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A Union in Disarray:
Romanian Nation Building under Astra
in Late-Nineteenth-Century Rural Transylvania and Hungary

by

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ABSTRACT

A Union in Disarray:
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Scholarly studies of the nation as a socially constructed community, while accurate, do not explain how individuals in a predominantly agricultural society build and mobilize a national community outside of traditional political arenas and without the resources of a bureaucratic nation-state. This investigation of late-nineteenth-century Romanian nation building under the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, or Astra, examines the educational and cultural activities Astra used to communicate nationalist messages to Romanian villagers and the responses of those villagers who funded and participated in Astra's movement. I argue that thousands of villagers participated in Astra events because Astra created a forum that addressed their needs and interests and raised their social status. Villagers never achieved equality with their social superiors in Astra, but villagers became more equal to them as Romanians than they had been as mere villagers. It was not easy to incorporate villagers into the association. As this dissertation shows, nation building is a contentious undertaking subject to diverse social pressures and full of internal conflicts and contradictions. Astra leaders hoped to build a unified and prosperous national community, but their initial attempts to transform peasants into rational and efficient farmers with academic programs mostly appealed to Romanian intellectuals. In order to
retain their educated members and to attract peasants to the association, Astra leaders legitimized two competing images of the Romanian national community, one based on the values of educated Romanian professionals and one based on traditional peasant culture. The dual representations of the nation both created the impression that a unified national community existed and underscored the divisions in the community, making it possible to think of the nation as a homogeneous community while simultaneously contesting its boundaries. Resulting contestation, I argue, enabled rural Romanians to challenge Astra's professionals for more influence over the national movement and forced intellectuals to address rural interests. Although this study examines the specifics of Astra's national movement, it also offers a potentially fruitful approach for understanding nation building among other marginal groups in search of greater power and autonomy over their own lives.
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"As water is to fish, light to vision, sun to flora, word to thought, so is nationality to any people," proclaimed Andrei Bârseanu, the vice president of the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People or Astra, at the association's 1908 annual assembly. Into nationality, he continued, "we have been born, it is our mother; if we are truly men, she raised us; if we are free, we move in her; if we are alive, we live in her; if we are upset, she soothes our pain with her national songs; through her we can still speak with our ancestors who lived thousands of years before....Nationality is our ultimate liberty and the sanctuary of our future well-being."

Bârseanu's belief that the Romanian nation was an organic, historical community of unique people whose independence and prosperity could only be secured as a collective entity was widely accepted among early-twentieth-century Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, but it was also a relatively recent perception. Romanian national consciousness was not a natural sensibility. Like any national consciousness, it had to be raised. This study of Romanian nation building in Astra explains how Romanians in the Austro-Hungarian Empire came to believe that nationality was their ultimate liberty and how they raised awareness of their national community among a predominantly rural and semi-literate population. Many Romanian villagers would not recognize the significance of their nationality until after the conclusion of the great war

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1 "Aceea ce este apa pentru pesti... ce este lumina pentru vedere, soarele pentru cresterea plantelor, vorba pentru cugetare, aceea e nationalitatea pentru oricare popor; intr'ansa ne-am nascut, ea este mama noastra; de suntem barbati, ea ne-a crescut; de suntem liberi, intr'ansa ne misca; de suntem vini, intr'ansa traim; de suntem suparat, ne alina durerea cu cantelele nationale; prin ea vorbim si astazi cu parintii noastri, cari au traiat inainte de mii de ani.... Nationalitatea e libertatea noastra cea din urma si limanul salutei noastre viitoare." Andrei Bârseanu. "Discursul de deschidere." Transilvania, 1908, 176.
and the creation of Greater Romania, but impassioned Astra leaders like Bărseanu made it possible for the Romanian peasant to become an integral and active part of the Romanian nation at the end of the nineteenth century.

The history of the Romanian national movement in the Habsburg and in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy after 1867 mirrors Miroslav Hroch's outline of nation building among "smaller European nations," which involves three distinct stages: a period of scholarly interest, an interval of patriotic agitation (activities directed toward increasing national consciousness), and the rise of a mass national movement. Romanian scholarly interest in the nation developed in the eighteenth century among clerics who pursued linguistic and historical investigations. They were the first to write about the Romanian nation as an organic and unique community with an ancient past and an intrinsic right to autonomous existence. In the nineteenth century a small but critical mass of Romanian intellectuals and professionals embraced this idea of the nation. These men and women became the patriotic agitators Hroch's study highlights. Their agitation helped many Romanian villagers to see themselves as members of the Romanian national community.

As part of their patriotic agitation Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania founded Astra in 1861 to promote literary and language studies, enlightened instruction, and cultural activities because they believed that culture and education could raise a subjugated, rural, Romanian people to the status of modern European nationhood.²

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² Miroslav Hroch, Social Preconditions of National Revival in Europe: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Composition of Patriotic Groups among the Smaller European Nations (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985). Hroch is careful to explain that these stages did not have to follow any chronological order or that a national movement had to include all of the stages. Although the Romanian national experience conforms to Hroch's outline, he does not address it.

³ Aware of debates on culture initiated in the discipline of anthropology, I use the term here as Romanians in Transylvania did; to imply literature, song, dance, dress, etc.
Widespread agreement that the Romanian nation existed in latent form convinced the intellectuals that they only needed to wake up the national community to realize its inherent autonomy. Historically the Hungarians and Habsburgs had denied Romanians recognition as a political nation for lack of noble heritage and had excluded them from meaningful participation in the political life of the region.\(^4\) Constitutional experiments the Habsburgs initiated in the early 1860s stimulated Romanian political activity, but mass boycotts of the new imperial parliament among Hungarians, Czechs, and Croats forced the Habsburgs to search for political stability elsewhere. In 1867 the Emperor allied with the Hungarians to create the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy. Control over the eastern half of the empire allowed Hungarians to try to build a Magyar nation-state. Most Romanians refused to acknowledge or participate in the new government and demanded national autonomy.\(^5\) They also initiated a campaign of cultural resistance to Magyarization in order to secure political recognition of their nation outside of the political realm. Astra became the largest and most important organization in the new cultural movement.

The Romanians initially hoped that the crown would turn to them again; but they also reasoned that if they could build and maintain national unity, they could force the Magyar state to recognize their national community and accord the members of the community their inherent rights to autonomy. For three decades Astra promoted scientific

\(^4\)Since the fifteenth century three privileged nations of noble Hungarians (Magyars), Szelkers (Hungarian speaking peoples who settled in eastern Transylvania) and Saxons ruled Transylvania. Peasants, by definition, were excluded from the nations. Since most Romanian nobles assimilated with the dominant nations and since a large majority of the Romanian community’s members were peasants, the community itself was effectively exempt from privileged status. Chapter two deals with this history in greater detail. See also David Prodan, Supplex Libellus Valachorum (Bucureşti: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1984) and Keith Hitchins, The Idea of Nation: The Romanians of Transylvania 1691-1848 (Bucureşti: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1988).

\(^5\) The form of autonomy varied. Initially Romanians demanded the restoration of the autonomous Transylvanian Principality. Later in the nineteenth century Romanian leaders tried to determine what shape
and literary studies as the most effective way to lay a solid foundation upon which to build a Romanian nation worthy of self governance. But the unsuccessful agenda of a learned, national elite convinced Astra leaders to try to enlarge the association's base in the early 1890s. Astra consequently expanded its activities to reach out to Romanian peasants, artisans, and minor merchants in Transylvania and Hungary. To this end Astra leaders strengthened the network of local chapters throughout the region; increased the circulation of newspapers, brochures and calendars deemed appropriate for rural readers; held annual festivals and exhibits commemorating the nation; built museums, rural libraries and schools; and delivered lectures to members of village chapters. Within a few years Astra successfully incorporated members of every socio-economic group into its nation-building campaign. By 1914 the association had carved out an autonomous Romanian cultural space in which Romanians could assert their own national existence in cultural terms in their on-going quest for political autonomy within the Empire.

Inspirations for this study of Romanian nation building in Astra came from scholarly debates on nations and nationalism published at the end of the twentieth century. The organic concept of nationhood that galvanized Romanians, Hungarians, and most other Europeans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was not widely discredited until the 1960s.\textsuperscript{6} Since then scholarly work has focused on the active roles

\textsuperscript{6} There were of course some earlier challenges (e.g. Marxism) to the natural view of nationhood. See for example John D. Bell, \textit{Peasants In Power: Alexander Stamboliski and the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union, 1899-1923} (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977) for an estatist view of socio-political organization. Nonetheless, nationhood was not theoretically problematized until the post-World War II period. See Karl Deutsch, \textit{Nationalism and Social Communication: An Inquiry into the Foundations of Nationality} (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1966) and Ernest Gellner, \textit{Thought and Change} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) for examples of works discrediting the essentialist or organic view of nationhood.
taken by elites in constructing the nation. The primary intention of these "constructionist" approaches is to contrast the conceptualization of nationhood with a population's sense of pre-modern identity and to demonstrate how and why elites instituted the concept of the nation throughout the world. Constructionist approaches do not necessarily deny that a common territory, language, or culture provided a basis for shared identity or consciousness. They do, however, stress that the boundaries which identify the national community are not the product of an organic, national development. People create, contest, and recreate national identities.

Constructionist approaches have made significant contributions to the study of nations and nationalism. They explain especially well how and why nationalist movements first emerged in the Atlantic world within burgeoning capitalist societies governed by central state administrations, but they do not apply well to the Romanian experience in Transylvania and Hungary. On an agricultural periphery of the Austro-Hungarian empire, the Romanians in Transylvania lacked significant capitalist development and a patron state. They also lacked the bourgeois leadership so prominent in most studies of European national movements. Rural Romanian leaders played

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important roles in the construction of the nation, and illiterate or semi-literate peasants funded and participated in Astra activities. The boycott of party politics further complicates the Romanian nation-building experience. Scholarly views of the nation as a socially constructed community, while accurate, do not explain how a predominantly agricultural society builds a nation and mobilizes its members outside of traditional political arenas.9

John Breuilly's excellent book Nationalism and the State, which describes nationalism as a form of politics concerning the acquisition and exercise of state power, fails to explain the Romanian experience in two important ways. Although Breuilly claims that political movements "only become nationalist when combined with other ideas about a distinctive cultural identity," he also contends that political analysis of the state provides the key to understanding nationalism.10 "To focus upon culture, ideology, identity, class or modernization is to neglect the fundamental point that nationalism is, above and beyond all else, about politics and that politics is about power."11 Breuilly is correct, I believe, to think of nationalism in terms of politics and power, but he minimizes the significant political aspects of cultural activities, ideological debates, identity disputes, class rivalries, or concerns about modernization. Nationalism is about politics; but politics is not limited to conventional state spheres. Keith Baker describes politics as "the activity through which individuals and groups in any society articulate, negotiate, implement and enforce the competing claims they make upon one another and upon the

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8 Both Duara and Smith offer influential critiques of the nation as a radically new form of social polity. See Duara, Rescuing History from the Nation; and Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations.
9 Even Duara's subtle analysis of the complicated relationship between historical narrative, the national community, and the nation-state in early-twentieth-century China accords more agency to the state than the Romanians experienced.
10 Breuilly, Nationalism and the State, 1-2. 5.
11 Ibid., 1.
whole.¹² Astra's cultural activity made significant political claims for access to state power that an analysis of traditional party politics would miss. Breuilly also neglects the general masses. It is not clear how everyday people receive the nationalist message, nor why they embrace it. In the case of the Romanians in Transylvania and Hungary, it is not clear how or why average villagers might see their nationality as important enough to begin to fund and participate in Astra's national movement.

The important works of Ernest Gellner, Benedict Anderson, Hobsbawm and Ranger, and Miroslav Hroch also overlook this problem. Gellner's understanding of nationalism resulting from the demands of industrialization for a literate, generically educated workforce explains how people receive a message; but because his analysis necessarily pertains to industrialized societies, it does not shed much light on the national movement among rural Romanians. Likewise. Anderson's emphasis on print capitalism assumes mass demand for printed materials, means to transport them, and basic literacy skills; all of which only Romanians within small intellectual circles shared. If nation building depended on these elements, it would have been difficult for Romanian villagers to imagine themselves as members of a national community. Hobsbawm and Ranger's influential demonstrations of invented traditions overlook the complexities of communicating those traditions and gaining their widespread acceptance. They do not explain why people would adopt an unfamiliar tradition. Even Miroslav Hroch's insightful work on the social foundations of European national revivals treats peasant agency ambiguously.

This study of Romanian nation building tries to explain how and why peasants accepted the nationalist messages of Romanian elites and participated in Astra's national movement. In many ways it builds on Hroch's outline of nation building. Like Hroch's concentration on patriotic agitators, this study also examines activities designed to raise mass national consciousness, but it does not end there. If the existence of the national community depends on its members' ability to see their inclusion in the community as inherently valuable, as Hroch infers, an investigation of peasant communities can reveal what value the nation offers its members and suggest why the nation became the dominant socio-political model among rural Romanians. This investigation of Astra's activities concludes that Romanian villagers who participated in the national movement gained more equality to their social superiors within the national community than they had as mere villagers. Interestingly the elevation of peasant status did not compromise the social order among Romanians. Elites still retained their dominant social position, but they had to grant certain concessions to other Romanians in order to justify their leadership. No longer able to presume to be the natural leaders, educated townsmen had to show their devotion to the nation as proof of their qualities to lead. Examining how the national model elevated and sustained social status begins to illuminate what attracts diverse groups of people to a nation.

In addition to concerns about the inapplicability of scholarly models of nation building for the Romanian experience in Transylvania, this investigation also grew out of a problem scholars face when trying to explain historical difference using west European models of development in other contexts. Scholarship that compares western experiences to non-western ones sets up the west as the norm by which to judge contexts that do not
match "the norm." The evaluation of eastern European economic development as backward is a prime example. The prominent view that "economic development is more or less natural to society and that its failure to occur" requires explanation has led scholars to label eastern Europe as backward, mistakenly considering that the exceptional industrial growth of western Europe is a universal experience.¹³ Northwestern European regions did industrialize faster than other areas of the world.¹⁴ But the real issue of economic growth cannot be separated from social and political developments, from an examination of society itself; backwardness does not just apply to the economy, but to all aspects of society, and the judgement begins to take on moral considerations. Western development becomes right or good: non-western European experiences become somehow wrong and inferior. This is the heart of the problem: understanding and describing difference that does not unfairly characterize, or as Maria Todorova says, disparage the difference.¹⁵

Any investigation of European nation building has to take these concerns into consideration because in studies of European nation building, positive examples of nation building are often associated with western Europe, and negative ones are generally ascribed to non-western Europe. Liah Greenfeld makes this juxtaposition rather starkly. In her book Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity, Greenfeld examines nation building in England, France, Russia, Germany, and the United States to show the "profound differences, reaching to every sphere of social existence, between nations defined in

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¹⁵ See the introduction to Todorova's book. Imagining the Balkans, 3-20.
individualistic and civic terms...and those defined as ethnic collectivities." According to Greenfeld, the idea of a modern nation as a community of people bearing sovereignty and collective identity first arose in England. English nationalism, she claims, made democracy possible because the ideas of popular sovereignty and equality, fundamental to the English idea of the nation, were also the basic tenants of democracy. She contrasts this sharply with the nation building experiences on the European continent, where nationalists translated the English notion of the nation as a collection of sovereign individuals to fit within the particular continental context and made the nation a unique and sovereign collective individual.17 Thus, the modern usage of national terminology developed in two distinct forms. In the English tradition, the civic nation resulted from a compact of sovereign individuals and nationalism came to symbolize democracy. Theoretically, nationality remained open and voluntary, dependent on citizenship. In contrast, the continental ideas of nation and nationalism denoted the sovereign character of a unique people. Sovereignty did not result from a compact of independent individuals but resided in the uniqueness of the collective entity, the nation. Nationality often assumed a particularism dependent on an inherited or genetic quality. Greenfeld argues that continental notions of the nation, understood as a collective unit with distinct characteristics, tend to produce authoritarian societies because the single will of the unique nation can be represented by autocratic rulers.

17 At the heart of the continental model of ethnic nationalism, Greenfeld finds *ressentiment*, sentiments of envy and hatred that fuel a resentment certain groups have toward others who deprive them of status and dignity granted by national identity.
In making distinctions between English civic nationalism and continental ethnic nationalism, Greenfeld insinuates that civic nationalism is superior.\textsuperscript{18} She correctly points out that politics, and not economics, triggered many national movements throughout Europe and that industrialization was not a prerequisite for nation building, but the dichotomy she proposes between western civic and non-western ethnic nationalisms reduces the complexity of continental experiences into an unchallenged narrative that perpetuates normative stereotypes.\textsuperscript{19} This problem is most evident in her analyses of German and Russian nationalism, which suffer from ahistorical perceptions of continuity between nationalist origins and Nazism or the Russian Revolution. Because she views the English model with admiration she fails to address barriers to English citizenship, conflicts between Protestants and Catholics, Anglo chauvinism, or race relations as inherent problems to the task of nation building in Britain or the United States.\textsuperscript{20}

Greenfeld's conclusions are symptomatic of a broader trend that uncritically defines and elevates western European ways, values, and lifestyles in opposition to non-western ones. The trend has a blinding, sanitizing effect. Evaluations of the wars of Yugoslav succession during the early 1990s, for example, often attributed the national xenophobias exhibited in the former Yugoslavia to a primordial Balkan essence and dismissed nationalism there as an abnormal irrationality. As Todorova explains, analysts ignored the inhumane carnage throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries brought on in the name of European nationhood. "It may well be that what we are witnessing today," she writes of the wars, "wrongly attributed to some Balkan essence, is the

\textsuperscript{18} Greenfeld. \textit{Five Roads}, 14-17.


\textsuperscript{20} The best work on nation building in Britain, which addresses these concerns, is Linda Colley. \textit{Britons Forging the Nation 1707-1837} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992).
ultimate Europeanization of the Balkans." Todorova does not deny differences in historical developments. She is mostly concerned with the thorny problem of understanding and articulating historical difference without essentializing it. I share her concerns.

In an attempt to outline a way to think about nationalism that can escape from the western-superior vs. non-western-inferior normative framework one might ask if a superior kind of nationalism even exists—this investigation tries to determine what nationalists do when they make claims on behalf of all the members of a national community. Although this study addresses the specifics of the Romanian national movement in Astra, it also suggests a more general view of nation building for subjugated peoples like the Romanians in Hungary. The works of Katherine Verdery, Keely Stauter-Halsted, and Prasenjit Duara have informed my inquiry. Verdery's perceptive analyses of Romanian history, the nation, and national ideology under socialism got me thinking about the national nexus of politics and culture. the "situatedness" (or subject position) of social groups, and the competing images of the nation that different groups made public. Stauter-Halsted's demonstration that peasants appropriated and reshaped nationalist ideals promulgated by elites to conform to the reality and needs of village communities indicates that contested meanings were at the heart of Polish nation building in Galicia. Duara also concentrates on conflicts over national meaning, but in the very different context of early-twentieth-century China. His view that the concept of nationalism posits a false notion of a unified consciousness

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21 Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans*, 13. Gale Stokes has also argued that the Yugoslav conflicts are a part of the "cartography of homogenization" that took place on the European continent during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. "In this context," he writes, "the Yugoslav wars of the first half of the 1990s are
provided a starting point for this investigation.\textsuperscript{22} It was an especially apt point of
departure because Romanian nation builders were far from unified, and yet they set about
to realize their perception of the nation's organic unity.

