

**UNIVERSITY "BABEȘ BOLYAI" CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY
DOCTORAL PHILOSOPHY SCHOOL**

***THE BLACK SEA
IN GHEORGHE I. BRĂȚIANU'S VISION***

PHD THESIS SUMMARY

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The Black Sea in Gheorghe I. Brătianu's vision

Summary

Keywords: Gheorghe I. Brătianu, Black Sea, The Danube, Eastern Question, Fernand Braudel, Simion Mehedinti, Nicolae Iorga, geopolitical, geohistory, geostrategical, structuralism, history, philosophy of history, the formation of the Romanian people, the Annales School, collective imagination, the history of the mentalities, Dobrogea, Euxin Pontus, the Genoese trade, Pompiliu Teodor, the turntable of the international trade, migratory peoples, the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Greek fire, the Greek colonies.

The present paper aims to study - and thus attempt to understand - from the perspective of philosophy, which is the synthesis dedicated by Gh.I. Brătianu, one of the great contemporary Romanian historians, to the Black Sea. The geopolitical metaphor of the place that Romanians can claim in this part of Europe and the world, a symbol of a partially repeatable, partially renewed configuration, of factors and relations between peoples and state entities, the Black Sea enters the history of Romanian philosophy and that of universal philosophy as an attempt to conceptualize spatiality by a geo-historical type.

Recent historical events, very close to present times, highlight the geostrategic importance of the Black Sea, the area around which our country, or rather the Romanian state formations, often acted alongside its evolution as a hinterland.

Any polyangular, objective, incisive scrutiny on the Pontic space can not be achieved without resorting to the complex synthesis of our great historian, Gheorghe I. Brătianu, who in this analysis "betrays" an impetuous structure of philosopher and philosopher of history.

That is why, in the current geopolitical context, it is proper that *The Black Sea. From the beginnings to the Ottoman conquest* to be highlighted, valorized and applied in the geostrategic paradigm predicted by our great Brătianu.

In the Introduction I attempted to motivate the basis that led me to choose this theme, to review the Romanian dowry, quite dull of the works in which geography fuses with history in a philosophical concept, to demonstrate and to highlight the importance of this area, as well as the implications the geopolitical and geostrategic anchoring may have for the field of political philosophy.

In the next chapter, Gheorghe I. Brătianu, historian and philosopher of history, I followed the views of historians, philosophers and culture people, who presented with arguments the philosophical component of Brătianu's personality as well as the philosophical nature floating over his synthesis content. We also noticed the methodological and approaching influence of the Annales School on his formation and consecration as a historian, but also as a sophisticated analyst of collective mentalities. I also illustrated his vocation, training and personality, bringing to light the data about his biography, his scientific contributions, but also his old interest in elaborating his synthesis.

In the chapter entitled *Philosophical problem of the Black Sea*, I highlighted the importance of some Romanian authors who have shed their concerns in the melting pot in which geography mingles prodigiously with history and philosophy; and here we have to remember Vasile Pârvan with his precious *Getica*, the geographer Simion Mehedinți with his anthropological studies, Lucian Blaga with his famous trilogies, Vasile Bancilă with an essay about Transylvania, Mircea Eliade, Emil Cioran and Nicolae Noica, who, in their brilliant writings, impregnate the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic territory with a genuine philosophical essence. Then to enumerate authors who have contributed to the Romanian historiography on the Black Sea. Though their number is small, we can say that the imposing figure of Iorga covers the poverty of preoccupations in the period preceding Brătianu. Besides Iorga I identified a tangential reference study by C. Marinescu, and the content of Mihai Berza's work, *La Mer Noire at the fin du Moyen Age*, published in 1941, unfortunately was not accessible to us.

In the subchapter on the Gh.I. Brătianu's historiographical concerns I brought to light the author's old interest in this area of the world, illustrated primarily by the successful doctoral work, in which the Genoese trade in the Black Sea in the 13th century is very extensive and documented, a work published in France, eulogiously received by the prominent chroniclers of the French intelligentsia.

