

**THE UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA
FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES**

**SUMMARY OF THE DOCTOR'S
DEGREE THESIS**

**GHEORGHE CHIȚU – REPRESENTATIVE
OF MODERN LIBERALISM IN ROMANIA**

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One of the latest concerns of the Romanian historiography refers to the assessment or reassessment of the role of outstanding personalities, who lived, distinguished themselves and were in a permanent relationship with a particular area of the Romanian space, with axiological connotations at the national level.

Within the gallery of personalities who have contributed effectively to the institutional and political modernization of Romania we can also mention radical liberal Gheorghe Chitu from Craiova. Along with famous politicians of the second half of the nineteenth century, he tried and succeeded to a large extent to distinguish himself as a true leader of his generation.

We have proposed to do an overall research of Gheorghe Chitu's work, at the political, social and cultural levels, which our historiography lacks. Typical of our approach and interpretation manner to the sporadic and earlier studies of monographic origin, which were dedicated to him, is, first, the primacy that we want to give to his political approach, as leader of the National Liberal Party in the configuration and essentialization of his work.

Our research and analysis regard the recovery of a significant number of historical sources, coming from the central local archive, parliamentary debates, media, unpublished manuscripts of the Romanian Academy as well as a rich adjacent bibliography. We have tried to use all these in full respect towards the technical rigors of scientific research, but also in a profitable spirit of understanding, to exempt the paper of unnecessary loads, whilst maintaining as far as possible, intact, both the argumentative effectiveness and academic style.

The present paper aims at placing the politician from Dolj within the system of ideas of the second half belonging to of the nineteenth century, a period when in our country, ideologies and parties take shape and divide. To our knowledge no one has ventured so far to bend on this issue thoroughly, which can be easily determined by reading the studied literature.

Due to these reasons, we have considered it useful to reconstitute the political evolution of Gheorghe Chitu, from the young Commissioner of propaganda to the complex politician, parliamentarian and Minister of the offices run by IC Bratianu.

The thesis is divided into six chapters, which are also divided into several subsections, as it follows: CHAPTER I – THE ORIGIN. INTELLECTUAL TRAINING. EARLY STEPS IN POLITICS (The family; Studies; participation in the Revolution of 1848; Leader of the unionist movement; Representative of the Romanian law; Mayor of Craiova), CHAPTER II – GHEORGHE CHITU’S PUBLISHING ACTIVITY (Beginnings; The unionist Publishing; Other journalistic concerns; Supporter of the typographical life in Craiova); CHAPTER III - A RADICAL LIBERAL, DEPUTY IN THE ROMANIAN PARLIAMENT (Admission in the Parliament; Political and ideological Clarifications during 1866-1871; The attitude toward the “Straussberg affair”; “the Jewish problem” and the anti-dynastic movement; The debut of the ministerial career); CHAPTER IV - CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE (Teacher and pace maker in modern Romanian education; Minister of Education and Religious Affairs; Promoter of legislation on education; Moderator of the relationship ministry - school auditors; Mihai Eminescu episode; A supporter of the national culture; The support for the Romanian students abroad; The model schools for girls, the development of higher education and schools outside the Romanian borders; The extension of the professional education; The reorganization of rural education; The General Council of Education; The Introduction of merit salaries for teachers; The adoption of the regulations for boarding schools and hand work in the girls’ schools; The support of the “Teachers of all Grades Society in Romania” and the “Society for Teaching the Romanian people”; The relationships with great men of culture of that time: BP Hașdeu, Titu Maiorescu Gr Tocilescu Spiru Haret, Caesar Bolliac Alecu Russo, August Treboniu Laurian, Gr Stefanescu etc; Animator of the historical research development; Member of the Romanian Academy; A supporter of the great libraries in the country); CHAPTER V – LAST YEARS OF LIFE AND ACTIVITY (Participant in the adoption of the legislation establishing the National Bank and the Agricultural Credit; connections with king Carol I and Prime Minister I.C Bratianu; Polyvalent Minister: Finance, Internal Affairs, Justice, Public Instruction and Religion; The last years of public activity; The withdrawal to Mirila; Gheorghe Chitu’s Passing); CHAPTER VI - Gheorghe Chitu IN THE MEMORY OF THE POSTERITY.