Drawing insights from these works and from constructionist views of nations, I
argue that when individuals and groups try to build a nation, they are searching for
greater power and autonomy in their own lives. For the Romanians in the Austro-
Hungarian Empire, the idea of the nation justified their search. In its modern form, the
national ideal represented a collective body of individuals who existed as an autonomous
community and who shared some qualities that distinguished them from all others.

Romanians who joined Astra understood that they joined as members of the Romanian
national community and that membership conferred on them the right to an autonomous
national life. They consequently sought personal liberty through national emancipation,
believing that all members shared equally in the autonomous life of the nation. In reality,
of course, personal liberty attained through national emancipation proved elusive
because, as this thesis shows, all members of the nation were not equal.

Within a national community theoretical equality for all members can never be
achieved because power is always dispersed among the members. In practice the nation is
a socially constructed category that re-distributes power relations among people because

\textsuperscript{22} Katherine Verdery, \textit{National Ideology Under Socialism, Identity and Cultural Politics in Ceauşescu's
Romania} (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991); idem, "Whither 'Nation' and
'Nationalism'?" \textit{Daedalus} (Summer, 1993): 37-46; Keely Stauter-Halsted, \textit{The Nation in the Village. The
Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914} (Ithaca: Cornell University Press,
2001); idem, "Patriotic Celebrations in Austrian Poland: The Kosciuszko Centennial and the Formation of
Peasant Nationalism," \textit{Austrian History Yearbook XXV} (1994): 79-95. Duara, \textit{Rescuing History From the
Nation}.
it re-organizes the way people think about the world and their place in it.\textsuperscript{23} Power, understood as “a general matrix of force relations at a given time, in a given society,” can be best analyzed in a historical context. It is never held or exercised unilaterally but is diffuse. “It comes from below; it is multidirectional, operating from the top down and also the bottom up.”\textsuperscript{24} It is not localized solely in the state or party politics as Breuilly indicates. Power “is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with; it is the name that one attributes to a complex strategical relationship in a particular society.”\textsuperscript{25} Domination then is not the essence of power.\textsuperscript{26} Power is exercised upon the dominant as well as on the dominated because “the human subject is equally placed in power relations which are very complex.”\textsuperscript{27} Every member of a nation exists within matrices of power, “however unequal and hierarchical, which they [do] not control in any simple sense. Individual actors engage in power struggles but “the overall effect escapes the actors’ intentions, as well as those of anybody else.”\textsuperscript{28} The national ideal that promises greater autonomy and equality for every member contains a fundamental contradiction: it can never be built as idealized. Dispersed power creates

\textsuperscript{23}This view does not deny similarities existing between people that formed a pool of collective characteristics but emphasizes the contested nature of those similarities and the tendency to forget formerly extant differences.
\textsuperscript{24} Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 185-6.
\textsuperscript{25} Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 93 as quoted from Dreyfus and Rabinow, 187.
\textsuperscript{26} This conception of power differs significantly from liberal notions of power and the need for internalized self-discipline. I am not arguing for or against the liberal position but want to point out that it has often served to subject some (minorities and women for example) in the name of liberating others (men with property). The more important point here is that understanding the constructed nature of the nation depends on understanding different ways in which power might work in human populations.
\textsuperscript{27} Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 208.
\textsuperscript{28} Dreyfus and Rabinow, *Michel Foucault*, 186-7.
inequities and subjugates members, and thus the nation once formed is forever contested as its members strive to revise power relations.29

This way of thinking about the nation and power helps explain how rival nationalisms, actions taken by the members of the national community who invoke the concept of the nation in order to alter power relations, compete within the larger, long-term course of nation building. According to my view, rival nationalisms constitute nation building. If power is dispersed and individual actors can never completely control the outcome of their efforts, then the product of nation building, the nation (a socially constructed category), is never under any one group’s control. Nation building is consequently a recurrent activity, renewed periodically according to the needs of its members.

Studying the formation of national identities is a good way to reveal power struggles and understand how the productive role of power functions within nation building. In order to build a nation there must be identifiable members who understand themselves as subjects of the national community. The formation of national identities is thus a process of subjectification in which a “human being turns him- or herself into a subject.” tied to a national “identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.”30 In this case power is productive because it leads to self-formation, enabling the individual to say “who I am.” Within the “inclusive we” of the nation, all subject members are interdependent actors who strive to understand just who “we” are and to incorporate that self-knowledge into their own perceptions of the world. The focus here on Astra’s efforts

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29 This holds true even for nationalist movements between nations. In order to understand better the conflicts between nations, we must also understand the power struggles within nations. Linda Colley’s work Britons is an excellent example of these relationships.
30 Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” in Dreyfus and Rabinow, 208, 212.
to incorporate the peasantry into the association shows that Astra's descriptions of the Romanian national subject, coupled with activities to recognize and commemorate the nation, raised questions about individual status and forced individuals to re-examine their own lives in light of the national community and consequently to incorporate that self-knowledge into their perceptions of the world. Experiences that villagers gained by participating in Astra's national movement, in effect, made them subjects of the nation. Their participation in Astra's programs was an act of self-formation. It asserted their place in the Romanian nation.

This does not mean that all Romanians thought of themselves as nationals, or that national consciousness took the same form, for the same reasons. It also does not mean that those who viewed themselves as Romanian nationals could only see themselves in terms of their nationality. Human identity is not a coherent whole. It is multifaceted and plastic. People incorporate knowledge of themselves in diverse contexts and in individual ways. National identity tends to be easy to incorporate into one's sense of self because national identity rarely requires people to take on a new identity, but to reinterpret established and future identities. Romanian national discourses in Astra subsumed other identities, assimilating ideas of gender and faith, for example, into the national paradigm so as to increase its salience. Villagers did not have to abandon any identities to become Romanian nationals: they just had to understand how their identities fit into the national context.

Rural identification with Astra's idea of the nation complicated efforts to build the Romanian nation into the culturally homogeneous whole nationalists envisioned. When Astra leaders made claims on behalf of the Romanian community, they projected images
of national unity, uniformity, and uniqueness. Like most historical actors attempting to characterize the nation, the Romanians contributed to the totalization of a national identity as an essential, unitary, and unchanging concept, reducing the complexities of the national community to simple descriptions.\textsuperscript{31} These kinds of descriptions communicate knowledge of a community and often serve to legitimate a particular social order.\textsuperscript{32} But when groups with competing interests accept the descriptions as their own, the groups can contest national identities and the social order they legitimate in order to serve their own ambitions.

The educated Romanian townsmen heading Astra's central organization at the end of the nineteenth century believed that their ultimate goal for equality with established European nations depended on Romanian economic prosperity, and they tried to foster prosperity by coordinating efforts to pool national resources and to host rural education programs. Because these leaders claimed to understand the right pathway to a brighter national future, they asserted their right to lead the nation to that future. They claimed, in short, the right to demand others to change. Other Romanians did not, however, accept the demanded changes unconditionally. The conflicts among Romanians played out over the image of the nation. Educated Romanians who began to define national boundaries separating Romanians from non-Romanians derived new legitimacy from their claims to represent the people, but a question arose: who are the people? Astra factions debated just how the community was unique, homogeneous, and unified. The struggles among Romanians to define their national community led to rival nationalisms (actions taken by people who invoke the concept of the nation in order to alter power relations). This study

\textsuperscript{31} Richard Handler, "Is Identity a Useful Concept?" in Commemorations, the Politics of National Identity, ed., Gillis, 30.
seeks to uncover the competing voices and contested Romanian identities in an attempt to explain how the productive role of power (the power to say who I am) worked in the case of Astra members before the outbreak of the Great War.

The Romanian experience in Transylvania and Hungary demonstrates that nation building is a contentious undertaking subject to diverse social pressures and full of internal conflicts and contradictions. The association’s intellectual elite who sought to build the Romanian nation as an enlightened community worthy of self-governance could not act independently. They had to take into consideration the masses of illiterate peasants who comprised the national community they wished to lead and formulate a conception of the nation with which all members of the national community could identify. Many of the association’s intellectual leaders, one or two generations removed from the ranks of the peasantry themselves, valorized village communities for preserving Romanian culture but despised rural ignorance and illiteracy. To resolve this conflict they strove in conjunction with rural leaders and peasant communities to create an image of the peasant-based nation while simultaneously propagating a message of national progress through education and rational approaches to socio-economic problems that would encourage peasants to change the way they worked and lived. This investigation examines how Astra members represented and commemorated the national community, claiming rural culture as a national inheritance and identifying diverse village communities as parts of a unified, rational whole. It explores how peasant members responded to these activities and ideas as active participants and with financial and material contributions. It also shows that national assimilation is a two-way street:

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peasants may have changed some aspects of their lifestyles based on educational advice from Astra, but elites also adopted some aspects of rural life as their own.

This thesis also provides evidence that nation building in Transylvania and Hungary was part of a larger project of modernization that was fueled by the concept of the nation. Astra leaders had a clear understanding of Romanian underdevelopment compared to civilized European “others” but they did not necessarily aim at industrialization to ameliorate this situation. Instead, they sought to solve socio-economic problems with reason and education and to use the model of the nation to overcome their political subjugation. The nation. Astra leaders predicted, would provide the necessary framework for the rational organization of society and the proper foundation for economic productivity which the leadership believed could be achieved in an enlightened community of rational farmers.

Astra’s message of agricultural rationalization allowed rural Romanians to embrace images of progress and modernity without forsaking their historical heritage or renouncing their national character. Because Astra leaders believed that modernization could be realized through the national organization of traditional socio-economic forms, they reconciled tradition with modernity without endangering the predominant social order of the Romanian national community or threatening the religious hierarchy in Transylvania. Scholars have long noted that the influence of church officials over the Romanian national movement in Transylvania waned after 1865, but they have underestimated the importance of the influence that the rural Romanian clergy maintained in Hungary until the First World War.33 In Astra rural clerics and confessional

school teachers took the association's message to the masses and helped shape a social
and intellectual dispute over the substance of Romanian identity. By 1900 priests stood at
the forefront of rural and provincial Astra chapters, propagating a nationalist message of
progress through education and religious piety. In this manner church leaders constituted
a force for modernity as it was conceived and embodied in the Romanian national
community.

With the help of rural leaders Astra enjoyed notable success, but it also faced
serious obstacles. A common theme throughout this thesis is the difficulties Romanian
nation builders encountered without the administrative infrastructure or executive
authority (e.g. to collect funds or enforce compliance) of a state. The appearance of
disorganization or the implementation of unrealistic plans reflect the problems Romanian
nation builders confronted as they tried to build a nation outside of traditional political
arenas. The problems they overcame, however, make Astra's success that much more
remarkable.

Terms Used

Terms used to categorize groups and regions or to describe social events and
movements are by their very nature contestable. Nevertheless, in order to avoid getting
lost in detail. I have found it impossible to write a study of this length without using
general terms. The labels used to describe social actors have given me the most difficulty.
They do not communicate the fluidity of social alliances or agendas which tend to shift
and overlap. The first such problematic term, intellectual, identifies Romanians who

procesul formării națiunii române în Transilvania," Anuarul Institutului de Istorie Cluj XXXI (1992): 86;
Ladislau Gyémánt, Mișcarea națională a românilor din Transilvania 1790-1848 (București: Editura
științifică și enciclopedică, 1986), 456-58; Miroslav Hroch, Social Preconditions of National Revival in
Europe, 243-44.
received more than a primary education. In many cases intellectuals studied at universities, both in the Monarchy and abroad; but village priests and confessional school teachers, many of whom only had a year of two of secondary education, are also grouped under this category. In order to distinguish the village church representatives from better educated lay leaders, I sometimes call these villagers "rural intellectuals." Elite is another sticky term. It denotes the intellectuals, the professionals (lawyers, doctors, journalists, civil servants, etc.), and persons who owned significant property. When discussing village notables, like the local mayors, notaries, or church leaders, I occasionally use the term "rural elites." In contrast to the rural elites, the urban elites are those intellectuals and professionals who resided in towns, the size of which varied across the region from approximately five thousand to sixty-five thousand residents.

Populists are another imprecise group. In Romanian history there are many different groups of people who claim to speak on behalf of and to look out for the interests of the peasants. In the Regat (Wallachia and Moldavia), those who followed Constantin Stere are known as populists. During the interwar period, the populists formed the peasantist movement (Țărăanism). Nicolae Iorga led another group dedicated to the preservation of rural life, which was known as the sămânătorists (the sowers). These different groups are sometimes lumped together as agrarianists, but I have chosen to call the Romanians who pushed Astra to pay attention to the interests of Romanian villagers populists. These men borrowed their ideas from a wide variety of thinkers: but on the

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34 The term agrarianist refers to a variety of positions throughout the region. In Bulgaria, for example, the agrarianists hoped to overcome backwardness and modernize with expanded educational opportunities. But the leader of the Bulgarian Agrarian National Union did not accept the national model of organization that the Romanians did. See Bell, Peasants in Power. Hungarian agrarianists, according to Andrew Janos, were in the socialist, conservative, and more radical populist camps. See Janos, The Politics of Backwardness in Hungary 1825-1945 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), especially 104, 143-44, 262.
crucial question of economic development, their thought remained much closer to the populists who advocated some industrialization than to the sămănătorists who romanticized rural life and argued for moral regeneration.

The terms bourgeois and bourgeoisie appear very rarely in this work. Although Romanian scholars describe the burgeoning middle class as bourgeois, a good portion of this bourgeoisie were well-off peasants (jărăni înstăriți) who owned more than a self-sufficient plot. When I talk about peasants or villagers and Astra's attempt to integrate them into its national movement. I am speaking about a diverse group of persons who derived their livelihood from agricultural labor (land or livestock), or who lived in village communities and whose principal social contacts were villagers. Thus, a village priest who did not necessarily work the land (although most priests had to own their own plots or work a plot someone else owned to survive), I consider both an intellectual and a peasant.35

The geographical term Transylvania refers to a specific area inside present-day Romania, but the referent changes depending on its historical context. Today, it designates all of the territory that the Trianon Treaty of 1920 forced the Hungarians to cede to Romania. The historic Principality of Transylvania, however, comprised about two-thirds of present-day Transylvania. When the Habsburgs incorporated the principality into the monarchy at the end of the seventeenth century, Transylvania became an autonomous province. Transylvania lost its autonomy when the Hungarians (or Magyars) incorporated it into their half of the Dual Monarchy in 1867 (the actual vote for unification took place in 1865). Astra began its work in the autonomous province of
Transylvania when it was founded in 1861 (hence the name Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People), but Astra later branched out to regions outside of Transylvania proper. I indicate the expansion outside of Transylvania using the geographical term Hungary. The maps at the end of this chapter illustrate the growth of Astra's regional organization from 1891 until 1910 throughout southeast Hungary. Today much of this territory lies within the state borders of Romania.

For the purposes of this study, the terms Magyar and Hungarian are interchangeable. Specialists recognize differences between the terms (that all Magyars are Hungarians and that all Hungarians are not Magyars), but because the Hungarian state aimed to assimilate non-Magyars into the Magyar nation-state, I have not emphasized these differences.

Twentieth-century debates over the meaning of the word culture make it the most problematic term, but I use it throughout this thesis in lay terms as Romanians themselves did to refer to their language, dress, customs, habits, education, etc.... For a discussion of the various referents the term culture brought to contemporary Romanians' minds, see chapter six.

Organization of the Thesis

Because the idea of the nation changed over time, I begin this work situating the Romanian national movement against a backdrop of evolving political realities during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, introducing Astra and the political importance of its educational and cultural programs in chapter two. Having introduced Astra within its historical context, chapter three outlines the main players in the association and the

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35 This grouping is consistent with Stauter-Halsted who follows P.M. Jones' social distinctions that are based more on shared forms of cultural behavior than strict economic differences. See Stauter-Halsted, The
controversies they endured attempting to build a nation without the organizational infrastructure of a nation-state. The nation builders in Astra who imagined that the homogeneous and unified Romanian national community merely needed to wake up faced serious social divisions that threatened the nation's unity, and in their minds, its future. Although Astra successfully masked the differences and disagreements among Romanians behind its national discourse, factional strife forced Astra's learned elite to revise the association's scholarly agenda and to address the needs and interests of rural Romanians.

Chapter four demonstrates that Astra's efforts to promote economic development through national unity corresponded to their goals of greater Romanian autonomy in Hungary and for elevation to European status. Astra's strategies for economic development reflected the members' convictions that Romanian political and economic failures were rooted in the ignorance and backwardness of the peasantry. Using popular lectures, publishing and distributing economic literature, and helping establish cooperative enterprises, leading members of Astra hoped to raise educational and moral standards, create common bonds among Romanians, and increase national prosperity. They were divided, however, over the means to achieve these goals. Professional elites advocated top-down reforms dependent on their expert advice that would enable villagers to help themselves. A small but vocal populist faction expected greater sacrifices from the experts. Like the professionals, the populists accorded the elite the leading role in society, but they also insisted that the elite return to the village and assist the organization of the people who, in their eyes, had preserved the fundamental essence of the national community. Instead of transforming the masses into prosperous, industrialized

*Nation in the Village*, 10.
Europeans, they wanted to protect Romanian smallholders and their ways of life. The continued existence of the nation depended on it.

Difficulties Astra faced with economic development did not dampen leaders' hopes that education would lead to a national revival. Chapter five shows how Astra's educational programs, designed to make the peasants more like the elite and thus create a more homogeneous society, had the opposite effect. In order to incorporate villagers into the association and into the national movement Astra had to recognize traditional village life as the authentic foundation of the Romanian nation. Astra's educational campaign legitimized two competing images of the Romanian national community, one based on west European standards for the educated elite and the other based on traditional peasant culture for the rural masses. Astra activities, thus, had a paradoxical effect. They created the impression that a unified national community existed and simultaneously underscored the divisions in that community. This helped make it possible to profess the existence of a Romanian nation and to contest its characteristics.

In addition to educational programs, Astra leaders tried to build national unity with a concept of homogeneous Romanian culture, the subject of chapter six. Yet the association's cultural activities further legitimized the two competing images of the nation. This is seen most clearly in Astra's organization of national enthusiasm and expositions the association sponsored. As a result of the national authority Astra conferred on village life, populists and rural leaders could contest the professional elites leadership of the association. The point is not just that nation was constructed in controversy or that it was heterogeneous, but that the contestation made it possible to believe in the national ideal even when its promises failed to materialize as expected.
Because the national ideal survived in multiple forms, various groups of Romanians, including Transylvanian villagers, were able to think of their world in national terms. Villagers helped build the nation, and the recognition they gained from doing so increased their social influence. The multifaceted character of the ideal and its benefits for rural Romanians suggests the appeal of the nation for disenfranchised peoples like those in the southeast corner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.
Astra's Regional Chapters in Southeast Hungary 1891

------- historic region of Transylvania
Chapter Two
"Here we are, we exist." The Politicization of Culture and Society in Nineteenth-Century Transylvania

Viewing the nation as a social construction does not mean that the community of persons who make up the nation does not exist. Individuals create national communities by building and contesting them over the course of time. The nation is real in the sense that it is a group of individuals whose social interaction, material organization, institutions, and everyday practice reify the national community. For the members who share a sense of belonging to the national community, the nation provides a conceptual framework through which members view their world. The reified nation shapes perception and experience, structures political action, and informs discourses of power.¹

The reality of national communities in Transylvania first became apparent in the eighteenth century when the Habsburgs and Hungarians attempted to build states in the region. As Vienna tried to consolidate its control over Hungary and Transylvania early in the eighteenth century, it faced resistance from Magyars who headed both states. The Habsburgs' efforts to Germanize and centralize the imperial government from the beginning of the eighteenth century provoked a particularly strong backlash from Hungarian opponents of imperial absolutism. In the nineteenth century the Hungarians initiated a campaign to rebuild the formerly independent Hungarian kingdom, of which they considered Transylvania an integral part, as a Magyar nation-state. Because Hungarians would dominate a Magyar nation-state, the cultural aspects of Magyar and non-Magyar societies took on increasing political significance.

