alliances and associations leading to the creation of the European Union. What began as a community based upon economic interests initiated by six European nations has become, within 50 years and seven waves of enlargement, a massive association of twenty seven countries (maybe more soon) including 500 million inhabitants who follow common principles and rules. The existence of common plans offers uniqueness to the European Union, demonstrating something history was never able to achieve before on the part of member states: the conscious sacrifice of a portion of their sovereignty in favor of the
common European institutions it established.

At the foundation of the creation of Europe stood the synergetic desire of countries to work together, convinced they can obtain better results at a European rather than a national level. In Romania we say: "Unity makes might." In this case, the aphorism expresses the yearning of the Romanian people for European values.

Economic and social politics, the creation of an all-European identity, the introduction of a European notion of citizenship in parallel to the national one, the development of a security and justice zone, the equalization of European legislation with preponderance over the national one, offer as many encouraging answers to the question: "What kind of Europe are we leaving for our children?

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1 Minodora Perovici , Romania in Europe (Editura Corint, Bucharest, 2008 ).


4 Dan Berindei, “Revoluția de la 1821 in Principatele Române” in Academia Română, “*Istoria Românilor*” (Editura Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 2003), 21 – 49.