Chapter I entitled **Origins. Intellectual training. Early steps in politics** adds

significant clarifying on its genealogical roots and the role of his family (Marin, Peter, Mary, Lucilla, Aurelia, John, Dragomir Chitu, CM Ciocazan) in the economic and social policy of Dolj district. It is clear that George Chitu can be clearly considered a representative of the typical middle class that developed in our country after Cuza's reforms.

Supported by the family and other influential figures in Dolj, he was considered a remarkable student at the Central School from Craiova. Strongly influenced by teachers such as I. Maiorescu Gh Plesoianu or C. Lecca, he was part of a golden generation which included such emblematic figures as: Gh Magheru, V. Boierescu, G. Vernescu or Titu Maiorescu. He completed studies in our country at St. Sava College in Bucharest, and after the Revolution of 1848 he integrated into the academic atmosphere in Vienna, where he studied law and philology and came into contact with prestigious names of the European scientific life, which marked his ulterior conduct.

Gheorghe Chitu's liberal political formation can be claimed from its active participation in the events of 1848. Coming into contact with the actions initiated by the secret society "Brotherhood", he became close to the radical liberal ideology, promoted by IC Bratianu C.A. Rosetti, of whom he was attached, not only because of his youth, but also because of his petty-bourgeois origin, generated by his family's status of merchants.

During the preparatory phase of the revolution, we can assume an involvement of Gheorghe Chitu in the elaboration, in Craiova, of some major programmatic documents, such as "The revolutionary program" and the proclamation "The Romanians from the Moldavian and Romanian Principalities". Even if it were not the case, we cannot risk admitting that on the ground of the ideas circulated by these, designed to modernize Romanian society, independence and national unity the young revolutionary was formed and militated.

As Commissioner of propaganda, a challenging and highly responsible mission, Gheorghe Chitu was active in the Club led by I. Maiorescu counteracting the local counter-actions and contributed to the establishment of the Civic Guard of Craiova. He also remarked himself in the occurrence, preparation and distribution of the newspaper "THE NATIONAL" and was formed in the spirit of the attachment to national claims of

the Romanians under foreign occupation.

Together with other representatives of the forty-eighters generation, Gheorghe Chitu ranged from those who prepared and carried out the act of January 24, 1859, in Oltenia. He was a member of the Unionist Committee in Craiova, but above all, he initiated and led “TheVoice of the Olt”, later “The Olt “, the greatest unionist publication of Oltenia. A true tribune of the militant union, the newspaper became an effective weapon of political confrontation, where the future politician in training shows that he is not an exclusivist, respecting the others’ right of opinion.

He was one of the fervent supporters of the political program initiated by Al. I. Cuza and his associates. He enthusiastically welcomed Cuza in Craiova, in 1859, and together with other leaders of the National Party he declared himself a supporter of Cuza’s positive initiatives. At his suggestion “TheVoice of the Olt” reappeared, which concentrated all the local progressive forces, showing that the politically Craiova city could no longer be considered a conservative and single-color society.

The professional and political rise of Gheorghe Chitu cannot be sufficiently understood sufficiently without shaping his training in law. With law studies in Vienna, he returned to his hometown where he was named president of the Commercial Court, Prosecutor of the Court of Appeal or lawyer. He distinguished himself in important trials, as a defender of both the educational and cultural institutions as well as ordinary people. Author of a course on Roman Law and other specialized studies, Professor of Law, he climbed up all the steps up to the dignified position of Minister of Justice. As parliamentarian and political figure he often used his legal knowledge, supporting a large number of legal acts, constitutionally based, which were absolutely necessary to the process of modernization in Romania.