Late-eighth-century Greek Catholic intellectuals initiated the politicization of Romanian culture and society with the creation of a Romanian national identity for Transylvanians. Their published studies on the origins of the Romanian nation and its language redefined the religious and class boundaries of the Romanian national community with historical, linguistic, and cultural markers. These intellectuals hoped to prove that Romanians constituted a nation worthy of political participation in Transylvania. Although their work was limited to a narrow reading public, it influenced subsequent generations of Romanian professionals and intellectuals who began to demand autonomy befitting a national community. These men organized a national campaign in the nineteenth century in order to secure Romanian leadership in Transylvania. Because Transylvania was under the powerful Habsburgs, sovereign statehood was not a practical option for Transylvanian Romanians. They strove instead for control over the autonomous Principality of Transylvania. Political realities in the Habsburg and later Austro-Hungarian empire hindered the Romanian national campaign, but Romanians elites did not yield. Although they abandoned traditional political activities after the creation of dualist Hungary, they headed a cultural movement that had profound political implications. Romania cultural assertions of their own national identity provided a means to protest against the formation of a Magyar nation-state. In 1877 when prominent Romanian leader George Barițiu wrote to a colleague "Here we are, we exist" concerning the Romanian political situation in dualist Hungary, the mere presence of the Romanian national community in a Magyar-dominated state had become a relevant political factor.²

² George Barițiu to F. Hossu-Longin, November 1877. Biblioteca Centrală Universitară, Francisc Hossu-Longin Collection; quoted in Keith Hitchins, A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian National Movement in
The History of the National Ideal in Transylvania

Barițiu's comment reveals that he held a modern idea of nationhood. In its modern form the nation is thought by nationalists to be a natural and unique community, defined by precise spatial, temporal, and cultural boundaries; distinct historical origins; common interests; and an autonomous future. Members of the modern nation often believe that they share certain homogeneous traits or uniform respect for certain principles as well as equality in national membership. Because the nation was assumed to be a sovereign community of equal members, the concept implied self-governance and equity, both for the community and for the individual member. Greater personal liberty was consequently sought through national autonomy. For people desiring more control over their own lives and resources, like Romanians in Transylvania, the nation was an attractive model of social organization.

The idea of the nation also fascinated the Romanians of Transylvania because historically enfranchisement in Transylvania required national status. Before the modern conception of the nation came to the fore in eighteenth-century Transylvania, the term natio denoted a privileged social status that excluded almost all of the Romanians in Transylvania. Incorporated as a principality of the medieval Hungarian kingdom in the tenth century, Transylvania came under the control of three ruling classes during the

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fifteenth century. Noble Magyars (Transylvanian Hungarians), Szeklers (a free Magyar population) and Germans, commonly known as Saxons, established their rule in 1437 when they banned together to suppress a peasant rebellion. The agreement they signed came to be known as the Union of Three Nations (Unio trium nationum). Subsequent agreements reinforced the rule of the three privileged nations (natio) who maintained their authority after the Ottomans defeated the Hungarians in the sixteenth century and established an autonomous principality of Transylvania under Ottoman suzerainty.

During the Transylvanian principality's relatively independent existence from 1541-1691, the three privileged nations ruled three main administrative districts. The nation of the Magyar nobles was organized into counties in northern and western Transylvania with a juridical and cultural center in Cluj (Kolozsvár). The Szekler lands, Terra Siculorum or Székelyföld, formed an administrative district in the east, and the Saxon Königsboden or Fundus Regius lay to the south. Transylvanian princes, in conjunction with a princely council, powerful chancellery, and the Transylvanian Diet, governed the region. The Transylvanian government directed an independent foreign

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4 In medieval European society, the nation referred to a group of strangers, groups of university students, elite church councils, and also privileged aristocracies.

5 Szeklers migrated to the Transylvanian eastern frontier to defend the borderland (beginning, most likely, in the eleventh century). Saxons relocated from central Europe to southern Transylvania in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In 1224 the Hungarian King granted the Saxon community a charter that provided for administrative autonomy, which lasted until the 1870s.

6 After childless Hungarian king Louis II died during the 1526 battle of Mohács's against the armies of Ottoman emperor Suleiman the Magnificent, Louis’s Habsburg widow Mary secured her brother-in-law Ferdinand’s election as king of Hungary. At that time the Hungarian crownlands comprised Hungary, Croatia (unified with Hungary as an autonomous region in 1102), and Transylvania. The Hungarian magnates, or high nobility, elected Habsburg Ferdinand as King of Hungary. The lower nobility of Hungary and Croatia elected János Zápolyai (1526-1540). The resulting civil war between the supporters of the two kings, combined with a war against the invading Ottomans who divided the region into two spheres, altered the power arrangement in the region. The Habsburgs controlled Royal Hungary to the north. The Ottomans ruled the central plains. And Magyar nobility in Transylvania ruled an independent principality under Ottomans suzerainty.

7 The prince appointed council members who gave him solicited advice. The Princely Chancellery was a small, but powerful body. The chancellor with his few secretaries and scribes had jurisdiction over local
policy, maintained its own armies, and contacted foreign powers through its own representatives. The gentry, minor nobles, and town citizens also enjoyed some political and legal privileges. They often held lower offices but seldom participated in the various assemblies or in the Transylvanian Diet. Peasants and non-privileged subjects were by definition omitted from the nation. Under these circumstances the term natio implied social rank, but because it also defined Magyar and Saxon communities grouped into three administrative districts, the term took on ethnic connotations.

Power struggles during the Reformation further differentiated the national groups along religious lines. The Saxons accepted the teachings of Luther. The Magyars were both Calvinist and Lutheran. The Szeklers embraced Catholicism. Lutheranism, and Unitarianism. In the sixteenth century the Transylvanian Diet legalized Calvinism, Lutheranism, Unitarianism, and Catholicism as the “received religions” and made public or political rights conditioned upon religious affiliation. The clergy of the four received religions enjoyed the position and privileges of the nobles. The Romanian Orthodox community was largely excluded from participating in the political life of the principality. The vast majority of Romanians were enserfed peasants and by definition outside of the nation, but the advent of religicus qualifications also denied national privileges to Romanian nobles who had not already assimilated with the privileged

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* According to Romanian scholar David Prodan, the country stopped being royal and became noble. David Prodan, Supplex Libellus Valachorum or the Political Struggle of the Romanians in Transylvania During the 18th Century (Bucharest: Academy of the Socialist Republic of Romania, 1971), 68. Ladislas Makkai argues that in the seventeenth century the Transylvanian princes gained greater authority at the expense of the diet and its noble membership. Makkai, Histoire de Transylvanie (Paris: Les presses universitaires de France, 1946), 258-72.
Magyar nation. The national concept took on greater ethnic overtones during this period precisely because it established social boundaries based on religions that corresponded to ethnic groups. The excluded religious communities also coincided with distinct ethnic groups.

After Ottoman defeats at the end of the seventeenth century, Transylvania was gradually absorbed into the Habsburg Empire as an autonomous region of the Hungarian crownlands. Emperor Leopold recognized Transylvanian law and institutions along with the political dominance of the three nations and four received religions. According to the 1691 Diploma Leopoldinum, the diet shared power with the Habsburg crown whose approval sanctioned law. Membership in the single-chamber diet was reserved for officials of the church and state, royal appointees, and representatives of the Magyar counties and of the Szekler and Saxon districts. Members of the diet were organized into three estates of Magyar nobles and clergy, Szeklers, and Saxons. Each estate voted on legislation, and all three had to approve a bill for it to become law. The Gubernium, consisting of a president and twelve councilors who were elected by the Transylvanian estates and were supposed to represent the three nations and four religions equally, was the main administrative institution in the principality. The Transylvanian Chancellery (established in 1695) supervised the affairs of the principality from Vienna. In 1699 the Peace of Sremski Karlovci formally ended the war against the Ottomans and officially incorporated Transylvania into the Habsburg Empire.

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9 Over the centuries, the mix of populations and religious faiths in Transylvania became highly complex. By the eighteenth century, Czechs, Swabians, Ruthenians, Armenians, Jews, Slavs, Bulgarians, and Gypsies also inhabited the region. See Elemér Illyés, National Minorities in Romania Change in Transylvania (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1982), 10-24; and Makkai, Histore de Transylvania.
10 Prodan, Supplex, 68-72.
Excluded from official political forums, the Romanians of Transylvania relied on
the Orthodox church to represent the community. By the end of the seventeenth century
the Orthodox church was affiliated with the Transylvanian state. The head of the
Orthodox diocese in Transylvania was elected by an assembly (synod) of protopops
(administrative archpriests who supervised parishes and their clergy) and was subject to
the approval of the Orthodox Metropolitan in Bucharest and the Prince of Transylvania.\footnote{12}
The metropolitan of Transylvania was invited to attend the diet where he could negotiate
relief of feudal services and dues for the Orthodox clergy. Nevertheless, the Orthodox
parish priest benefited little from arbitration between the church hierarchy and
Transylvanian authorities. Like his parishioners, he was a peasant. He often labored in the
fields under serfdom and contributed his tithe to maintain the clergy of the received
religions, but was prohibited from collecting funds for his own support. Although legally
protected from some feudal dues or services, the Orthodox priests never enjoyed the tax
or military exemptions granted to Protestant or Catholic clergy. In free cities or in the
Saxon lands, where law provided him certain liberties, the Orthodox priest continued to
pay dues and render services to local and provincial authorities.\footnote{13}

When the Habsburgs took over Transylvania in 1691, the crown encountered
serious resistance from Transylvania’s independent nobility and established Protestant
churches. In order to improve the position of Catholics in Transylvania and to counter
anti-Habsburg Protestant resistance, Emperor Leopold tried to ally with the Orthodox

\footnote{11} Keith Hitchins, \textit{The Idea of Nation. The Romanians of Transylvania 1691-1849} (Bucharest: Editura
\footnote{12} A metropolitan in the Orthodox Church is a bishop who ranks below the patriarch and heads an
ecclesiastical province. The Transylvanian Orthodox Metropolitanate, an ecclesiastical province, was
divided into administrative districts, or protopopie, and local parishes.
\footnote{13} Mircea Pâcurariu, \textit{Istoria bisericii ortodoxe române}, vol. 2 (București: Editura Institutului Biblic, 1992),
290-91.
community. Leopold offered Orthodox clergy equality with the Catholic clergy if they would agree to unite the Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church into the Greek Catholic or Uniate Church. Based on an approach used to convert Orthodox Ruthenians in northeastern Hungary to Catholicism in 1646, the Orthodox priests had to accept the Four Articles of the Council of Florence that had briefly unified the Latin and Byzantine churches in 1439. These articles included recognition of the Pope as the head of the Christian Church, the use of unleavened bread for the Eucharist, the existence of Purgatory, and the doctrine of the Trinity.\textsuperscript{14} The union of the two churches did not require changes in the Orthodox rite, canon law or church traditions. The promises of material gain and alleviation of feudal burdens led many to accept the church union. The Greek Catholic or Uniate Church was officially recognized in the Leopoldine Diploma of 1699 and reconfirmed in a second Diploma of 1701. Although the crown never fulfilled its promises to the new church clergy and although Romanians defected in mass from the Greek Catholic Church to the Orthodox Church later in the eighteenth century, the founding of the Greek Catholic Church led to the development of a Romanian intellectual elite who played a pivotal role in the formation of the modern Romanian national ideal.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{14} The doctrine of the Trinity that Orthodox had to accept confirmed that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son. Păcurariu, 294.

The Modern Nation and the Politicization of History

Leaders of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church were among the first to imagine the Romanian nation in its modern form as an ethnic group deserving equal status with the privileged peoples in the empire.\textsuperscript{16} Seventeenth-century Chroniclers had given Romanian speakers a secular history, but they did not refer to the nation as a group of people who, regardless of social status, were entitled to political autonomy.\textsuperscript{17} The clearest and earliest expression that corresponded to the modern idea of the nation as a group of sovereign people came from the Greek Catholic Bishop Inochentie Micu Klein who, in 1735, petitioned the Habsburg court to grant privileges to the Romanian clergy in southern Transylvania on the basis of historic rights. He argued that the Romanians had inhabited the region since the founding of the Roman province Dacia under Emperor

\textsuperscript{16} The verb "imagine" here means to think anew. The idea of a community being imagined does not imply that the community did not exist but that people began to think of the nation and their membership in it in new terms.

\textsuperscript{17} Pompliu Teodor. \textit{Evoluția gindirii istorice românești} (Cluj: Dacia, 1970), and Mihai Pop, ed., \textit{ Istoria literaturii române}, vol. 1 (București: Editura Academiei R. S. R., 1970). Among the earliest Chroniclers, four contributed the most to the development of the ideas expressed by the Transylvanian School. Grigore Ureche (ca. 1590-1647), a Moldavian nobleman, wrote the first Romanian history of Moldavia that described an inherent unity among Romanian speaking peoples who, he claimed, shared a common heritage. Another Moldavian, Miron Costin (1633-1691), was the first to intimate that Roman colonists in Dacia (which he delimited as the present-day provinces of Transylvania, Banat and western Wallachia) withdrew to the Carpathian mountains in the Medieval period from where they reemerged in the fourteenth century and moved to Moldavia. The most significant contribution came from Moldavian prince (1710-1711) Dimitru Cantemir (1673-1723) who argued that the Romanians were the direct descendent of Roman colonists from Dacia. According to Cantemir’s chronicle, the Romans exterminated all of the indigenous Dacians and then colonized the region. When barbarian invasions threatened the Romanized province, the population temporarily withdrew to the mountains and forests. This idea of a Romanian with pure Roman blood became a fundamental pillar of the future Transylvanian School’s argument. A final chronicler, Constantine Cantacuzino from Wallachia (1640-1716) penned a history of Wallachia from the Roman colonization of Dacia to the invasion of Attila the Hun (mid fifth century). In contrast to Cantemir, Cantacuzino claimed that the genesis of the Romanian people resulted from indigenous Dacian populations assimilating with Roman colonists to form a new Daco-Roman community. Adolf Armbruster, \textit{Romanitatea Românilor} (București: Editura enciclopedică, 1993), 204-34.
Trajan and deserved the same status as other privileged groups who settled in the area much later.\textsuperscript{18}

Successive generations of intellectuals and clergy who were primarily of the Greek Catholic faith and had access to higher education abroad built on Klein’s historical arguments in favor of political emancipation for all Romanians. Their work, later named the Transylvanian School, differed significantly from the seventeenth-century Romanian chronicles. Whereas the chronicles justified the independence of Romanian nobles from Greek Phanarite rulers installed by the Ottoman Porte in Wallachia and Moldavia, the historical texts of the Greek Catholic scholars in the Transylvanian School justified constitutional status for all Romanians, not just for the nobility as the chroniclers had or for the Greek Catholic clergy as the crown had. The Romanian intellectuals of the Transylvanian School no longer regarded the nation as a privileged group with political status. They subtly added linguistic and historical factors to religious identity and moved toward a modern conception of national community. The politicized history of the Transylvanian School became part of a historiographical controversy that continued throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.\textsuperscript{19}

The enlightened despot Joseph II sparked the politicization of historical writing with his reforms to modernize the Habsburg empire in the 1780s. His attempts to centralize the state involved political, administrative, economic, social, religious and cultural reforms. The most significant changes for the Romanians in Transylvania

\textsuperscript{18}Prodan, Supplex, 134-87: Augustin Bunea, Din istoria Românilor: Episcopul Ioan Inocențiu Klein (1728-1751) (Blaj, 1900); and Hitchins. A Nation Discovered, 43-59.

\textsuperscript{19}See Teodor, Evolutia gindirii istorice românești: Al. Dima, ed., Istoria literaturii române, vol. II (București: Editura Academiei Republicii Socialiste România, 1968); and Frederick Kellogg, A History of Romanian Historical Writing (Bakersfield, California: Charles Schlacks, Jr., Publisher, 1990) for information on the conflicting historical accounts by Saxon and Romanian authors. Katherine Verdery also
concerned the emancipations of serfdom in 1783 and 1785, the expansion and revision of the Romanian educational system (to be conducted in the Romanian language), and the Edict of Toleration in 1781 which legalized Orthodoxy and granted the Romanian nation equal status with the other privileged classes.\textsuperscript{20}

Joseph II's reforms generated great resistance from Transylvanian nobles while they conversely met many of the Romanian intellectuals' demands and encouraged the intellectuals to continue to work to gain further concessions. Nevertheless, a combination of noble Magyar and Saxon opposition, a financial crisis resulting from war with the Ottoman Empire, and the events of 1789 in France convinced Joseph II to appease the privileged orders. He revoked all of the reforms except those concerning emancipation and religious toleration. The debates on reforms, however, continued in historical writing.

The privileged orders in Transylvania who perceived the Josephine reforms as threats authored historical works justifying the medieval power arrangement and rejecting Romanian demands for further concessions.\textsuperscript{21} Franz Joseph Sulzer was the first Transylvanian German to deny the Romanians' Roman origins and their continual presence in Transylvania since the Roman conquest in his work, \textit{Geschichte de transalpinischen Daciens} (1781-1782). Citing linguistic evidence, the German historian declared that the Romanians had migrated from regions south of the Danube in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. According to Sulzer, the similarity between the dialects

of Vlachs (a term used to identify Romanians and other Latin-speaking peoples - also spelled Olahs and Vallachs) north and south of the Danube indicated that the Romanians in Transylvania had originally come from present-day Macedonia. His denial intimated that the Romanians did not deserve the same historic rights as the other Transylvanian nations. It roused the historical forces of the Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania.

