

**Military operations and the occupation regime of the Central Powers in
Brăila county
(1916 – 1918).**

The German sources perspective

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Keywords: The First World War, Romanian Front, military operations, military occupation, the Central Powers, war archaeology.

The motivation to research the proposed theme can be explained from different points of view. First of all, there is no study to present the general image of the entire area of the occupied Brăila. For many reasons, Brăila county played a very important role for the Central Powers, especially for Germany: Brăila represented a strategic defensive and offensive point which closed the Siret Line at the Danube; Brăila's port was the most important place of the cereals' production and shipping system; the modern port and the railway offered the means to properly shipping the Romanian cereals and later on, the Ukrainian cereals to Germany. After occupying two thirds of the Romanian territory, Germany had a major purpose: the requisition of the two most important resources of the country: the oil and the cereals. For two years, between January 1917 – November 1918, Brăila will be one of the most important towns for the Central Powers.

Second of all, the scientific research derives from older preoccupations which are presented in a volume published in 2012 at „Editura Sfântul Ierarh Nicolae” from Brăila:

”The Monography of the Scorțaru Nou village”. The study of the archive documents and the field researches from the area of Scorțaru Nou village brought to light many information and archaeological evidence not only of the battles but of the occupation also, wich took place during the winter, between 1916 – 1917: documents of the Romanian administration and of the occupational administration, trenches, railway, bridges over the Buzău River, funerary monuments. Also, between 2012 – 2013, I published two articles about two archaeological discoveries during the First World War: an austro-hungarian funerary monument wich I discovered in Sihleanu village, Brăila county and sections of the narrow railway build by the Germans, which I discovered in Scorțaru Nou village, Brăila county.

The research of the proposed theme has three major objectives: the description of the military operations developed by the Central Powers on Brăila county's territory (operations wich represented the end of the military campaign in Romania and wich secured the control of the Brăila's port for 23 months); the analyses, from the perspective of the First World War's archaeology, of the material evidence discovered in the area of the Scorțaru Nou and Măxineni villages, Brăila county, together with the corelation of all these material evidence with the written documents; the analyses of the German military occupation of Brăila county's territory. Being a local history work, I wish for it to become one of the pieces that will help recompose the history of the Romania's participation at the First World War.

The doctoral thesis is divided in two volumes. The first volume has five chapters. The first chapter, ”Neutrality and Propaganda”, has nine subchapters and it reffers to the political, economical and social context of the port-town Brăila during the Romania's neutrality. The second chapter, ”Military operations of the Central Powers in the area of Brăila county, December 1916 – January 1917”, has eight subchapters and contains information about the development of the Central Powers' military operations in Brăila county's area., from German perspective. The military operations described in this section reffer to both the battles wich took place on the Brăila county's territory and the construction of the defensive structures by the Central Powers on the Lower Siret Line. Also, the chapter reffers only to the military operations that took place between December 1916 – January 1917.

Chapter III, "Military operations, propaganda and peace negotiations at Lower Danube, February 1917 – November 1918", has nine subchapters which describe the military operations (actions and espionage) which took place between February 1917 – November 1918: local battles, the military campaign in the summer of 1917, the German propaganda on the Lower Siret front line, the negotiations from Brăila regarding the supplement of the Armistice Convention from Focșani, the battle from Galați between Romanians and Russians, the separate peace between Romania and the Central Powers and the retirement of the Central Powers' armies from the occupied territory of Romania.

Chapter IV, "Applications of the First World War Archaeology in the area of Brăila county" contains eight subchapters which refer to the archaeological discoveries during The First World War from the area of Scorțaru Nou and Măxineni villages. It is also described the way in which the archaeological discoveries become very important in completing the entire picture of The First World War's history in Romania, the occupation of Brăila county.

Chapter V, " Brăila under the German occupation (1916 – 1918)", has fifteen subchapters. In this chapter I referred to the concept of the military occupation from the international law perspective, I made a comparative study of the military occupational system undertaken by the Central Powers in the occupied European territories and I generally described the German military occupation in Romania, the occupation of the city and county of Brăila. The chapter ends with the presentation of two memoirs journals, one belonging to lieutenant Fritz Ortlepp, the other one – to the general Robert Kosch. The enclosure of the first volume contains maps, photos, diagrams and tables which represent unpublished sources and offer an imagistic wholeness to the entire work.

The second volume contains a selection of German documents from The German Military Archives of Freiburg and Berlin. The documents are chronologically and thematically ordered. Some of these documents are completely translated and others, only partially.