Even if he was appointed mayor of Craiova by Mihail Kogălniceanu in 1864, on behalf of Al. I. Cuza, Gheorghe Chitu, faithful to the radical ideas promoted by the Liberals, was in favor of bringing and establishing the foreign prince.

As head councillor of Craiova, he aimed at the good functioning of socio-cultural institutions (theater, school, church), of the Civic Guard as well as at the rhythmic supply of population in hygienic-sanitary conditions with products of strict necessity. It was a useful experience, which he would use in his activity of politician, minister and

parliamentarian.

Chapter II, **Gheorghe Chitu's Publishing Activity**, focuses on the first attempts during school time, followed by the literary concerns of the student years in Vienna.

The significant moment is placed in the period when he was editor of "The Voice of the Olt" and "The Olt", where he manifested himself as a unionist journalist. He is, through the lines he wrote, the man of an era dominated by the romantic spirit of his generation. The articles written or endorsed by him were crossed by the national idea, with concern for the plastic, colorful phrase and detailed descriptions.

After 1870, his publishing activity diminishes, Gheorghe Chitu showing interest in writing articles with philological character, focusing on the Latinity of the Romanian people and language. He is at the same time, printer and book publisher in Craiova.

Chapter III, **A radical liberal, Deputy in the Romanian Parliament**, is the main part of the paper starting from his admission in the Parliament and the political and ideological clarifications, visible in the period 1866-1871. From the perspective of the liberal-radical doctrine he was a true messenger of voters from Oltenia, position that made him understand and clearly state his views and of those he represented, be an offensive parliamentarian in parallel with his status of versatile public personality, a liaison intended to harmonize the convergence of the initiatives of the community with those of the whole nation.

On the background of these ideas, Gheorghe Chitu made endeavors to contribute to the formation from fragments of a system of thought and action, meant to remove even partially, the ideological shortage, visible in the liberal cabinets.

We have tried to emphasize that politician Gheorghe Chitu kept a constant own conduct, without moving, even temporarily, to various liberal dissidents formed at that time. He was a partisan of the rigorous party discipline, called for political indestructibility and he was a skilful coalition builder in his own party and sometimes with elements from the political parties in opposition.

We have not omitted his education, his affiliation to Freemasonry, especially to its humanistic ideals, which are linked to those of classical liberalism. Highly important are his special relationships with IC Bratianu whom he would follow in his career, not as a docile proselyte, but in the posture of a limb of ideas with his own attitudes and views.

We emphasize that from the group of Liberals from Craiova, he was influenced in a profound manner by Emanoil Chinezu, by his genuine liberal works and ideas.

Gheorghe Chitu's parliamentary interventions, in his first years in the National Representation, have proved to be principled, reasoned, consistent, proving vocation and passion. He remains, however, fairly generous to the forty-eighters' ideas, focusing on simple national objectives, arguing strongly the cause of the Romanians over the Carpathians. The organization of the armed forces Law of 1868, resulted in strengthening the defense capability of the country, providing favorable conditions for obtaining the state's independence, by means of arms.

Around 1870, after the Oltean politician involved, expressing constructive points of view in the "Jewish problem", the "Straussberg affair" or the anti-dynastic movement, we could draw the definitive conclusion that his political profile had become fully mature, beyond the states and attitudes typical to the young age. No longer a mere 'consumer' of the political life, but one of its builders he contributed fully, with certain nonchalance even when approaching the most difficult problems of the parliamentary agenda.

Distinct voice in the political landscape, Gheorghe Chitu makes a stand during the big conservative government when discussing an important set of laws (the establishment of the tobacco monopoly, the status of the superior clergy, The stamp law, The pay of the lower military body, the changing of the Criminal Code, the taxation of trade with spirits, The Code of the Military Justice, The change of the state's accountancy Law, the land reform for the newlyweds, The Trade Convention with Austria-Hungary), but also the formation in 1875 of the National Liberal Party.

In 1876, he begins his activity as a Minister of Public Education and Religious Affairs in the Office of MK Epureanu also retaining the portfolio in the Government of IC Bratianu simultaneously carrying a persistent parliamentary life. On the eve of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, his political positions coincided with those of major European politicians, showing a careful and objective account of the evolution of international relations.