Shortly after the death of Joseph II in 1790, Romanian intellectuals drew up a petition entitled *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* in which they used historical arguments to demand equality with the Hungarians and Saxons and the restitution of the Josephine reforms. The authors claimed entitlements to historical rights as descendants of Roman colonists brought to Transylvania by the Emperor Trajan in the second century AD. The authors maintained that when Roman forces evacuated the province in the third century, the Roman colonists remained and evaded later barbarian invasions, electing their own rulers until the Hungarian conquest at the end of the ninth century. After the defeat of the Romanian prince Gelu by the Hungarian ruler Tuhutum, the Romanians elected Tuhutum as their own ruler. Under this arrangement, Hungarians and Romanians lived peacefully as equals (allowing for the difference between classes of course). The authors claimed that the political union of the Magyar, Szeklers and Saxons in 1437-1438 to suppress a peasant revolt had excluded the noble Romanian nation, but had not deprived it of its rights and privileges. Later, the Protestant Reformation and the Counter Reformation resulted in several legislative acts to specify legal faiths. Defining the Protestant

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22 Kellogg, *Romanian Historical Writing*, 17.
Reformation as a reaction within the Catholic Church, the authors argued that the diet omitted any mention of Orthodoxy because the Byzantine Church played no part in the religious movement. Not until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries did the governing nations systematically suppress the Romanians and classify them as tolerated for the benefit of the country. In reply to Sulzer's thesis that the term Vlahi or Valahi applied to populations south of the Danube, the *Supplex* stated that the Slavs used this term to denote Roman, Italian, or Latin peoples. Accordingly the Slavs named the Romanians Vlahi after they migrated to Transylvania in the seventh and eighth centuries and recognized the Latin base of the Romanian language.

Largely ignored by the Transylvanian Chancellery, the intellectuals continued to demand their historic rights and submitted another detailed petition to the new Emperor Francis II in 1792. He sent the document to the Chancellery. The diet again refused to grant any major concessions. Concerned about their own status, Saxons responded with their own version of the history of Transylvania. I.C. Eder was one of the first to refute the *Supplex*. With a "point by point rebuttal" of Romanian claims. Eder largely reiterated Sulzer's thesis denying the pure Latinity of Romanians' origins as well as their continuity in Transylvania. In 1803 Johann C. von Engel also rejected Romanian arguments and maintained that the Romanians had not lived in Dacia continuously since the Roman period but had only migrated there later. 24

To bolster the Romanian historical interpretation, three Greek Catholic scholars of what became known as the Transylvanian School, Samuil Micu-Klein (or Clain).

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Gheorghe Șincai, and Petru Maior, produced detailed accounts of the Romanian ethnogenesis, continuity from Dacia to the present, and linguistic development. Repeating themes similar to those presented in the Supplex, Klein's 1806 work Scurtă cunoștință a istoriei românilor (A Brief Acknowledgement of the History of the Romanians) described how all the indigenous inhabitants fled after the Roman legions took over and colonized Dacia in 105-06 AD. When the Roman Emperor Aurelian evacuated his forces to fight the Persians in the third century, Klein explained, the military forces withdrew to the region south of the Danube and renamed it Aurelian's Dacia. Administrators, farmers and other settlers remained in the former colony, Trajan's Dacia. This account implied that the Romanian nation developed from those settlers of Trajan's Dacia independent of direct Roman rule. To prove that the Romanians descended directly from the Romans, Klein enumerated dates of celebrations and customs common to both peoples.  

In his 1806 work Hronica Romănilor (History of the Romanians) Gheorghe Șincai claimed that Trajan's Roman army completely exterminated the indigenous Dacian population during the conquest. In their place, he asserted, colonists from all over the Empire, but especially from Rome, settled the region. Șincai countered Eder's argument that all the Roman colonists evacuated Dacia when Aurelian withdrew his army to reinforce the campaign against the Persians in the third century. He argued that the remaining Roman settlers continued to inhabit the region with their own rulers until the time of the Hungarian migration when they united with the Hungarian tribes as equals.  

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Petru Maior wrote the most detailed and influential history of the Transylvanian School, *Istoria pentru începutul românilor în Dacia* (History of the Beginnings of the Romanians in Dacia). Refuting the arguments of the Saxon authors, Maior attempted to demonstrate the pure Roman heritage of the Romanians and the continuity of the Roman colonists in the region from the second to the nineteenth centuries. According to Maior, the Romans exterminated most of the Dacians, and any remaining indigenous peoples fled the region for fear of Roman domination. To repopulate the area, Maior claimed, thousands of settlers came to the new Roman Province where they tilled the land and organized their society according to Roman law. When Aurelian evacuated his military forces, Maior argued, the majority of the settlers remained in Dacia as a pure people, even during the barbarian invasions. Like Klein and Șincai, Maior asserted that the Romanian people voluntarily united with the Hungarian tribes as a free people in order to show that Romanians deserved the same historic rights as the officially recognized nations in Transylvania.

The politicized history of the intellectuals contested the present and future status of the Romanians in Transylvania by creating a modern national identity for the Romanian community in Transylvania. In order to claim historic rights as a fourth nation worthy of official recognition and hence political participation, Romanian intellectuals had to identify the historic community that comprised the fourth nation. Their accounts of Romanian ethnogenesis used the idea of a common origin to distinguish Romanians from other peoples and to legitimize the Romanian nation. The Transylvanian School

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documentation of Romanian descendancy from the Roman "masters of the world" certified the nation's birth and development. According to Pierra Nora, the greater the origins, the more they magnify the nation's greatness. By associating Romanian lineage with Rome, the Transylvanian School historians linked the contemporary Romanian community to a distant secular past and claimed a noble heritage similar to that of the Habsburg rulers, which, they contended, was worthy of official, political recognition. Because Romanians shared a common and noble heritage, all Romanians, according to the Transylvanian School accounts, qualified for historic rights, not just the nobility or clergy as previous conceptions of the nation stipulated.

The Transylvanian School histories also provided the spatial framework necessary for a modern national identity. Samuil Micu, for example, argued that the Romanians outnumbered all other peoples in the regions inside the Tisza, Danube, Prut and Dniester rivers (a little larger than present-day Romania). In their discussions of Trajan's Dacia, the authors coupled the place and the group so that each "received the imprint of the other." Without the ancient Roman province of Dacia, its cities, trade routes, and fortifications, the Romanian community as the Transylvania School described it cannot exist. To recall the province, one thinks of a common Romanian historical experience beginning with the Roman conquest. Any changes to the spatial component symbolized a threat to the national identity. Thus, when Saxon authors challenged the Supplex's

28 Ibid., 29-31, 35, 69. Maior argued that the Roman colonists farmed the land and cultivated tolerable relations with the invaders, supporting them with their agricultural products but could not marry women of another culture, a practice that "made them sick." Hence, they remained a special, pure people.
32 This idea is not intended to explain how the image of a place "triggers" an official memory. Ibid., 140.
33 Ibid., 130-131
claims of Romanian continuity in Dacia, the intellectuals of the Transylvanian School had to respond. Their accounts detailing the pure Roman heritage and the historical continuity of the Romanians in Dacia created an image, spatially constructed, to buttress the identity they conceived for the Romanian national community.

A modern national identity also has temporal characteristics. The secular origins and material development of the Transylvanian School histories transformed the previous religious aspects of Romanian identity. Members of traditional societies like rural Transylvania experienced their surroundings through living social memory, a combination of unrecorded legal and social customs, rights and duties, in which the past was always present.\textsuperscript{34} Romanian peasants lived in a religious milieu in which Orthodox Christianity provided the framework that gave meaning to their lives.\textsuperscript{35} Orthodoxy was more than a religious rite. It "was a complex heritage of faith and religious practices intertwined with age-old folk customs that had been passed down from generation to generation."\textsuperscript{36} Before Transylvanian Romanians could think of themselves as part of a modern national community, they had to be able to incorporate the concrete worldly details of the modern nation into the framework of Orthodox Christianity. The historical studies of the Transylvanian School provided the necessary groundwork.

Patrick Hutton has described history as an art of memory in the modern age, because it adjudicates the relationship between the unconscious presence of the past and our conscious efforts to evoke the past. Originally writing was only an adjunct to oral

\textsuperscript{35} I do not mention the Greek Catholic faith here because generally speaking the establishment of the Greek Catholic Church at the beginning of the eighteenth century caused little change in traditional Romanian religious life, especially at the rural level. It "meant very little to the average priest and the mass of believers. For them, old faith remained intact." Hitchins, \textit{A Nation Discovered}, 25.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 40–41.
devices such as rhetoric, but with the advent of print culture, knowledge gradually became separated from the operations of the mind and stored in texts. Study of textual knowledge led to clearer distinctions between the past and present and to an understanding of the particular nature of historical knowledge. It also prompted the search for an authentic self that changed and matured over time. Late-eighteenth-century autobiographers, for example, attempted to describe the concrete circumstances of an individual’s transformation from childhood into adulthood through investigations of their personal origins and the significant influences on their lives. Their analyses reflected the modern historical perspective of the past as a distinct reality removed from the present in time.37 “In light of this conception of the past the interest of the historian shifted from an appreciation of the edifying lessons the past may teach to an understanding of the way in which we have come to be who we are in this present place and time.”38 In the modern world, historical knowledge thus functioned as a form of collective self-knowledge.

The development of historical sensibilities and the search for a better understanding of the human condition coincided with a new understanding of the nation and its historical progression.39 Historians reinforced the modern idea of the nation with accounts of the national past fashioned from the concept of a developing human self. Their investigations examined the nation’s birth, maturation, and destiny in terms of linear progression. From a point of origin, historians followed the rise of the nation,

37 For more information on the differences between oral and print cultures see Walter J Ong, Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word (London, 1982); and James Fentress and Chris Wickham, Social Memory.
38 Patrick Hutton, History as an Art of Memory (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 156.
39 For influential arguments on the causes of this new understanding of the nation, see John Breuilly, Nationalism and the State; Ernest Gellner, Nations and Nationalism; Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities; and Prasenjit Duara, Rescuing History From the Nation. These works and several others are reviewed in Tanya Dunlap, “Nation-building and Nationalism. A Review Article,” in Spiritualitate transilvană și istorie europeană, eds., Iacob Mârza and Ana Dumitran (Alba Iulia, 1999). 519-34.
explained its present-day circumstances, and outlined its aspirations. Projections of the national community and its present concerns into the past as an object of historical becoming linked a distant past to the present and to a necessary future. By inserting present-day circumstances into the temporal continuum, the Transylvanian School historians tried to bridge the temporal divide, re-creating a connection to the past and showing the way to a brighter future.

Unlike French and American revolutionaries who exaggerated the backwardness and injustices of the past, the Romanians hoped to reconstruct society through a cult of history and a whole set of practices to commemorate it. John Gillis describes the process of constructing American and French identities in the late 1700s as an attempt to break with the past and to create as large a difference and distance as possible between the old order and the newly constructed regime. The revolutionaries created a cult of new beginnings with original sets of memory practices and sites in order to legitimize the new social order. The Romanians adopted a different approach. Whereas French and American reformers rejected old models as inappropriate for society's future foundations, Transylvanian intellectuals founded the new national era on historical origins, old ideals, values, and privileges. For these scholars, the new social order sprang forth from ancient and medieval historical rights and traditions. They envisioned a break from the present, not from the past.

The information contained in the Transylvanian school texts gradually became relevant to a wider national audience because they built on the living social memories of

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40 For more detailed descriptions of how groups form and regenerate through narration see Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation" in Nation and Narration (New York: Routledge, 1990): 291-322.
the broader community. The narratives gave new national meaning to the customs, habits, social values, and common ideals (i.e. the social memories) of Orthodox Romanians, attributing them to a common Roman heritage. Samuil Micu, for example, listed several celebrations, games, patterns of dress, wedding traditions, and funeral practices that the Romanians and Romans had in common in order to prove that the Romanians in Dacia (that is Transylvania) descended from the Romans. He also argued that the Romanian community’s Latin language verified their ancestry. The Romanians may have picked up words and linguistic influences from the barbarian peoples (Slavs and Hungarians) over the centuries. Micu argued, but the continuity of their Latin tongue from ancient days to the present showed that it was their original base language. As final proof of the Romanians' Roman heritage Micu declared that the name Romanian came from the word Roman. In the Romanian language an accent mark differentiates the noun and adjective Romanian (român) from Roman (roman). Micu claimed that the added accent resulted from the development of the Romanian language apart from its Latin origin. Furthermore, the Slavs called the Romanians vlahi, which Micu explained, meant Romans. The validity of Micu's evidence is not relevant here. What matters is that he ascribed social significance to the religious milieu in which the Romanian-speaking community lived. By supplementing living social memories with secular details, his text added a modern national dimension to the Romanian Orthodox community’s social memory.

The texts of the Transylvanian School made the Romanian nation real not because the representations of historical events or the descriptions of the community were accurate, but because the national history was remembered in textual form. Images

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42 Micu, Scurtă cunoştinţă a istoriei românilor, in Despre vechimea, 22-28.
inscribed in print tend to crowd out alternative representations of the past.\textsuperscript{43} When
eighteenth and nineteenth-century Romanian historians organized the living social
memories (previously unrecorded rights, duties, and legal and social customs) of the
Romanian Orthodox community in logical, sequential order and supplemented them with
historical details, they explained the collective experiences of a newly conceived
Romanian national community. Printed narratives had the effect of embedding those
explanations in more rigid, more complex, textual forms. The texts served as a deposit of
quasi-official views for future generations.\textsuperscript{44} The views were not, however, cast in stone.

When members of the burgeoning professional class in nineteenth-century
Transylvania began to narrate their own historical accounts, they referred to the
Transylvanian school texts, but they also formulated their own arguments about the past
in light of the needs of their present situation.\textsuperscript{45} Beginning with the early-nineteenth-
century writing of Ion Budai Deleanu and continuing throughout the nineteenth and
twentieth centuries, Romanian historians began to downplay the purity of the Romanians’
Latin origins. They emphasized the Romanization of the Dacians in order to describe the
unique make up of the Romanian people. Romanians, they argued, were not merely
Orthodox Romans (or Greek Catholics as opponents of the church union intimated). They
had an indigenous, noble past deserving of the same political recognition as the other

\textsuperscript{43} Benedict Anderson, \textit{Imagined Communities} (London: Verso, 1983), 80; Hutton, \textit{History and Memory},
21.

\textsuperscript{44} Fentress and Wickham, \textit{Social Memory}, 1-10. For an argument on the fundamental collapse of memory
and its subsequent embodiment in sites of memory see Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History," 7-25.

\textsuperscript{45} For a concrete example of Transylvanian School influence on Romanian revolutionaries in 1848 see
Pompiļiu Teodor "Ideologia revoluției din 1848 și opera istorică a lui Samuil Micu," \textit{Studia Universitatis Babes-Bolyai} 2
(1965):57-62; and ibid., "În jurul unei lucrări istorice a lui Petru Maior," \textit{Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj} IX
peoples of Transylvania. The Dacian past, moreover, had a longer tradition than either the Habsburgs or Hungarians and reinforced Romanian claims to historic rights in the region.

As a result of these historical debates, most Transylvanian elites adopted the new, modern conception of the Romanian nation and its political implications. The concept framed their views of the world and its peoples, who they divided according to national groups even as they were defining the boundaries for those groups.

The Modern Nation and its Language

In addition to the historical borders that Romanian intellectuals established for their national community, the intellectuals also created language markers to differentiate Romanians from other national groups. As part of their acceptance of the modern national ideal, the intellectuals considered the Romanian romance language the principal distinctive factor of the Romanian national community, but they could not make a simple case for their view because Romanian lacked generally accepted stylistic and grammatical norms necessary for a uniform literary language. Although the masses of Romanian peasants spoke dialects of the Romanian language, official use of Romanian at the end of the eighteenth century was still limited to the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches and to the schools run by the churches. Even until the middle of the nineteenth

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46 For insight into the international dimensions of these historical arguments, see Katherine Verdery, National Ideology Under Socialism, 30-54.
47 For more information on these debates see Teodor. Evolutia gindirii istorice romanești; Al. Dima, ed., Istoria literaturii române, vol. II; Kellogg, Romanian Historical Writing; and Sorin Mitu, Geneza identității naționale la români ardeleani (București: Humanitas, 1997).
49 The problem was not that Romanians had not developed stylistic and grammatical norms, but that scholars had developed too many. None gained general acceptance and widespread use among Romanian writers. Mitu, Geneza identității naționale la români ardeleani, 332.
century, Romanian intellectuals often mastered Latin, German, Hungarian, Italian, and/or French to the exclusion of Romanian.\textsuperscript{50}

Scholars in the Transylvanian School who believed that the backwardness of the Romanian nation resulted in part from the literary and linguistic limitations of the Romanian language worked hard to establish a firm foundation for their Romanian tongue. Samuil Micu and Gheorghe Șincai undertook the first serious study of the Romanian language, introducing the problem of Romanian-language use to scholarly audiences with their reference work \textit{Elementa linguae daco-romanae sive valachicae} (Daco-Roman linguistic elements of the Vlachs) published in 1780. The work addressed Romanian orthography, etymology, syntax and the formation of words plus a small vocabulary section of Romanian and Latin words. The authors tried to show that Romanian developed from classical Latin in order to prove the unique, historic and noble nature of the modern Romanian nation.\textsuperscript{51}

Transylvanian School scholars also tried to make the appearance of the language support their Latinist argument. They abandoned the traditional Romanian use of the Cyrillic alphabet, which the Orthodox Church had preserved, for Latin letters. Samuil Micu first broke with the church tradition in 1779 when he published a Romanian language book of prayers in Latin letters (\textit{Carte de rogacioni}). Subsequent linguistic studies, like the 1825 etymological dictionary of the Romanian language \textit{Dicționarul de la Buda}, which Micu and Petru Maior authored, noted the Latin base of the Romanian

\textsuperscript{50} In the 1840s the Paris-based Society of Romanian Students mandated that members should speak and write to each other only in Romanian, "an indication that for many of them a special effort was necessary to speak in their own tongue instead of in French." John Campbell, \textit{French Influence and the Rise of Romanian Nationalism. The Generation of 1848} (New York: Arno Press., 1971), 141. See also Mitu, \textit{Geneca identității naționale la români ardeieni}, 332-34.

\textsuperscript{51} Dima, \textit{Istoria literaturii române}, 36.
language, but the work also tried to purify the Romanian language from some of its foreign influences.⁵²

The etymological dictionary was part of a larger debate on the necessity of eliminating the foreign influences from the Romanian language and returning to the original form of the ancient Romanians' language, essentially creating a new language. But philology was not the heart of this matter. Romanian intellectuals in Transylvania wanted to be able to demonstrate the cultural capabilities of the Romanian language so that they could assert the equality of Romanian with other European national tongues. Samuil Micu went so far as to argue that the Latin alphabet was the orthographic vehicle of all civilized nations.⁵³ If the Romanians too wanted a civilized nation, they needed, he argued, the right tools.