Through another subchapter - *The Black Sea as a synthesis of philosophical relevance* - I am trying to expose the philosophical visions of some Romanian authors (Pompiliu Teodor, BP Hasdeu, Nicolae Iorga, C. Rădulescu-Motru, DD Roșca, Lucian Blaga, Aurel Pentelescu) on the Romanian space, visions that confirm the assertion that Gh.I. Brătianu's work is a synthesis of philosophical relevance.

Similarities between the Gh.I. Brătianu's *The Black Sea* and Fernand Braudel's *The Mediterranean Sea* are the subject of another subchapter, in which the two devalue their "weaknesses" to the rules of the Annales School.

In chapter entitled *The Black Sea Issues in the synthesis of Gh.I. Brătianu* I did an analysis of the geopolitical importance of the Black Sea in antiquity, an assessment of the economic, political and military implications in the Early Middle Ages, but I am also concerned with the popularization of the author's views on the evolution of the Romanian countries regarding the access to the sea. At the end of this chapter I characterized the unfortunate situation in which the Black Sea becomes a "Turkish lake".

Gh.I. Brătianu's concerns about the formation of the Romanian people in connection with the Black Sea and the course of the Danube is another chapter in which the author pleads, including the apologetic and religious argumentation, for the age and continuity of the Romanian people on this territory.

Concerning the chapter *The study of the past as a basis for forecasting for the future*, I note that the author emphasizes the necessity of historical knowledge for setting up the prerequisites for forecasting the future. Through his vision of the geopolitical and strategic importance of the Black Sea area, the author draws attention to his ability to anticipate events and prefigure competitions to master or control this geographic complex. And in the subchapter on the status of the Black Sea during the Second World War and the post-war period, Brătianu reviews the treaties that have defined the status of the sea, focusing on the Montreux Convention of 1936, which remains, with some minor modifications, still in force today.

Another chapter of the thesis is devoted to the problem of Brătianu's synthesis anchored in the field of philosophy of history, starting from the presentation of the new school of history - "the new history", the school that Brătianu turned towards the methodology of the French history, in which the mentalities game plays an important role in defining and reconstructing history.

In the next chapter I am presenting Gh.I. Brătianu as a forerunner of structuralism, proven by embracing the theory of the factors interaction, a title that the historian from Cluj, Maria Teodor, supports in a special study dedicated to our historian.

In *The Historiographical and Political Legacy of Gheorghe I. Brătianu's Monograph*, I am sharing the scientific impact of the monograph, as well as the intuition of the genius historian, capable of anticipating the long-term historical trends, but also validating his apprehensions of

the behavior of a great power in the region. Brătianu's predisposition to historical philosophy and political philosophy brings him closer to the historiographical school established around the „Annales” magazine, an approach proven by its approach based on interdisciplinarity, on the use of anthropological, geographic, economic, sociological, philosophical and economic arguments and also on using dialectics and counterfactual arguments.

In *Conclusions*, I have summarized the importance of synthesis, highlighting its philosophical valences and using a review of the ideas that crossed our work as a red thread, such as:

- the new paradigm in the conception of history, generated by the Annales School at the beginning of the 20th century, promotes the role of collective mentalities and social imagination in the configuration of the historical fact;
- the historian Alexandru-Florin Platon reveals the comparative research method used by Gh.I. Brătianu, a method that led him to the discovery of repetitive acts and phenomena, invested with the attribute of permanence and profound forces of duration;
- Maria Cristina, but also the historian mentioned above, showed the "kinship" between Fernand Braudel's "Black Sea" and Brătianu's "Mediterranean Sea";
- Gh.I. Brătianu is not only a scholar, he is also a philosopher of history; not only does he make an account of facts and historical or historical events, but he also makes use of an assessment, analysis and interpretation of them, operations that transcend and surpass the field of activity and expression specific to a historian;
- both Braudel and Brătianu, each in his own way, are forerunners of the historical theory of "world systems", a theory that enshrines the principle that what is to be overridden is not the national states, but "the world systems", a principle found in the present day with the well-known political scientist American Huntington;
- Under the influence of the philosopher Henri Bergson, in Brătianu's conception, changes in the perimeter of the sea, but also in history in general, occur in "durations", a concept that resonates with reference to the millennial duration, to the chronologically large opening;
- in the conception of Brătianu's scientific discourse, the Black Sea becomes a character with his own biography, and the theater offered by the Pontic Basin favors considerations that overcome the regional problems, referring to forces that act in the field of universal history;