During the course of hostilities, Gheorghe Chitu had to cope with all the complications that occurred within the Ministry he administered. Energetic spirit, he

took measures to adapt education to the state of war, most teachers ranging among the first on the list of financial supporters of the army. More than ever he became close to I. C. Bratianu replacing him as interim, when appropriate, even for prime minister.

As a parliamentarian he showed lucidity, political flexibility and a unique mental strength. In special circumstances he did not hesitate to fight even his own party colleagues, sometimes going to the National Liberal Party President, I. C. Bratianu.

He proved that he was an independent parliamentary, free and intelligent, considering the court of law an ideal place for expressing human feelings on behalf of those he represented. Furthermore, he remarked as a distinguished exponent of the liberal current making common cause with other parliamentarians from his party, in adopting the most important acts of the moment.

Chapter IV, **Contributions to the Development of Education and Culture**, is concerned with the most important area in which Gheorghe Chitu activated. A well trained school teacher, with good knowledge in of the realities of the Romanian education, he was a fervent supporter of its values and the process of modernization that foreshadowed Haret's reforms. As a Minister he was the initiator and promoter of legislative acts which considered the hiring, promotion and remuneration of teachers, the organization of the school inspectorates, curriculum and plan changes, etc.

His constant concern was to establish optimal relations between the center and territory, with emphasis on introducing elements of decentralization. This is where the episode of his special relationship with Mihai Eminescu can be integrated. He also supported a significant number of young people for scholarships abroad, and made endeavors to expand women's education, professions and high education. Gheorghe Chitu maintained close ties, supporting them in different times and situations, with great men of culture of the time, such as BP Haşdeu, Titu Maiorescu Grigore Tocilescu, Spiru Haret, Cezar Bolliac, August Treboniu Laurian, Alecu Russo, Gr Stefanescu etc. His merits being recognized, he became a member of the Romanian Academy, supporting the highest scientific forum of the country, not only by its own efforts but also financially.

His prodigious work in education is characterized by the realism of the ideas and the draft legislation proposed, by the concern to connect school to reality, to allow it

meet the socio-economic status of the country, the scientific and technical progress of the time, and also the demands of the country's future, which were foreseen with acuity. Therefore, Gheorghe Chitu's regulations met the historical requirements of Romania's development around and after gaining Independence.

It had begun the time for a broad debate on economic, social and political reforms; in the ideational plan there were discussions about the "social elite" and its social and intellectual sources, about national sovereignty and democratic rights and, in this context, about a social and political life based on morality and order, all closely related to training young generation, to the development of Romanian education and national culture.

Gheorghe Chitu's pleading met the generous ideas of some of his colleagues from the Party, Parliament or Government. For these reasons, its legislative initiatives were based on principles that were the foundation of democratization and modernization of Romanian education, of integrating the requirements for material progress, prosperity and historical emancipation of the new independent state's citizens, that was to connect to the European culture and civilization.

The views of Minister Gheorghe Chitu, reveal features and objectives pursued and applied consistently: the compulsoriness and gratuitousness of the primary education; equal training and education equal in the urban as well as rural areas; the capitalization of the Romanian school's traditions; the realistic and practical character of a fully leveled education; the emphasis on the school's educative character; adequate preparation and continuous improvement of teaching staff, permanent call to modern teaching methods; providing a suitable material base for schools.

On another note, Gheorghe Chitu was a consistent supporter of the Romanian culture and art. As a member of the Romanian Academy, he was in constant contact with the elites of spirituality in our country. His name may be invoked in connection with the formation and shaping of important personalities from various fields: painting, history, mathematics, literature, etc. Constructive spirit, realistic, permanently ready to make efforts, he contributed to putting the national culture in the grounds and ideals of the generation from the turn of the 19th-20th centuries.