Early-nineteenth-century Romanian intellectuals and professionals took up the language debates that the Transylvanian School initiated. The secondary school teachers, doctors, lawyers, civil servants, shopkeepers, and clergy who made up this group appointed themselves the spokespeople for the nation and began to define the interests of the Romanian national community in Transylvania. Romanian-language use in the public life of the nation was a major concern for these men because they believed that their language set them apart from other nations. They published articles on the importance of the Romanian language and literature in hope of persuading the reading public to accept their nationalist views. The work of the nineteenth-century elite had greater publicity and

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⁵² This argument paralleled Maior's historical account that the early Romanians were direct and pure descendants of the early Romans. Dima, Istoria literaturii române, 26-28.
⁵³ Mitu, Geneza identității naționale la români ardeleani, 331-47. For Micu's quote, see pages 346-47.
broader influence than the Transylvanian School arguments, which were isolated within a relatively small group of intellectuals, but the debates were not easily resolved.\textsuperscript{54}

The issue of writing Romanian with Latin letters was particularly difficult. Almost all prominent Romanian leaders in the early nineteenth century campaigned for the Latin alphabet. The Latinists feared that Cyrillic writing maintained the barrier between Romanians and other European nations, who did not yet recognize the Romanians of Transylvania as a modern national community. They blamed the Orthodox church for introducing foreign elements into the language and perpetuating Romanian backwardness. The problem was that these men were predominantly Greek Catholics. Their insistence on abandoning Cyrillic letters was interpreted as an attack on the Orthodox church and on the customs, habits, social values, and common ideals (the social memories) framing the pre-modern Romanian worldview, which were associated with Orthodoxy. The Orthodox hierarchy defended the use of the liturgical language’s Cyrillic lettering as a means to preserve the specifications of Romanian identity. They argued that the abandonment of Cyrillic letters represented the first step toward modifying the ancient Romanian faith and thus toward the loss of the community’s identity. Orthodox scholar Moise Nicoară even went so far as to indicate that the Latinization of the Romanian language would Hungarianize the Romanian population. Thus, the proponents of the Latin alphabet proceeded slowly.\textsuperscript{55}

\textsuperscript{54} The debates on the structure and orthography of the Romanian language were not settled until the second half of the nineteenth century when Transylvanian elites accepted the rules established by the Romanian literary society in Bucharest (founded 1866), the precursor to the Romanian Academy.\textsuperscript{55} Mitu, \textit{Geneza identității naționale la români ardeeni}, 346-58. For information on the nuances and disagreements of the Latinist arguments, see George Em. Marica, Iosif Hajós, Călina Mare, and Constantin Rusu, \textit{Ideologica generației române de la 1848 din Transilvania} (București: Editura politică, 1968), 137-50. The Latinist movement also took place in Bucharest in the early nineteenth century, but the leader of the movement, Transylvanian intellectual Gheorghe Lazar, first identified Latinism with France, not Rome. For more on this history, see Susana Macesich, "French Revolution, Napoleon and the Balkan
The case of the Gazette of Transylvania (*Gazeta de Transilvania*) and its literary supplement (*Foia pentru minte, inimă, și literatură* literally the Journal for Mind, Soul, and Literature) first published in 1838 from the southern Transylvanian city of Brașov illustrates the caution Romanian intellectuals in the Latinist camp exercised. The founder and editor of the papers George Barțiu insisted on using Romanian to show its usefulness in public life, not only in the church. He believed that use of the national language would promote collaboration between Romanians. Although the paper was originally published in Cyrillic letters, from its earliest editions Barțiu took up the contemporary controversies around language and the Latin alphabet. He did not act on his Latinist convictions for a couple years, and even then, he followed a gradual plan. In 1840 Barțiu adopted a semi-Cyrillic transitional alphabet for the literary supplement. In 1844 he introduced the transitional print to the Gazette. Partial printing in Latin letters did not take place until 1852, and the complete shift did not take place until 1856 for the literary supplement and 1862 for the Gazette.\(^\text{56}\) For a man who argued that if the Romanians did not cultivate their own language they would not be worth mentioning among the European nations, he understood that the cultivation of Romanian with a Latin alphabet and hence the construction of the Romanian community as a western European nation would take some time.\(^\text{57}\) He was right. The Orthodox Church, for example, did not abandon Cyrillic letters until the early 1900s.\(^\text{58}\)


\(^{58}\) Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale la români ardeieni*, fn. 205, 346.
The politicization of the language debates intensified in the first half of the nineteenth century in reaction to Hungarian liberalism during the Reform Era (1830s and 1840s). Hungarian liberals argued for equal rights for all qualified, male inhabitants of Hungary, but the nationalist faction of liberals led by Lajos Kossuth also insisted on the union of Transylvania with Hungary, on Hungarian as the language of administration and education, and on Hungarian as a compulsory school subject. The Hungarian nationalists' intention to Magyarize the Romanian population became clear in 1842 when they passed legislation making Hungarian the official language not only of the government and judiciary, but also of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches and schools. The language law never came into effect because the Emperor refused to sanction it, but it was an early sign that nationalists and liberals in Hungary and Transylvania could not coordinate policies.

Disagreements among the Hungarian and Romanian nationalists and liberals prevented joint action during the revolution of 1848-49. Although Romanians initially supported the Hungarian declaration of constitutional autonomy from the Habsburgs and union with Transylvania as an opportunity to gain equal standing with the other nations, they soon became wary of Hungarian hesitation to recognize the rights of the Romanian nation, including the right to a national language. Hungarian revolutionaries pushed for individual citizen's rights and refused to guarantee the autonomy of the Romanian nation. The revolutionary constitution did not mention national minorities, "except to confirm Magyar as the language of legislation and administration throughout the country." The Romanians deserted the revolutionary cause. They pledged loyalty to the Habsburgs.

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petitioned against the union of Transylvania with Hungary, and demanded the historic autonomy of Transylvania under a liberal regime that recognized the Romanians as an equal, constituent nation. As the conflicts between the Hungarians and Romanians intensified, Romanian nationalists abandoned the idea of cooperation with the Hungarians and called for the federation of the empire into autonomous national units, including an independent Romanian Duchy of Transylvania.

In the end, the Habsburgs suppressed the revolt with Russian help and reestablished Transylvania as an imperial province with its historic organization of three nations and four received religions. During the age of neo-absolutism that followed (1849-60), few opportunities remained to press for Romanian demands. Romanian leaders turned instead to cultural representations of their national community to make their positions known. If they could make the Romanian nation visible, then the authorities could not. Romanian elites reasoned, ignore Romanian demands forever.

The Politicization of Folk Culture

Having been sold out by the Habsburgs in 1849, Romanian elites no longer emphasized their pure Roman ancestry, which they had used to associated themselves with the Habsburgs who had inherited the glory of Rome. Instead Romanian leaders began to search for authentic Romanian expressions of their national community. They turned to peasant culture for inspiration. Concerns for Romanians' historic roots had attracted elite attention to Romanian folklore and ethnography from 1780 until the early 1800s, but the concerns were largely limited to the similarities between Romanian and
Roman traditions and linguistic forms, and to efforts to eradicate rural superstition. In the 1830s and 1840s the new generation of Romanian professionals and intellectuals looked to peasant literature as a potential source of innovation, but calls for further study of peasant literature were rarely realized. It was only after the revolution that peasant culture - the stories, songs, costumes, proverbs, and rural ways of life - took on new national significance. During the neo-absolutist era in which political dialogue waned, Romanian elites began to put Romanian peasant culture on display in order to assert their claims to nationhood. They collected and published peasant poetry, stories and proverbs as well as folk songs. They also publicized traditional Romanian music and dances, like the Romana, featured at balls and parties put on by local chapters of the Romanian Women's Society. As a result of the increased attention to the rural roots of the nation, peasant characteristics of the Romanian national community complemented the historical and linguistic components of Romanian national identity as the intellectuals defined it.

The concern for national folk costumes reflects the new importance elites accorded peasant culture. In the more relaxed atmosphere of the early 1860s, cultural expressions of the nation took on new life. Financial troubles after the defeat at the 1859 Battle of Solferino had forced Vienna to abandon absolutism in 1860 and make concessions to the nationalities in the empire. As a gesture of its new liberal stance, the

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63 Romanians were not alone in their interest in peasant culture. See Peter Brock, *Folk Cultures and Little Peoples. Aspects of National Awakening in East Central Europe* (Boulder, CO: East European Quarterly, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1992); and Tamas Hoffer, "Construction of the 'Folk Cultural
crown lifted an 1850 prohibition on Hungarian folk dress. Hungarian students in Budapest donned traditional clothing, and Romanian students reacted in kind, wearing a newly fashioned Romanian national costume based on traditional Romanian peasant dress. The actions of a few select students would not have been noteworthy had they not catalyzed a public debate in Romanian newspapers on the importance of national costumes and other homespun materials.64

Prominent journalist Gheorghe Barițiu set the tone of the debate in several articles published in 1860 and 1861. He argued that Romanian national costumes as well as all homespun textiles constituted an essential part of the life of a people and should be maintained to counter moral and political influences from non-Romans. Because there were several different kinds of traditional Romanian dress, Barițiu claimed that the most characteristic national costume would associate Romans with their Roman heritage and distinguish Romans from other neighboring peoples. But Barițiu did not ask Romans to abandon their local variation of folk dress. Clothing had to be practical, comfortable, and appropriate for varying climates and activities. Above all, Barițiu wanted Romans to wear their tradition clothing with pride. It was not to be shunned anymore as a national embarrassment, as a sign of underdevelopment, but celebrated as unique expressions of the nation.65

The sustained interest in Romanian folk costumes inspired some authors to call for the bourgeoisie (urban professionals, intellectuals, shopkeepers and craftsmen) to incorporate peasant costumes into their own wardrobes. Some went so far as to develop

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64 Marica, Studii de istoria și sociologia culturii române a râului, 241-46.
65 Ibid., 247.
model national costumes for the cultivated classes. Prominent politician and historian Ioan cavaler de Pușcariu is credited with calling on Romanian elites to wear a national uniform at public events, especially those with a national character like popular celebrations, festivals, balls, or weddings.66 According to Pușcariu, the uniform should first differentiate Romanian national dress from the clothing of other peoples. and second it should combine elements common to all Romanian costumes. It should also, he argued, portray moderation. Pușcariu believed Romanian national dress should be identified by its simplicity.67 A simple design was attractive because many believed that the Romans dressed with equal moderation and because Romanian would be able to afford simple costumes more easily.

Not all Romanians favored a return to tradition Romanian dress. In the first place, critics argued, Romanians had many more important concerns than national dress. General education or enlightenment, for example, was a top priority, not clothing. Secondly, folk costumes constituted an unnecessary expense for most Romanians. The proponents of a national costume for Romanian professionals and intellectuals had singled out students to take up the new clothing trend, but critics claimed that students needed to reserve their funds for their education. Critics also complained the contemporary debates focused on the proper national attire for men, not for women. Beyond the fashion magazines from Paris, one critic asked, what kind of guidelines should cultured Romanian women follow?68

Proponents of the national costume for Romanian elites defended their views. They argued that upwardly mobile Romanians faced the greatest pressure to assimilate

66 Ibid., 251-52.
67 The text of the article attributed to Pușcariu can be found in Marica, 265-67.
with the dominant Hungarians. Hence the preservation of a national costume for Romanian elites would help them retain their national uniqueness. The Romanian national community needed educated Romanians, they agreed, but they needed learned Romanians to remain consciousness of their nationality. The nation also needed its cultivated women to maintain their sense of national loyalty. Romanian leaders were concerned that Romanian women from prominent families would marry wealthier non-Romanians. Wearing national dress would presumably help these women resist pressure to assimilate with their husband's culture. We have the duty, one author wrote, to remain "unmixed" (nemîșcați) and preserve our national character, which is found in our language and dress. The author did not have detailed guidelines for elite women. He urged them to refrain from buying foreign cloth and to spin their own clothing like rural women did.\textsuperscript{69} Cloth spun by non-Romanians endangered the purity of Romanian textiles (through the introduction of non-Romanian motifs in the cloth for example), and hence the purity of the national character that cloth represented.

Debates on the importance and most appropriate kinds of national dress waned after 1862 because elite attention in Transylvania shifted to the constitutional experiments underway throughout the empire. After the defeat of Habsburg forces on the Italian battlefield in 1859, financially strapped Vienna needed to strengthen the position of the imperial government. Military spending had outpaced tax revenues, and the imperial population showed little willingness to contribute to the monarchy's coffer. In Hungary, for example, only thirteen percent of direct taxes were collected in 1859.

\textsuperscript{68} Ibid., 253-55.  
\textsuperscript{69} Ibid., 257-58.
without force or threat of force.\textsuperscript{70} The October Diploma of 1860 provided a central parliament, but it also restored local legislative bodies and traditional political orders to appease Hungarian nobles. It was immediately rejected among German liberal circles. In the face of liberal resistance, the crown abandoned the Diploma for a centralized constitutional government.\textsuperscript{71}

The February Patent of 1861 concentrated power in Vienna at the expense of provincial government. The Patent enlarged the imperial parliament, the \textit{Reichrat}, to 343 members and reserved for the \textit{Reichrat} all decisions not specified for the provincial diets. One of the more important tasks of the provincial diets under the Patent included electing a specified number of representatives to the \textit{Reichrat}.\textsuperscript{72} With the Patent the emperor still maintained exclusive control over foreign and military affairs. The Patent satisfied German liberals but outraged Hungarian leaders. Hungarians demanded their 1848 program, including the union of Transylvania with Hungary, and boycotted the \textit{Reichrat}. In August 1861 the crown prorogued the Hungarian diet in Budapest and re-imposed bureaucratic absolutism in Hungary. Hungarians in turn withdrew from political life, choosing not to cooperate with the new regime rather than to revolt openly against it.

The repression in Hungary and passive resistance among Magyars in Transylvania contrasted starkly with the new freedoms Romanians exercised in Transylvania. The attempts to institute constitutional government inaugurated a new era in Romanian

\textsuperscript{70} Robin Okey, \textit{The Habsburg Monarchy From Enlightenment to Eclipse} (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), 171.

\textsuperscript{71} The reforms also bought time for the monarchy to compete for dominance in Germany. See Alan Sked, \textit{The Decline and Fall of the Habsburg Empire 1815-1918} (London and New York: Longman, 1989) and F.R. Bridge, \textit{The Habsburg Monarchy among the Great Powers, 1815-1918} (New York, Oxford, and Munich: Berg, 1990).

political activities.\textsuperscript{73} Under pressure from Romanian delegations to Vienna, the court approved a Romanian national congress held in Sibiu in January 1861.\textsuperscript{74} The Romanian national congress preceded a February conference of Magyar, Saxon, and Romanian representatives considering the principles of a new Transylvanian constitution, so the delegates to the Sibiu-based Romanian national congress took the opportunity in January to formulate a national policy that all delegates could support. Their demands to the Transylvanian Diet included renouncing any future union of Transylvania with Hungary, revoking legislation that discriminated against Romanians, and appointing a reasonable number of Romanians to the Transylvanian Chancellery (the Vienna-based body that supervised Transylvanian affairs). Delegates also chose a national committee to coordinate future political action.\textsuperscript{75}

Romanian solidarity in Sibiu carried over to the February conference. The twenty-four Magyar representatives, eight Saxon representatives and eight Romanian representatives to the conference resolved little. The Magyars refused to consider a new Transylvanian constitution. They argued that the conference should determine electoral procedures for Transylvanian representatives to the diet in Pest, an obvious motion rejecting the autonomy of the Transylvanian principality. Three Saxons sided with the Magyars, but the remaining five German delegates agreed with the Romanian representatives on the necessity of national equality in Transylvania and an expanded

\textsuperscript{73} Simion Retegan. \textit{Dieta românească a Transilvaniei} (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1979), 40-42.

\textsuperscript{74} One hundred fifty Romanians participated at the 1861 national congress, twenty-five clerics from each church and fifty laymen from each church. Because the court recognized no other Romanian leaders except the Orthodox bishop Andrei Şaguna and the Greek Catholic bishop Alexandru Sterca Şuluţiu, the representatives to the congress were limited to those appointed by the bishops. Nevertheless most Romanians believed the new opportunities would allow them to help determine the future political arrangement in Transylvania. Hitchins, \textit{A Nation Affirmed}, 61-62.

\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 63-64.
suffrage. The impasse forced the conference to close after the second day, and leaders of each national group submitted a separate petition to the Transylvanian chancellor.

The stalemate in February lasted throughout 1861 and 1862. The court confronted with passive resistance not only from the Hungarians but also from the Croats and Czechs who boycotted the parliament and demanded federalism, weighed its options before it instituted further constitutional changes. In Transylvania the court gradually cast its lot with the Romanians in a test case to prove that constitutional government could work. In order to overcome Hungarian resistance to parliamentary elections, the emperor ordered an enlargement of the franchise so that any Transylvanian man who paid eight florins of direct tax could vote. For the first time nobles had to meet the tax qualifications, a requirement that eliminated many lesser Magyar nobles. Clergy and professional classes (doctors, lawyers, notaries, teachers), however, were automatically enfranchised. The expansion created enough new voters that elections to the Transylvanian Diet (which would send representatives to the Reichrat) could be held despite Magyar abstentions. Nevertheless, Hungarian resistance prevented the elections until 1863.

The new franchise did not come into effect until 21 April 1863. On that same day the emperor stipulated the issues for the Transylvanian Diet’s consideration. These included: “the legal recognition of the Romanian nation and its churches, the settlement of the language question in public affairs, the drafting of a new electoral law, the election of Transylvanian deputies to the imperial parliament, a new administrative division of the

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76 For more details on the 1861 negotiations between Magyars and Romanians regarding the reorganization of Transylvania and the views of Hungarian liberals and aristocrats see Köpeczi, History of Transylvania, 545-48.
country, the reorganization of the administration and court system, and the establishment of a credit bank." The elections held in June and July 1863 sent 49 Romanian representatives, 44 Hungarian representatives, and 33 Saxon representatives to the diet. The crown also appointed another 11 royal representatives from each nationality to the diet. (One Romanian regalist later died and was replaced with a Magyar representative).

The diet convened in mid July without the Magyar delegates (save three regalists) who clung to the 1848 union of Transylvania and Hungary protesting that "'the very idea of a Transylvanian Diet was contrary to law.'" Magyar abstentions enabled the Romanians and Saxons to pass two key laws that seemed to solidify Romanian national autonomy. The first gave the Romanian nation and the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches equal standing with the other three nations and their four received religions. The second made Romanian an official state language for administrative and legal affairs. Before either of these laws could come into effect, they required a second reading in the diet and the sanction of the emperor. The diet convened a second time during the summer and early fall of 1864. Romanian and Saxon delegates passed additional legislation to secure the autonomy of Transylvania's administration, judiciary, and finances, but approval from the crown was short-lived.

Magyar, Czech, and Croat intransigence stymied the constitutional experiments throughout the empire, and the emperor was forced to look for a more stable imperial

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78 Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed*, 72.
79 Retegan, *Dieta românească*, 78. For information on the feverish activity of Transylvanian Romanians before the summer elections see Retegan, 64-79.
80 Köpeczi, *History of Transylvania*, 549.
81 Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed*, 75.
82 For a detailed discussion of this legislation and other deliberations of the 1864 Transylvanian Diet in Sibiu see Retegan, *Dieta românească*, 80-244.
organization. In 1865 Franz Joseph entered into negotiations with leading Hungarians. Once of his first concessions granted in 1865 provided for the union of Transylvania with Hungary. The final outcome of the negotiations culminated in the Compromise, or Ausgleich, of 1867. The agreement divided the monarchy into two legally equal parts, Austria and Hungary. The monarch and the ministers he appointed managed the common affairs of foreign policy, defense, and finances in conjunction with delegations from the Austrian and Hungarian parliaments; but, in all other respects Austria and Hungary were sovereign states with their own legislatures, judiciaries, and administrations to govern internal affairs.