- our historian recommends himself in his analysis as a follower of "universalism," agreeing that the history of mankind is like a single body, a unique organism with multiple aspects;
- Brătianu thinks that the beginning of the Romanian state formation is associated with natural determinants: the Mountain and the Sea;
- our author points out that the Black Sea possesses some key strategic points, whose control also means ensuring the domination of the entire Pontic basin; moreover, he considers that this basin is a turning point in international trade;
- the reference to the usefulness of the Chinese wall, built in the 3rd century BC, is a concession made to the cliometrics or the counterfactual history, (recourse to an imaginative exercise: what would have happened to Europe if the invasion of the peoples of Northeast would have started five centuries earlier, that is, at a time when the defensive system of the Roman defensive system would not have come to pass);
- the general interpretation of the *The Black Sea* monograph undoubtedly leads to a philosophical hermeneutics, and from this point of view, Brătianu appears as a historian converted into a philosopher and as a philosopher converted into a historian.

Through the "segmentation" of the Brătianu's monograph, through the attempt to value a historical synthesis in a philosophical key, I tried to highlight the geostrategic, geopolitical and geo-historical meanings of a heterogeneous space whose significance has lasted a significant period, in lateness and obscurity . The September 11, 2001 event brought about new reconsiderations of the configurations of the "global systems" and unlocked a new optic to the need to provide control strategies in the world's vital points. The recent occupation of Crimea by Russia is an expression of the need and ambition to ensure these strategies.

The Black Sea in Gheorghe I. Brătianu's vision does not claim to be a research that exhausts the subject, or to contain an exhaustive debate and analysis, it does not claim to be either one of the obviously esoteric works does it have a striking, or an overwhelmingly original one; the present work would mean opening to a barely explored horizon where a determined and dominated space by the marine factor in its historical and ethnopsychological metamorphosis is interpreted in a philosophical dimension and in a manner in which geopolitical and geostrategic paradigms become clear working tools.

For the success of the interpretation, exegesis or hermeneutics of any discourse, works, the philosophical leverage of thought, the love of wisdom, is undoubtedly necessary. Co-option

of philosophy in any field of research, theoretical, scientific, literary, artistic is certainly not only necessary but also productive.

In this paper I have therefore attempted to place under the magnificence of the philosophical observation the effervescence of a world over which the footprint of space has radically settled, in a conjunction that the Romanian historian uses ideally to show its generous philosophical and visionary availability. The philosophical approach could not be discarded by the historical one; the development of a complex synthesis, on a time and space coordinate, had to operate with formulas such as historical reconstructions. By reading *The Black Sea ...* and, implicitly, the present work, creates the reader's opportunity to discover the philosophical meaning of a historical work and, in particular, the magisterial clairvoyance, the author's anticipatory capacity for the role of the pontic basin in contemporary times.

At the same time, I tried to support the idea that Brătianu's work on the Black Sea, although written many decades ago (unfortunately, this work stopped only halfway, the second part, namely the Black Sea from the Ottoman conquest until the history of the life of the historian, has been a prematurely abandoned desire), provides a valid and effective tool for contemporary researchers and observers in the field of history, philosophy, geostrategy and geopolitics, in deciphering the interests of the great powers of the world and, implicitly, but also to develop the strategies needed to control this space, at a time when conflicts and disputes of influence areas have become increasingly acute.

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