Chapter V, entitled **Last Years of Life and Activity** is concerned with the

political man from Dolj as a parliamentarian, promoter or supporter of some laws which were relevant to Romania's stability and progress, for example, establishing the National Bank and The Agricultural Credit. He continued the good relationship with IC Bratianu and remained around sovereign Charles I for a long time.

During 1881 - 1885, he successively held the portfolios of Finance, Justice, Internal Affairs and Public Instruction. We emphasize his involvement in all these functions, where he campaigned claiming respect for individual freedoms, effective administrative decentralization, for the democratization of the army and judiciary electivity.

As a Minister of Public Instruction for a shorter period, he was concerned with the development of preschool education, maintained good relations with Titu Maiorescu (whom he reinstated in higher education), Gregory Tocilescu or B.P. Haşdeu.

After 1885, Gheorghe Chitu was less active, although he held important positions in the Parliament. He especially distinguished himself as a member of the Commission of marking the border with Austria-Hungary and was one of those who made efforts, with IC Bratianu, to save the National Liberal Party in 1888, before the offensive of the United Opposition.

Since 1892, we find him, along with his family, at the estate of Mirila, Olt county. These are difficult years, of great suffering, followed by the death of the great politician.

Gheorghe Chitu's passing drove out the political life one of IC Bratianu's and National Liberal Party's most important "technicians", in the process of strengthening the state, in the late nineteenth century. Animator and competent guide of the school and culture of the national revival, the great patriot from Oltenia illustrated convincingly the period that he crossed, itself extremely important in preparing the national transformations that were to come.

The last chapter, **Gheorghe Chitu in the Memory of Posterity**, focuses on deeds and actions intended to drive out the dust of oblivion that has undeservedly marked his personality for over a century. The sculpture of his bust by the renowned artist C. Balacescu from Gorj, and of another monument at the Palace of Justice in Craiova, the speeches uttered when unveiling these monuments, were ways of expressing significant and realistic characterizations of the multivalent political and cultural man.

In 1904, seven years after his passing, two important papers were published, one incorporating a part of his parliamentary speeches, the other reproducing an expanded reverential speech delivered by Gregory Tocilescu. They certainly are the most important pieces in the category of the historical sources, which any expert considers when they want to research his activity.

For the inter-war period the sources are not very numerous (C. M. Ciocazan, N.Gh. Dinculescu), but they still manage to shape the impact of Gheorghe Chitu's work on public opinion. They refer to the different perspectives of its work: teacher, journalist, politician, official, man of the city.

It has been long until something consistent and systematic appeared in that direction. In 1983, the signatory of these lines sustained at the Faculty of History - Philosophy, University of Bucharest, the final paper, **Gheorghe Chitu, politician and culture man**, coordinated by prof. Dr. N. Isar. In 1999, the paper, slightly extended, was finally printed in Targu Jiu, by the Point Publishing.

Without doubt, a peak time in Gheorghe Chitu's homage is the publishing of the book **Oltenian Prominences. The Chitus**, belonging to the researchers from Craiova, Firescu and I. Patrascu. The book joins other initiatives undertaken after 1989: symposiums, giving his name to educational institutions, addressing the media, lifting a bust on the Alley of Personalities in Craiova.

The thesis includes in addition to a rich bibliography a special one dedicated to Gheorghe Chitu, where we noted his works and articles as well as references to his work and activity.

In Appendices, we alluded to unpublished documents, images and other materials, arranged chronologically, with a manageable list that includes their summary.

All in all, our work proposes a multilateral approach of Gheorghe Chitu's personality, focusing on the least explored dimension, that of politician. We have made efforts to eliminate a series of white spots, or controversial points of view, we have brought into question the original elements, based on published sources or bibliographic sources over time. There are sufficient reasons to fall him into the category of the most important representatives of the Romanian liberalism, his deeds undoubtedly sending to the top-level leaders of the National Liberal Party in the nineteenth century.

His origin and education, his character, the influences of the intellectual and political environment, his gradual but firm rise, put their stamp on everything that has been undertaken to serve the native land and modern Romania.