In the Hungarian half of the Dual Monarchy the completion of the long-sought union of Transylvania and Hungary enabled Hungarians to move forward with plans to transform their multi-ethnic half into a Magyar nation-state. Romanians publicly rejected the Compromise of 1867 in hope that the crown would again reverse its decision and decide to support the goals of the non-Magyar nationalities in the empire, but Romanian calls for the restoration of Transylvanian autonomy fell on deaf ears. Many leading Romanians in Transylvania opted for passive resistance, refusing to sanction the new political order with their participation. In 1869 Romanian leaders orchestrated an electoral boycott. But unlike the Hungarian boycott of Habsburg constitutional reforms in the 1860s, Romanian abstention did not paralyze the government; it only gave

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83 Franz Joseph dissolved the Transylvanian Diet in Sibiu in September 1865 and raised the tax qualifications for eligible voters. The new Transylvanian Diet held in Cluj (Kolozsvár) met in November 1865. The Magyar-dominated legislative body urged the emperor to ratify the union of Transylvania and Hungary. He agreed to do so provided that the Hungarians recognized the rights of the Romanian and Saxon nations and the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches. On 9 January 1866 the emperor prorogued the Transylvanian Diet, and the autonomous principality ceased to exist.

84 The delegations proved too cumbersome to work effectively, leaving ample room for the monarch and common ministers "to function practically without constitutional checks." Tibor Frank. "Hungary and the Dual Monarchy, 1867-1890" in A History of Hungary. 253.
Hungarians more room to maneuver. The attempt to establish an independent Romanian principality had officially ended.

Magyarization

Although it initially looked like Hungarians would guarantee national rights for the Romanians in the new Dual Monarchy, the liberal leaders of Hungary could not resolve the contradiction between their aspirations for a unitary nation-state and the reality of a multinational country. They wanted to guarantee the civil liberties of every citizen but also to preserve the hegemony of the Hungarians. Because their understanding of nationality was not based on genetic traits but on the adoption of linguistic and cultural markers, Hungarians tried to build a Magyar nation-state by encouraging the minority nationalities to assimilate. At first the Hungarian government's assimilation policy concentrated on voluntary Magyarization. The required learning of Magyar in most high schools, for example, was designed to turn intellectuals from the varied national groups into Hungarians. In the 1880s, however, the new generation of national liberals led by Kálmán Tisza abandoned the voluntary assimilation policy for a more forceful plan to turn all citizens into Hungarian nationals. In this context, Romanians' attempts to preserve their own culture and language took on greater political importance.

In the early days of dualism, the 1868 nationalities law provided the legal foundation for the Hungarian government's nationality policy. It guaranteed the right for all citizens to use their own language at local and municipal meetings, in all government petitions, and in lower courts of law. The law also entitled citizens rights to receive governmental responses to petitions in their own native tongue and to hear court judgements in their native language. In addition the law allowed communes, churches,
and elementary schools to use the language of their choice. An important provision of the law authorized association, societies, and funds "for the promotion of languages, art, science, economy, industry and trade" of the nationalities. With this provision the nationalities had a legal right to organize themselves and their finances relatively independently of the government. The law, however, was never fully enforced and subsequent legislation contradicted its spirit and intent.  

In the decades following the 1867 compromise and 1868 nationalities law, Hungarian authorities treated protections for the nationalities as obstacles to the consolidation of the Magyar nation-state. The concern for Magyar-language proficiency attracted considerable government attention. After the death of influential Hungarian moderates József Eőtvös in 1871 and Ferenc Deák in 1876, unsystematic measures to introduce Magyar-language training into the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Church schools gave way to more compulsory policies. In 1879 the Hungarian diet passed Law XVIII requiring that current teachers become proficient in the Magyar language by 1882 and that teaching certificates be granted only to those candidates who demonstrated Magyar-language proficiency. An 1883 law made Magyar-language instruction mandatory for seventh and eighth graders in all confessional and state schools. Legislation passed in 1891 that established kindergartens for three to six-year-olds required a command of Magyar for all early childhood educators. The conflict over language education intensified early in the twentieth century when Hungarian officials demanded that the Orthodox theological institute offer Magyar language courses. The

85 Köpeczi, History of Transylvania, 601.
86 Ibid., 602.
government also tried to promote Magyar-language proficiency through an expansion of
state schools in Romanian communities, supplements to Romanian confessional school
teachers who demonstrated Magyar-language proficiency, as well as financial support for
repair and construction of schools offering Magyar-language instruction.88

The government's attempts to intervene in Orthodox and Greek Catholic schools
culminated in the famous 1907 Lex Apponyi. The law raised salaries of state and
confessional school teachers - salaries that the largely impoverished Romanian
confessional schools could not afford. In order to offset the costs, the law provided state
subsidies if the schools would offered "an impeccably patriotic civic education,"
including a more intensive teaching of Hungarian language and literature and instruction
on the Hungarian constitution. If Hungarian students comprised half or more of the
student body, Hungarian had to be the language of instruction. Schools had to provide
Hungarian language education for Hungarian students if they made up twenty percent or
more of the student body. Lex Apponyi also Magyarized school appearances. Every
school had to display the Hungarian coat of arms and the name of the school in
Hungarian, use Hungarian forms, fly the Hungarian flag on state holidays, and exhibit
Hungarian historical scenes in all classrooms.89 If Romanian communities failed to raise
teacher salaries without state aid, they would lose the right to maintain their schools.90

With the passage of the Apponyi Law, the government's Magyarization policies
took on new life. Teachers, for example, who could not demonstrate competence in
Magyar were replaced with certified Magyar speakers. Schools that did not meet the new

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88 For a detailed discussion of the Hungarian government's attempts to Magyarize Romanian churches and
schools in Transylvania and the Romanians' reactions, see Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed*, 169-220.
patriotic requirements were shut down. Under state pressure, many Romanian church schools even introduced textbooks with patriotic Hungarian history lessons. Among the Romanian population, however, the Magyarization campaign did not encourage assimilation. It strengthened Romanian resolve to resist being incorporated into the Hungarian national community and to organize their communities and fund local Romanian education. Although the law helped improve the quality of education in Romanian communities, it could not rectify the demographic barrier to assimilation. Most Romanian schools served Romanians communities, and their alienation to the Hungarian nation-state was not overcome with compulsory educational reforms.91

Cultural Resistance

In light of the Romanian boycott of dualist politics in Transylvania, Romanian resistance to the state's Magyarization campaign took the form of a cultural movement. Romanians hoped that cultural expressions of their own national character would help them avoid assimilation and force the state to address their demands for territorial autonomy, collective national rights, and independent political institutions.

Astra, the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (Asociațiunea transilvană pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român), became the largest and most important organization in the Transylvanian Romanian cultural movement.92 Founded in 1861 during the era of

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92 See V. Curticăpeanu, Mişcarea culturală românească pentru unirea din 1918 (Bucureşti: Editura Științifică, 1963) for more information on the Romanian cultural movement in the second half of the nineteenth century. Also available in French translation, Le Mouvement Culturel Pour le Parachèvement de
constitutional reform. Astra’s formation was part of a general trend among nationalists to express national identity through scholarly and cultural forums. Nationalists set up scientific and cultural associations throughout central and southeastern Europe in the nineteenth century to establish their national presence.⁹³ In Transylvania, the Saxons founded the first intellectual and cultural societies in the 1840s [the Association of Transylvanian Native Knowledge (Verein für Siebenbürgische Landeskunde) est. 1840; and the Transylvanian Association of Natural Sciences (Siebenbürger Verein für Naturwissenschaften) est. 1849]. With strong ties to German Universities, the leaders of these societies wrote histories of the Saxon communities in Transylvania, set up and enriched libraries like the important Brukenthal library in Sibiu, and sponsored activities in grammar schools among other things.⁹⁴ Inspired by the Saxons, the Hungarians established the Transylvanian Museum Association (Erdélyi Múzeum Egylet) in 1857 (with official permission to organize in 1859). This scholarly Hungarian society functioned not only as a museum with collections of items donated from aristocrats, intellectuals, and members of the bourgeoisie, but it also served as a nascent scientific academy. After the union of Transylvania and Hungary in 1867, the Transylvanian

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⁹⁴ Kőpeczi, History of Transylvania, 584; C. Göllner, ed., Die Siebenbürger Sachsen in den Jahren 1848-1918 (Köln and Vienna, 1988).
Museum Association lost much of its earlier political purpose (to assert Hungarian nationhood in the autonomous principality of Transylvania), but it gained new direction with the founding of the University of Koloszvár (Cluj) in 1872, loaning collections to the university and sharing personnel.\textsuperscript{95}

Leaders of the Romanian cultural and literary society Astra patterned their association after the Saxon and Hungarian organizations, but Astra also influenced leaders of such organizations. Because impoverished peasants made up a large portion of the Romanian population in Transylvania, Astra could not rely solely on contributions from intellectuals, professionals, and clergy. Romanian leaders also felt a duty to emancipate the population intellectually and financially. Astra's elite devoted considerable energy and resources to rural education and national organization in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in hope that rural enlightenment would help foster collective economic productivity and higher national living standards. Astra's attention to rural communities impressed Hungarian leaders who had established the Magyar Cultural Association of Transylvania (Erdélyi Múzeum Közművelődési Egyesület) in 1885 to promote Hungarian language and culture throughout the countryside. The Hungarians followed the Romanian lead and began to incorporate portions of Astra's rural activities, like popular lectures, into their own organizations.\textsuperscript{96}

Despite the mutual influences, the societies retained separate programs. Leaders of the different national associations sometimes invited non-nationals to annual conferences and awarded them honorary memberships, but they did not collaborate extensively with heads of the other cultural and scientific associations. Like the general

\textsuperscript{95} Köpeczi, \textit{History of Transylvania}. 584-85. 607-09.
members of the associations who joined their own national association and the masses who attended events put on by their own national society, the leaders dedicated their energies and resources to the development of their own national organizations.\textsuperscript{97}

Astra's rural work that impressed Hungarian elites resulted from a growing understanding of the Romanian peasant as the foundation of the national community. Romanian intellectuals almost never viewed peasants as political or social equals who were capable of managing their own affairs or futures, but they saw national potential in the peasantry. The potential sprang in part from the vast number of Romanian peasants relative to numbers of Romanian intellectuals and professionals, who made up between two and three percent of the Romanian population.\textsuperscript{98} If the intellectuals could just transform the peasant into a prosperous, educated Romanian national, they believed that the Romanian nation had a viable future. The transformation required the intellectuals to make the modern national ideal real for village communities. Romanian peasants needed to understand the political importance of their national culture and to begin to participate actively in society as Romanian nationals.

Astra did successfully begin this transformation, but not without some difficulty. The Romanian national movement was far from monolithic. Before Astra leaders could get their rural campaign off the ground, they had to work out disagreements among themselves and formulate a coherent policy. Chapter three addresses these concerns.

\textsuperscript{96} Kántor Lajos, "Párhuzam az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület és az Astra megalakulásában és korai működésében," \textit{Erdélyi Muzeum} 45, no. 2 (1940): 103-17.
\textsuperscript{97} Köpeczi, \textit{History of Transylvania}, 586; Lajos, "Párhuzam az Erdélyi Múzeum-Egyesület és az Astra." 116-17.
\textsuperscript{98} Hitchins argues that the intellectuals and white collar professionals (including clergy and school teachers) constituted less than two percent of the Romanian population in Transylvania in \textit{A Nation Affirmed}, 106; and less than three percent in \textit{Ibid.}, \textit{Rumania 1866-1947} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 218-19. In 1910, only 4.5 percent of Romanians lived in urban centers.
Chapter Three
The Nation Builders

The Romanian nation-building campaign in Transylvania and Hungary illustrates the difficulties nationalists faced when they tried to build a nation without the patronage or institutional structure of a national state. Historically the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches had provided the institutional basis for the Romanian national movement in Transylvania. The churches continued to play important roles even at the end of the nineteenth century, but their influence had begun to erode in the middle of the nineteenth century after professional lay leaders started to assert more authority over the national movement. Without a common organizational framework to build the Romanian nation in Transylvania, Romanian nationalists needed their own institutional infrastructure. They turned to a cultural association, the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People, or Astra, in order to organize and direct their activities.

Romanian nation builders rallied behind Astra in part because they believed Astra's educational and cultural programs were necessary to raise national consciousness and build a strong nation. Like many national romantics in Europe, professional elites in Transylvania believed that they merely needed to awaken the national consciousness of their compatriots and Romanians would almost automatically begin to assume responsibility for their own affairs. Educated laymen and religious leaders alike also agreed that as elite members of the national community it was their responsibility to educate the peasantry and thereby combat rural backwardness. Religious officials did not necessarily espouse the secular vision of the nation that the laymen championed, but they
worked for the association’s success because it offered a means to meet clerical responsibilities for the social and, to a lesser extent, economic well-being of their parishioners. Religious and secular leaders also supported the association because its educational and cultural focus provided a seemingly apolitical agenda that most Romanians could support.

With the backing of so many leaders, Astra became the largest and most important Romanian cultural organization in Hungary. By the outbreak of the First World War, Astra had incorporated thousands of rural Romanians into its local organizational network. The association also managed to subordinate previously important church or religious affiliations to a sense of national loyalty. Astra leaders praised both Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches as important Romanian national institutions and integrated them into the association.

Astra’s successful expansion, however, masks the differences and disagreements among the groups that made up the association. Although distinctions between varying groups were sometimes ambiguous and their agendas often overlapped, within Astra a basic tension existed between high church officials and the more secular professional and intellectual elites. When Romanian intellectuals negotiated with Habsburg authorities in the early 1860s to establish Astra, religious and secular leaders set aside political disagreements and worked together. After the union of Transylvania with Hungary in 1865 and the creation of the Dual Monarchy in 1867, however, friction between Orthodox leaders and Romanian lay leaders affiliated primarily with the Greek Catholic Church became more pronounced. Religious authorities concerned with the independent status of their church and the faith of their parishioners more readily compromised with
governing officials. Lay leaders boycotted the dualist agreement. They even formed a political party in 1881, which reaffirmed their boycott. Nevertheless all parties maintained their support for cultural organizations like Astra because they believed that literature and education could create a unifying sense of culture among Romanians and lead to their collective empowerment.

Among the lay leadership a division grew between generations. A younger age group that came to the fore at the end of the century advocated a renunciation of the earlier boycott and a return to the political stage. These men sought to influence public opinion, incorporate the Romanian peasantry into a mass national movement, and make the villagers active citizens through universal manhood suffrage. They did not, however, consider the peasantry their equals, and a rift between the peasantry and the intellectuals that had dogged all previous Romanian nation-building efforts in Transylvania continued.

Disagreements between more urban. secular professionals and intellectuals and village clergy also became increasingly evident as Astra pushed its network into the countryside. Rural priests and confessional school teachers did not always accept a subordinate role to the urban professionals and intellectuals. Furthermore a small but outspoken group of populists who argued that the village held the key to the nation's future began to challenge the authority of the more urban and secular elite.

Although Romanians of all persuasions worked for Astra to spread a message of national unity, the tensions between various factions nevertheless endured. In the early 1900s the conflicts took shape over the leadership of the nation and role of the peasantry in the national community. At the crux of the debate was the question of how to build the nation without the organizational infrastructure of a national state and in such a way that
all Romanians would benefit equitably from their membership in it. Within Astra, this dispute occurred during and over the expansion of the association’s organizational network into the countryside. Astra leaders agreed that organizing villagers had to be their first step, but they did not resolve more fundamental differences like the future role of the peasantry in the Romanian national community. Tensions among Romanian nationals only appeared to dissipate behind Astra's nationalist discourse.

**Challenges from Lay Leaders**

Early disagreements among religious and secular Romanian leaders first became evident in the 1830s and 1840s with the rise of a nascent professional class, often referred to as the generation of 1848 because it began to exert greater influence in Romanian circles in the revolutionary atmosphere of 1848-49. Although most of these men came from peasant families, few entered the priesthood, the traditional vocation of Romanian intellectuals. Instead, they profited from educational opportunities available at secondary schools in Transylvania and settled in Romanian cultural centers where they took up professions in teaching, journalism, and, to a lesser extent, law. With a strong faith in the power of rational education to transform society, the lay intellectuals committed themselves to the practical resolution of political and economic problems. They continued to value the contributions of both the Greek Catholic church and the Orthodox church to the Romanian national cause, but, unlike church leaders, their primary allegiance was to the nation, not to Christianity. Romanian secular elites in Transylvania did not espouse atheism or exhibit hostility to organized religion. They did, however, prioritize contemporary human affairs over questions of eternity. Therefore they found it difficult to understand why the bishops did not set aside religious differences and end the
antagonism between the two churches that they thought artificially divided the national community and hindered its progress. The lay intellectuals also could not understand why the bishops who officially represented the Romanian national community in the empire did not press harder for the emancipation of the Romanian nation, but continued to defer to governing authorities for solutions to the national question. The higher clergy’s reluctance to discuss fundamental socio-political reforms with imperial officials in the 1830s and early 1840s convinced lay leaders that they could not rely on the church hierarchs and that they needed to take matters into their own hands. Without access to other national institutions (for none existed), laymen tried to gain influence over church councils and transform them into political forums.¹ When these efforts failed, they successfully took their concerns to classrooms and to national journals in which they communicated their ideas to a wider national audience.²

Religious authorities and lay leaders alike worked to secure greater Romanian autonomy in the Habsburg empire but their strategies differed fundamentally. In the eyes of Orthodox and Greek Catholic leaders the church communities constituted the nation and church officials represented it. The sovereignty of the nation was thus intrinsically linked to independent religious institutions. For this reason, they fought to preserve and expand the independence of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches and their confessional schools within the structural organization of the empire. Secular leaders defended the autonomy of the churches too, but they were not satisfied with freedoms of

¹ The best account of the nineteenth-century Romanian national movement in Transylvania is Keith Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality. Andrei Șaguna and the Rumanians of Transylvania, 1846-1873* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1977), 208-47. The following pages draw much information and insight from this work.
² Ladislau Gyémánt, *Mișcarea națională a românilor din Transilvania 1790-1848* (București: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1986), 129-46. See also George Em Marica, Ioșif Hajas, Calina Mare, and
religion. According to their views, the nation was not defined by or limited to organized religion but was an inherently sovereign collective body, capable of determining its own fate. Therefore laymen worked to establish independent Romanian political, social, and economic institutions over which they could exert their national leadership. Such institutions, they believed, would enable Romanians to shape their own future.

The extent of the differences between lay intellectuals and the bishops became increasingly apparent during the revolution of 1848-49. At the outset of the revolution, prominent Romanians debated Magyar intentions to unify Transylvania with Hungary. Promises of civil freedoms and political equality for every individual citizen initially encouraged many Romanian lay leaders to support the union, but they increasingly grew wary of Magyar unwillingness to recognize and enfranchise the Romanians as a nation. Fearful that rights promised for individual citizens of a Greater Hungary would preclude guarantees for the development of the Romanian nation and lead to Magyarization.

Simion Bărnuțiu, an outspoken nationalist leader of the generation of 1848 and later law professor at Iași, convinced most of his compatriots to reject the union unless it provided for the collective emancipation of all Romanians. At meetings held in April and May 1848, he and his supporters, along with moderate leaders led by Orthodox Bishop Andrei Șaguna, hammered out a declaration of “Sixteen Points” that asserted Romanian political independence and demanded Romanian participation in the debate on the union.

Under the influence of the lay leadership, the Sixteen Points differed significantly from previous petitions to governing officials. Instead of arguing on the basis of historic rights and legal agreements, the authors of the declaration appealed to the universal and

Constantin Rusu, Ideologia generației române de la 1848 din Transilvania (București: Editura politica, 1968), 160-61.
natural rights of man and extended those rights to the nation. The document also laid out many other demands, such as the full restoration of Romanian church autonomy, social emancipation, industrial and commercial freedoms, the abolition of taxes and duties, civil freedoms guaranteed by a constitutional government, an armed national guard, and independent educational institutions funded by the state. As a political declaration, the Sixteen Points “represented the most comprehensive and forceful statement of Romanian aspirations made up to that time, and in its essentials it provided the national movement with its program for the next half-century.”³ The leadership communicated the content of the declaration to thousands of Romanian villagers who had gathered in Blaj in May 1848 and who then peacefully dispersed to await the proclaimed reforms.

The task before the Romanians, however, was arduous. The two Romanian delegations elected to deliver the document to the Transylvanian Diet in Cluj and to the Habsburg Court in Vienna encountered widespread opposition. Because governing officials only recognized the authority of traditional leaders to participate in governing affairs, the bishops continued to serve as the legal spokesmen for the Romanian nation. Greek Catholic Bishop Ioan Lemeni (1832-1848) led the delegation to the Transylvanian Diet but he was only allowed to speak as an official Romanian representative after the union was made into law. Instead of protesting against the legislation, Lemeni ignored the arguments in the Sixteen Points and actually praised the union.⁴ Bishop Şaguna fared slightly better at Innsbruck where the Court had fled after the revolution erupted. He received an audience with the Emperor, but to no avail. Ferdinand had sanctioned the

⁴ The Habsburg military commander in Transylvania, General Anton von Puchner, later suspended Lemeni as bishop on account of his support for an independent Hungarian government. Lemeni had no subsequent
union of Transylvania with Hungary before Şaguna’s arrival. Unable to prevent Transylvania’s incorporation into Hungary, Şaguna traveled to Budapest to negotiate the terms of the union with Magyar representatives in Budapest. His actions, conducted independently of the lay intellectuals, exacerbated animosities between Romanian leaders. The intellectuals argued that the bishops had compromised vital national goals and should never have discussed the union officially with Magyar authorities because their discussions appeared to legitimize an enlarged Hungarian state. The hierarchs, however, were primarily concerned for the autonomy of the churches and schools and had entered the discussions to preserve the independence of religious institutions. Nationalist leaders recognized the importance of maintaining church autonomy, but the conflict had galvanized them, and they became unwilling to settle for anything less than full Romanian autonomy. Consequently, they preferred to boycott any discussion of the union.⁵

The crisis in Transylvania intensified in the fall of 1848. Excitement about the talk of reforms gave way to despair about their implementation. Violence broke out throughout the countryside at the same time that the conflict between the Habsburgs and Magyar nationalists came to a head.⁶ Encouraged by summer successes against revolutionaries in Bohemia and northern Italy, the Habsburgs sought allies among the non-Hungarian people of the empire. Romanians in Transylvania enthusiastically to overtures from imperial authorities in October 1848, they pledged their loyalty to the crown and their resources to its defense in exchange for future political autonomy, which

⁵ Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality*, 55-63.
they hoped would take shape in the form of an autonomous Romanian duchy in Transylvania. The Habsburgs, however, had no such intentions. The Austrian military command refused to treat Romanian forces as equals and quickly alienated the intellectuals by refusing to recognize them as official Romanian representatives. After the incursion of Russian forces in 1849, the Habsburgs ignored Romanian protests and reestablished Transylvania as an imperial province with its historic organization that excluded Romanians from political life.

Romanian intellectuals were anxious to organize and debate aims and strategies in public forums but during the repressive atmosphere of the neo-absolutist regime (1849-60), they did not have the opportunity. Such opportunities arose only after Habsburg defeats in northern Italy in 1859 forced the court to initiate constitutional reforms. From 1860 to 1865 the Romanians benefited from Habsburg efforts to centralize the empire along more liberal, constitutional lines. The constitutional experiments had a short lifespan however. Throughout the empire, Magyars, Czechs, and Croats refused to participate in the new legal framework because it elevated the power of the Habsburgs at their expense. The resignations of many Magyar, Czech, and Croat state functionaries as a form of protest led to disruptions in effective government. As a result, the Habsburgs reconsidered their relationship with the Hungarians who were the most powerful national group. Beginning in 1865 the Court decided to make concessions to Magyar leaders who insisted on the union of Transylvania with Hungary as a means to restore the historic integrity of the Hungarian state and the dominance of Magyars in public life. This brought great pressure on the Romanian national movement, seriously dividing it.

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The old disagreements between religious and lay leaders persisted during the period of liberalization (1860-65) but did not prevent both sides from working together toward common goals. Although all Romanians supported the federalization of the empire with guarantees for national autonomy, they did not agree on the means to achieve their goal. Bishop Șaguna continued to advocate national equality for the Romanians, but he also respected tradition and maintained his defense of imperial unity and loyalty to the Emperor as a means of countering Magyar domination of Transylvania. Concerned that the Romanians would not have the economic or legal strength to stand against the Habsburgs and Magyars should a rapprochement between the two take place (as it did), Șaguna argued for Transylvanian autonomy and equality for all nations in the province. Leaders of the generation of 1848 cared deeply about the virtues of unity and loyalty but their allegiance was not to the empire. It was to the Romanian nation. For these men the intrinsic qualities of the nation bestowed upon them the right and obligation to manage Romanian affairs. They pushed for complete Romanian autonomy and argued that Romanians should establish their own independent social, economic, and political institutions. These conflicting political strategies did not openly divide the Romanian leadership under the liberal regime. But when Vienna began to court Magyar nationalists in 1865, the Romanian lay leaders, backed by many in the Greek-Catholic hierarchy, broke with Șaguna and passively resisted any cooperation with the crown. Despite the passivist label, these men were anything but politically passive. They organized mass electoral boycotts, engaged in protest movements and litigation, and even established the foundations for a political party in 1881, which affirmed passivism. Hostility between activists like Șaguna who supported working within the new dualist

system and passivists who insisted Romanians proceed independently of the court, refusing to endorse the new arrangement in any way, created a grave breach in the Romanian national movement.

**Differences and Cooperation**

Although the activists and the passivists both considered the preservation of Romanian nationality one of their primary responsibilities, their approaches to the problem were fundamentally different. For Șaguna and his activist followers only the church could continue to represent and defend national interests. Șaguna "believed that the church had been the chief instrument of the Rumanians' [sic] survival as a separate people during the preceding four hundred years and that the fate of the one was joined to that of the other as the 'soul to the body.'" He thus set out to safeguard the existence of the church in a harmonious and cooperative relationship with the state in order to further national interests. Not only did Șaguna respect the law as the proper means of regulating human affairs, he also understood that he could most effectively preserve the rights of the church and nation by exercising those rights. Through active participation in Austro-Hungarian politics he profited from many opportunities to assert church and national autonomy. His commitment to the political process also resulted from his pragmatic assessment of past Romanian cultural or educational advances, which had all come from the intervention of Vienna as it tried to play off the minorities against the Magyars. If the Romanians renounced their loyalty to the emperor, Șaguna believed they would throw away their only method of advancing their interests. His rationale, however, extended

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7 Hitchins, *Orthodoxy and Nationality*, 214.

8 It is also important to note that between 1864 and 1869 Șaguna needed the favor of the crown in his negotiations to reorganize church government and gain Romanian independence from the Serbian Orthodox Metropolis of Sremski Karlovici. Orthodox resistance to the union of the Orthodox and Catholic
beyond strategic analyses and rested in values that differed substantially from those of the lay intellectuals. For unlike them, Šaguna gave priority to the propagation of Christian beliefs and the advocacy of human salvation over political emancipation and economic rationalization. The church, he believed, should serve the national community but not to the extent that it lost its spiritual purpose or autonomy. In the final analysis, he was willing to sacrifice secular national aims to advance Christian ones.

Lay leaders allied with Greek Catholic officials viewed Šaguna's covenant with the church as indifference toward the nation. His mission, which he interpreted as universal, unrestricted by time or place, conflicted with their concerns for the immediate development of the national community. Their visions of a just and rational social order depended on education, economic advancement, social programs, and political rights, not theology. Unwilling to endorse the new imperial organization with their participation in its governance, the passivists sought national autonomy outside of political forums. Firmly believing that they had a unique mission to transform Romanian society into a prosperous and autonomous European nation, Romanian leaders sought to provide Romanian villagers with educational messages that would enable the villagers to improve their own lot. Because the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches bore the primary responsibility for educating the Romanians in Transylvania, secular nationalists did not

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Churches forced Maria Theresa and Joseph II to appoint a temporary and later in 1783 a permanent bishop for the Orthodox Church who was subordinated to the Serbian metropolitan. In 1864 Francis Joseph approved the establishment of a Romanian Orthodox Metropolis in Sibiu and appointed Šaguna metropolitan. The final approvals for the new metropolis did not come until 1868. The church constitution was finalized only in May 1869.

9 When opponents tried to transform the church into a political institution during the late 1860s, Šaguna began to question the desirability of nationalism, referring to it as the "unfortunate idea of nationality." Quoted in Hitchins, Orthodoxy and Nationality, 218.
adopt anti-clerical views. They needed rural clerics to institute the educational, economic, and social reforms that lay leaders considered necessary in order for the Romanian nation to assume its own autonomy outside of traditional political forums. The intellectuals thus strove to incorporate the churches and the clergy into the new society that they intended to build, hoping to use clerical manpower for the transformation of the nation and the perfectibility of its members.

The fundamental differences between the activists led by Șaguna and the passivist intellectuals hindered political cooperation, but did not prevent opposing sides from working together in nonpolitical forums. The inability of either passivists or activists to exert any influence over the course of events in Hungary after the union was sanctioned in 1865 forced both sides to recognize their need for collaboration. Even the Orthodox and Greek Catholic hierarchies tried to set aside more than a century of religious disputes in order to work together to promote Romanian unity. All parties turned to cultural activities to provide this strength. Romanians established hundreds of cultural groups in the second half of the nineteenth century in an attempt to create a public forum in which they could exercise some measure of national autonomy. The size of these groups varied widely. nevertheless, they supplied the necessary common ground for all Romanians to come together precisely because of their apolitical, and thus less controversial character.

True political debates in Transylvania were not possible after 1867. Not only had the government outlawed them, but church officials also forbade them because

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10 Between 1893 and 1906 the churches staffed approximately 2500 primary schools, almost all of the 13 secondary schools, and all five of the seminaries and theological institutions where advanced learning was available. Liviu Maior, Mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania, 1900-1914, (Cluj-Napoca, 1986), 33-34.
involvement in political movements might jeopardize their autonomy and prevent them from fulfilling their religious duties. Nonetheless, their sense of responsibility for the political and material health of their congregations and the national community as a whole justified cooperation in common endeavors for the benefit of the nation, so long as laymen or clergy of one church did not interfere in the affairs of another. For this reason, when church officials helped establish Astra as the largest and most important Romanian cultural organization in the early 1860s, they insisted that the association refrain from religious debates and conflicts. Because Astra’s statutes forbade religious or political debates, the association provided neutral ground on which church and lay leaders could work together.

Astra also provided an institutional base that the secular elite had long desired. Although lay leaders envisioned the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches primarily as Romanian social institutions through which they might better the educational and economic opportunities available to Romanian villagers, religious leaders retained their influence over the churches and the secular elite was never able to direct church activities independently. Thus in order to realize their goals, lay leaders needed their own organizational infrastructure. Astra offered them such a foundation. As long as the association avoided conventional political activities, Astra’s leaders could administer the

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12 Astra statutes published in 1862 and again in revised form in 1897 prohibited discussions with specific political or religious content that might prove contentious. Members attending Astra events refrained from public discussions of political issues but upon occasion they met privately to discuss politics or to sound out political opinions and establish the need for and plan political meetings. For an example of such political networks within Astra, see Keith Hitchins, A Nation Affirmed. The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania 1860/1914 (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999), 123.
13 Above all secular leaders wanted to modernize the curriculum and introduce new pedagogy into confessional schools. They did not attempt to eliminate religious instruction but to decrease the amount of attention devoted to it and increase the attention given to other subjects like Romanian history.
organization in an independent manner. Secular elites shared leadership of the association with religious officials, but unlike in church forums, lay leaders were equal, and often dominant, partners in Astra.

The cooperation among religious officials and secular leaders in Astra’s organization enabled the association to subordinate previously significant religious distinctions to a sense of Romanian nationality. Lay leaders in Astra viewed the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches as Romanian social institutions and emphasized the Romanian character of the churches over their religious content. The religious affiliation of Romanian Orthodox and Greek Catholic parishioners consequently lost some of its saliency as a marker of personal identification within Astra. The differences between Orthodox and Greek Catholic members of the association simply did not affect their participation in the cultural organization. Prominent members of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic hierarchies served on Astra’s higher decision-making bodies and both hierarchies lent significant institutional support to the association. The churches not only encouraged their clergies to get involved in Astra’s local and regional chapters (agenturi and despărtăminte), they also provided the infrastructure for Astra’s activities to take place. The churches kicked off the association’s annual meetings with services attended by Astra central committee delegates. At the conclusion of the service, the presiding clergy made announcements on behalf of the association and the Romanian national community. If the locale hosting the meeting supported both Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches, services were held in each church and the meeting took place in a neutral setting like a hotel. In smaller towns without large commercial buildings the local clergy helped coordinate Astra events in the church itself or in the local
confessional school. In return, Astra praised both churches as important national institutions that had historically guaranteed the independent existence of the Romanian national community. When Astra representatives spoke on church-related topics, they often stressed the importance of religion without differentiating between the two different faiths. If they did address specific contributions a particular church made to the national movement, they were also careful to mention, at least in passing, the importance of the other church.\(^\text{15}\) As a result of the evenhanded treatment of both churches within the association, Romanian nationality began to define the larger community so that church affiliation remained important but not more prominent than national affiliation. In fact, those who belonged to either church were by implication considered Romanian nationals.

**Social Divisions and the Dominance of Lay Leadership in Astra**

The collaborative relationship between members of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches was vital to the success of the association (see below for further details), but the relationship was not without its strains. As mentioned earlier, the friction between the two communities of faith arose between activists, those led by Orthodox Bishop Șaguna who supported political participation in the Dual Monarchy, and the younger generation of secular passiveists who, backed by many Greek Catholics, boycotted the electoral process. In 1867, Astra scheduled an election for a president who would serve a three-year term. Șaguna had held the office since its inception in 1861 but his handling of the political crises in 1865-67 that led to the union of Transylvania with Hungary and the creation of the Dual Monarchy had discredited his authority in the eyes

\(^{14}\) For an example of such an arrangement in Sebeș see *Transilvania*, 1894, 286-87.

\(^{15}\) This remained true even when the speaker was a church official. In 1891 Greek Catholic vicar and Astra regional chapter president Alimpiu Barboloviciu extolled the historic educational contributions Blaj - the residence of the Greek Catholic Metropolitanate - had made to the Romanian national cause. He also
of many (especially Greek Catholic) lay leaders. In 1867 the secular elite rejected the bishop as Astra president and elected one of their own, Vasile Ladislau Pop, president of the association.\textsuperscript{16} Şaguna’s ouster is just one example of the new influence gained by the growing class of secular professionals over the Romanian national movement. As increased economic diversification in nineteenth-century Transylvania provided greater employment opportunities and the numbers and power of the new professionals increased (albeit significantly less than in other regions of the empire), the lay leaders gained the upper hand.\textsuperscript{17} Nevertheless, they did not ostracize clergymen. Their general view that national progress would be best promoted through rational education and a solid moral foundation prevented them from taking such action. As long as the clergy also espoused their educational goals the parties continued to put aside public differences.

With lay leaders securely in control of Astra by the end of the 1860s, academics dominated the association’s agenda until late in the century. Believing that the promotion of scientific and literary studies was the most effective way to lay a solid foundation upon which to build a Romanian nation worthy of self-governance, Astra members designed the association to function as a nascent Romanian academy. Thus, in its original form Astra largely catered to the needs and scholarly interests of its intellectual and

\textsuperscript{16} Şaguna’s election in 1861 was not a forgone conclusion. Secular leaders had worked hard to get a Romanian scholar (and Greek Catholic priest), Timotei Cipariu, elected Astra president in 1861, but Şaguna won, and Cipariu became vice-president. In 1867 the situation had become more tense and Şaguna’s removal reflected those strains. Hitchins, \textit{Orthodoxy and Nationality}, 255; Stefan Pascu et. al. eds., \textit{George Bariş şti contemporarii săi}, vol. 3 (Bucureşti: Editura Minerva, 1976), 339.

\textsuperscript{17} For example, newspaper editor and historian George Barişiu and Dr. Ioan Raişu, the advocate of the Greek Catholic Church and later prominent Romanian party leader, sought support from Romanian leaders for a memorandum to the emperor protesting the unification of Transylvania and Hungary. Although Şaguna opposed the idea, Barişiu and Raişu proceeded and received the approval and financial support of hundreds of prominent Romanians. Raişu delivered the document to the court on 31 December 1866, but quickly learned that imperial support would not be forthcoming. Hitchins, \textit{A Nation Affirmed}, 82-84; Pascu, \textit{George Bariş şti contemporarii săi}, 190.
professional members. Clergy who participated in the association did so as part of the educated elite. Active members were forced to reevaluate the association’s primary mission after the establishment of a Romanian Academy in București in 1879, but they never abandoned their academic focus.\textsuperscript{18} They continued to publish the association’s journal Transilvania and other scholarly works, hosted academic conferences, and provided stipends for students pursuing elementary and advanced studies or training in agronomy and artisan crafts.

Astra members often discussed the importance of raising national consciousness, educational standards, and economic productivity in the countryside but lack of funding and of sustained interest in rural affairs restricted early Astra activities to intellectual pursuits. The association did make initial attempts to encourage rural participation, but the enthusiasm generated from singular events and the early organization of regional chapters could not be maintained and these efforts consequently bore little fruit. Disinterest in peasant participation in the national movement reflected the leadership’s elitist conception of the nation.\textsuperscript{19} By 1848 most Romanians viewed the nation as an ethnic community, with peasants constituting the vast majority of its members.\textsuperscript{20} Membership, however did not imply equal status. Romanian professionals and lay leaders did not consider the peasantry capable of directing its own local affairs, much less national ones. Nevertheless, the Romanian elite in Astra was concerned with peasant


\textsuperscript{19} In part, Romanian leaders were unable to sustain interest in rural nation building during the late 1860s and the 1870s because they faced other pressing concerns. They were especially preoccupied with a perceived need to mend the divisions between Romanian passivists and activists in order to present a united national front to political authorities, yet by the late 1870s unity continued to elude them.
poverty and sought ways to promote greater diversity and efficiency in agriculture as well as growth of local commerce and artisan crafts. In 1862 and in 1881, for example, the association organized Romanian ethnographic, agricultural, and home industrial exhibits in Brașov and Sibiu. These exhibits were potentially important because they provided opportunities for Romanian villagers to represent themselves through the display of their wares and way of life. The exhibits generated much excitement at the time and effectively portrayed the peasant communities as integral parts of the national community, but they were only two events over a twenty-year period. Likewise, the system of regional chapters (despărțăminte) established in 1869 to facilitate the association's contact with rural populations fell into disarray and did not achieve its intended effect. By the end of the 1870s, the majority passivists were forced to admit that their national movement had virtually stagnated. They did not, however, give up. With the death of Bishop Saguna in 1873, the activist faction had also fallen into disarray, leaving the passivists in a dominant position despite their failures.

**The Neo-Activists and the Struggle to Create a Mass National Movement**

Increased Magyarization during the late 1870s, the creation of an independent Romanian state in 1878, and the elevation of the Romanian prince's status to King Charles I in 1881 gave new life to the Romanian national movement in Hungary. The

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21 To compound the difficulties facing the association in the early 1880s, the Hungarian government prohibited Astra from sponsoring the 1881 exhibit because Astra’s statutes did not provide authorization for economic activity, only literary and cultural pursuits. Unwilling to abandon the idea, Astrists continued their organizational work and simply found another private patron to sponsor the exhibit over whom the state did not have jurisdiction. Lucian Boiș, *Eugen Brote* (București: Editura litera, 1974), 40-42.

22 In 1869 the association decided to found regional chapters in Brașov, Făgăraș, Sibiu, Sebeș, Hâțeg, Deva, Abrud, Belgrad (Alba Iulia), Baia de Criș, Cluj, Șimleu Silvaniei, Dej, Gherla, Șomcuta mare, Năsăud, Bistrița, Reghinul Sases, Turda, Muraș-Osorhei, Blaj, Sighișoara and Medias. Out of these twenty-two chapters, eighteen were actually established but only a portion of them were active.
widespread enthusiasm among all Romanians generated from the war leading to independence convinced many Romanian leaders in Hungary that their movement for national autonomy needed the support of the rural masses.23 They sought that support through the Romanian National Party established in May 1881. Of the 148 delegates from Transylvania and the Banat (currently western Romania) who founded the party, the majority were lawyers and other professionals.24 Although the party consisted of Romanian activists who had openly participated in the political life of the Dual Monarchy and passivists who boycotted the electoral process to protest the loss of Transylvanian autonomy, passivism carried the day in the early 1880s.25 The newly established party adopted a traditional passivist platform calling for the restoration of Transylvanian autonomy, new electoral laws, the introduction of the Romanian language in the courts and imperial administration, the appointment of Romanians to positions in the state bureaucracy in areas heavily populated by Romanian speakers, the maintenance of autonomy for confessional schools and for the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches, and a variety of other legal reforms.26 The passivism of the 1880s differed, however, from previous decades. Under the influence of nationalist ideas current in Romania, the party emphasized the need to raise the national consciousness of rural Romanians in Hungary in order to attract mass support for the Romanian national movement in Hungary.

23 Maior, Mișcarea națională, 12-13; Bocșan, Ideea națiunii, 167-68,
24 Lawyers and notaries totalled to sixty-four delegates. Members of the clergy accounted for thirty-seven delegates. There were also twenty-eight landowners (proprietari) present as well as seven professors, four bankers, four retired state employees, two journalists, and two doctors. Maior, Mișcarea națională, 13-14.
25 The complex political scene, however, is difficult to summarize for although passivism dominated the political agenda, in some regions, with substantial Romanian majorities, Romanian candidates supported by the National Party competed in elections with varied results. Other Romanian leaders promoted national causes during elections without actually participating in the election. For a detailed account of the political scene prior to the First World War, see Maior, Mișcarea națională.
The most vocal and consistent support for a mass national movement came from a younger generation of Romanian nationalists associated with the newspaper *Tribuna*, founded in 1884. Unlike previous generations of Romanian leaders in Transylvania who had never actually considered the peasants active citizens and designated themselves the rightful, "natural" leaders of the people, the Tribunists had a more democratic view of the Romanian nation. In keeping with their intention to bring the peasantry and lower classes into the national movement, the Tribunists argued that only those who had consulted the masses had the right to lead them. They sought, however, not just to consult domestic public opinion but also to influence it. With articles designed to elevate the content of political discussions, the Tribunists energized the Romanian national movement. Their attention to public opinion and contemporary circumstances constituted a new approach to the national question in Hungary. Like the generation of 1848 which retained its prominence through the 1880s, the Tribunists regularly disregarded historic rights and traditions as the basis for arguments on Romanian political autonomy, but unlike previous generations, they referred to the actual circumstances of the Romanian national community in appeals to public opinion which they used to defend their cause and to initiate political and social change.27 Concerned that years of political boycotts had sacrificed some measure of Romanian power, the Tribunists also sought to bring the Romanian National Party into the political process. After Tribunists gained prominent positions within the party in 1887, they pushed for a more activist program and, specifically, for the elaboration of a memorandum to acquaint the emperor with their deplorable situation under the Hungarians and to demand national rights for the

Romanians within the Monarchy.\(^{28}\) With the backing of the majority of party members, the Memorandum became the focus of party activity for the next several years, but the document polarized the organization until its near dissolution in the middle of the 1890s.\(^{29}\)

Debates on the content and timing of the Memorandum continued from 1887 until 1892 between the passivists, who advocated postponing submission of the document until a favorable outcome could be assured, and the neo-activists, led by the Tribunists, who demanded its immediate delivery. By 1892 the neo-activists in the party, allied with the newly elected president Ioan Rațiu, who had harbored doubts about the efficacy of passivism for some time, swayed the opinion of the majority of party delegates. The majority approved the final version of the Memorandum and its delivery to the emperor in 1892. As a product of compromise between the two camps, the document followed traditional precedents in its affirmation of Romanian loyalty to the crown and arguments made for the restoration of Transylvanian autonomy, but unlike previous declarations, it was translated into French, German, and English and widely circulated in the Romanian press and throughout Europe. To the dismay of the Romanians, the emperor refused to grant them an audience and the document was returned unopened to Rațiu. The Memorandum itself attracted little international attention. The Magyar reaction, however, turned the affair into an international issue and heightened European concerns for the

\(^{28}\) For more information on the memorandist movement see Corneliu Mihail Lungu ed., Dela pronunciament la memorandum 1868-1892. Mișcarea memorandistă expresie a luptei naționale a românilor (București: Arhivele Statului din România, 1993); and N. Cordoș, Mișcarea memorandistă în documente (1885-1897) (Cluj, 1973).

\(^{29}\) The Romanian National Party had proposed such a document in 1884 but continued rankling over the strategy and timing of the document delayed its realization. Only with the urging of the younger party members was the Memorandum drafted and submitted to the authorities and to international public opinion.
stability of the central and south-eastern regions of the continent. In December 1893 Hungarian authorities indicted the entire executive committee of the Romanian National Party for printing and distributing materials which compromised the security and territorial integrity of the state. The committee was brought to trial in May 1894 and after 17 days the court handed down prison sentences ranging from two months to five years for all but four of the defendants. Not all of the imprisoned leaders served their full terms. Under international pressure, the emperor pardoned those with longer sentences. Nevertheless, even after the release of jailed leaders, the party failed to mend the divisions between the neo-activists and the passivists, which the Memorandist movement had intensified. By the end of the century, the party had all but disintegrated. The crisis lasted until 1905 when passivism, thoroughly discredited for its inability to realize even modest national goals after forty years, was officially abandoned in favor of activist strategies.

The inability of the younger generation of neo-activists with more democratic concerns to take immediate control of the Romanian National Party did not, however, mean that they had no influence on the Romanian community in Hungary before the turn of the century. Throughout the last two decades of the nineteenth century the neo-activists continued to argue for greater participation in public life. With the Tribunists at the forefront, the neo-activists linked political goals to Romanian cultural movements.

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31 Although the indicted leaders considered fleeing to Romania, only Eugen Brote emigrated before the court date. Alexandru Popovici fled to Romania while on bail after his sentence was announced.
advocating the use of culture to inform Romanians in Hungary about the goals of the national movement for Romanian autonomy. Through this linkage, the integration of the popular masses into the Romanian national movement became a new priority.

The new emphasis on the rural masses was clearly seen in Astra after neo-activists gained greater influence in the association in the 1880s and 1890s. Eugen Brote, for example, the prominent Tribunist and staunch support of the Memorandum, joined Astra in 1876 and served as Astra auditor (controlor) (1877-1883) and treasurer (1883-1888). As a result of the influence of Brote and other young men of his same mindset, Astra began to modify its academic orientation. Dissatisfied with Astra’s academic focus, the neo-activists pushed for more provincial programs that would raise rural national consciousness. In order to attract the attention of the masses to the association, Astra gradually incorporated a popular image of the nation as an ethnic community with political rights that differed substantially from its earlier vision of the nation as an enlightened intellectual community. In accordance with the new goals of the leadership, Astra pushed to extend its influence into rural areas using images of the nation as an autonomous ethnic community. Leaders of the association hoped to raise the national consciousness of all Romanians and transform an intellectual national movement into a mass movement capable of addressing the political, social, and economic concerns of all Romanians.

32 The best single volume work on the activist faction of the Romanian National Party is Maior, Mișcarea națională româneasca din Transilvania 1900-1914. For details of party activity before 1900, see Hitchins, A Nation Affirmed, 101-168.
33 Boia, Eugen Brote, 31-38.
34 The fact that Brote was even elected to offices in the 1870s and 1880s was remarkable. He had published scathing articles on the ineffectiveness of the association in 1876. His election indicates that other voting members shared his opinions. Ibid., 39-42.
35 Bocșan, Ideea de națiune, 141-66.
Creating the Institutional Framework in Astra for a Mass National Movement

Before Astra could attract greater attention in the countryside, it had to establish a network of active regional and local chapters (despărțăminte and agenturi). Association leaders considered local chapters an administrative necessity to coordinate the association’s activities and extend their own authority over the rural population. In an article on the importance of the regional chapters, Astra central committee secretary Zacharia Boiu described the despărțăminte as an essential link through which the nation’s head (the central committee) was connected to the national body (the masses). If only the center and the regional chapters could strengthen their relationship and maintain a living connection between the intellectuals and the people, the long-sought vitality and prosperity of the nation, he argued, would surely follow.  

Reorganization of the previously moribund regional chapters concluded in 1890 provided less than satisfactory results. In part this was due to restrictions imposed by the government during the Memorandist movement, but it was also a problem, according to the central committee in 1894, of indifference to the association and to the Romanian nation. Because Astra leaders did not emphasize individualism but the collectivity of the nation, Astra publicists expected their educated compatriots to work individually for the benefit of the collective whole. They did not admonish their co-nationals to shun individual gain entirely, but did urge them to act altruistically for the greater national

36 Transilvania, 1895, 39.
37 Astra reorganized the system of regional chapter from 1888-1890 extending the number of chapters to 33, 27 of which were initially active. From the early 1890s the regional chapters worked to intensify their involvement in local affairs but the most significant expansion of these bodies did not take place until 1899, after the reorganization of the association itself was completed in 1897, which is detailed below.
38 During the Memorandist movement the Hungarian government tried to restrict the activities of Astra’s regional and local chapters. Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Nationale Bistrița-Năsăud. Fond Astra despărțământul Nasaud anii extremi 1862-1939, 40-1895. Astra did not engage openly in political debates
good. When individuals did not do so, in this case when they did not sign up as members of an association designed to promote Romanian nationhood, the leadership publicly chided their co-nationals for their apathy. The nationalists never considered that their motivational appeal might be faulty. They just resolved that more work needed to be done and continued on with their course of action.

As part of the quickening of public life in the early 1890s, Astra leaders started to become more aware of loose ties to the countryside and increasingly alarmed at the lack of growth in Astra members. In September 1894 the central committee lamented that thirty-three despărțămintes had only 397 members and that some regional chapters situated in heavily populated Romanian areas had shown no signs of life. To address this problem the central committee issued a circular to all regional leaders urging them to take every necessary step to raise local interest in the association, to attract new members to their chapter, and to establish local chapters (agenturi) and local public libraries (biblioteci populare) throughout their region. The central committee also pressured regional leaders. In 1895, for instance, the commission that reviewed the annual report

but its journal did mention in vague language the political oppression of its members. See for example Transilvania 1894, 293 and 1895, 35-38. On indifference see Transilvania, 1894, 387.
39 See for example the public rebuke that the director of Astra's Dicio Sân Martin chapter Dr. Romul Boiță gave to apathetic intellectuals at a popular lecture in the commune of Bachnea. Muzeul națională de istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca, Fondul Iuliu Boiță, nr. inv. M523.
40 According to Astra general reports published annually in the association’s journal Transilvania, Astra’s annual dues-paying membership (membri ordinari) dropped from 483 in 1891 to 343 in 1892. In 1893 it rose slightly to 397, and to 412 in 1894. Beginning in 1895, however, membership gradually increased throughout the decade. There were 668 paid memberships in 1895; 774 in 1896; 707 in 1897; 1095 in 1898; 1100 in 1899; and 1219 in 1900. See Transilvania 1892, 308; 1893, 357; 1894, 282; 1895, 266; 1896, XLVI; 1897, 99; 1898, 82; 1899, 57; 1900, 88; 1901, 51. In 1904 a breakdown of membership numbers from 1894-1903 offers different results after 1897, but it appears to account for all enrolled members, not just those who paid their membership dues. Transilvania, 1904, 74.
41 Transilvania, 1894, 397. In 1894 the association was most concerned about the stagnation of regional chapters in Gherla, Turda, and Deva. 1895 Astra records indicate that waned in the regional chapters in Agnița, Beteleanu, Ciachi-Garbau, Dej, Elisabetapole, Gherla, Mociu, and Treișcău. An 1895 article shows that 16 of the 33 despărțămintes had 15 or less members, 6 of 33 had between 16-30 members, and 11 of 33 had 31 or more members. Transilvania, 1895, 35-38.
42 Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Naționale Sibiu (ANS), Fond Astra, doc. no. 430-1894.
urged the central committee to sustain the living spirit of the despărțăminte by composing a comparative summary of regional chapter activity in order to provide more exact evidence of the association’s progress and failures. The responses to these attempts to increase local activity varied widely. The central committee’s sustained interest in the expansion and enrichment of the regional chapters put greater pressure on despărțăminte directors to become more active, but because the association left provincial organization up to regional leaders, Astra’s success depended almost entirely on the initiative of specific individuals.

In the regions around Brașov and Blaj, enthusiastic despărțăminte officials met the expectations of Astra’s central committee. As early as 1892 the regional Brașov chapter had founded a local chapter and a local library with popular reading material in the commune of Prejmer, where it had held its annual assembly that year. At that meeting regional chapter members discussed many topics including a regulated system for collecting dues, which they adopted. The director gave a lecture on “Some shortcomings of our people that should be eliminated.” Afterward the assembly was invited to a musical production put on by the local youth and an exhibit of handwork organized by the women of Prejmer.43 The Brașov despărțământ kept up its work in the outlying communes throughout the decade, specifically intensifying its efforts in light of the 1894 circular. By 1900 it had set up numerous itinerant public libraries and had founded 15 agenturi.44

\[43\text{ ANS, 334-1893. The Romanian title of the lecture is “Câte-va scaderi ale poporului nostru care ar trebui delaturate.”}
\[44\text{ See chapter five for details on the system of itinerant public libraries the Brașov regional chapter established.}
Only the Blaj chapter came close to this number with 10 local chapters of its own.\textsuperscript{45} As the center of the Greek-Catholic Church, Blaj had well-organized, educated personnel necessary for the expansion of Astra’s influence in rural communities. In 1895 Blaj leaders decided to establish 11 agenturi, each one equipped with a popular library, and made individual despărțământ officials responsible for establishing them in specific localities. They advertised their meetings in local journals and also sent circulars to professionals and clergy in their region. At their meetings they discussed which written materials were appropriate for rural readers and distributed complimentary books to those who were literate.\textsuperscript{46} Popular lectures of local interest were given at the annual assemblies, and the significance of the association was repeatedly stressed to those in attendance.\textsuperscript{47}

The success of the Brașov and Blaj chapters, however, was not typical of most Astra organizations in the 1890s. In the relatively wealthy community of Săliște, for example, the regional chapter remained inactive until leaders committed to the association took over. In 1893 the central committee wrote to the provisional director of the Săliște despărțământ to inquire about the chapter’s status. The director, archpriest (protopresbiter) Dr. Nicolae Maieru, reported that his repeated calls to the regional intelligentsia for a founding meeting went unanswered and he recommended that the Săliște despărțământ be incorporated into the Sibiu chapter until there was real support from the intellectuals in Săliște for a separate chapter. The central committee rejected Maieru’s suggestion and instead sent prominent banker and central committee member

\textsuperscript{45} Transilvania, 1895, 156-58; and 1900, 224.
\textsuperscript{46} Literacy rates for Romanians in Hungary are difficult to determine because they varied substantially by location. In reports to the Brasov despărțământ, for example, local leaders stated that among Romanians under fifty years of age, very few were illiterate. ANS, 827-1909. General Romanian literacy rates in Hungary increased from approximately twenty percent in 1900 to twenty-eight percent in 1910. Hitchins, A Nation Affirmed, 219.
\textsuperscript{47} ANS, 479-1895.
Partenie Cosma to visit Sâliște in order to establish the new chapter under firmer direction. At the founding meeting Maieru argued that the community had rejected his efforts to organize the chapter because many had serious reservations about the leadership and activities of the association. He accused the central committee of ignoring Astra’s primary concern for literature and culture by pursuing particular interests, like a secondary girls school.\textsuperscript{48} that did not serve the entire Romanian community, especially the community of Romanians in Sâliște who, he argued, had contributed thousands of florins over the years to the Astra treasury. Cosma replied that this explanation was merely a pretext for excusing four years of inactivity and could not be taken seriously without more detailed evidence. The Sâliște lawyer Dr. Liviu Bran de Lemeny sided with Cosma, claiming that Maieru could have constituted the \textit{despărțământ} with good results if he had been interested in promoting the noble goals of the association. Cosma then requested that those present sign up as members of the chapter. One former member re-subscribed and twenty new members signed up (twelve of whom were associate members). The members had a chance to take the floor and then elected the \textit{despărțământ} committee with Lemeny as director.

The new leadership made the difference. The chapter committee met more regularly the next year, attracted more members, collected their dues, and began to discuss establishing local chapters and public libraries in the region. They also purchased reading material judged appropriate for popular audiences and distributed the materials gratis. At the 1895 chapter assembly the leaders reported that they had decided to sponsor

\textsuperscript{48} The civil girls school was established in 1886 to provide a Romanian education for those children who would otherwise attend “foreign” schools, in other words, for those few girls whose parents had the funds to pay for an elite education.
popular lectures and award prizes for the best cultivated gardens.\textsuperscript{49} Despite the success in rejuvenating the Săliște chapter, in general the level of activity of the regional chapters in the mid 1890s did not fulfill central committee aspirations of sustained interaction between the intellectuals and the masses.\textsuperscript{50} The disappointing efforts to intensify Astra’s general organization and activity at the regional and local levels in the early 1890s did not give way to more optimistic results until the end of the decade.

The organizational impetus for a province-wide expansion of Astra’s activities came when the association received governmental approval for the revision of its statutes in 1897. Astra’s leaders had begun to discuss revising the statutes in 1892, but there was some disagreement over the association’s primary focus. A minority of Astra members wanted to retain the association’s scholarly character and use the new statutes to define the association as a scientific and literary corporation. Others emphasized the importance of promoting Romanian culture for the general consumption of both the intellectuals and the villagers. In a speech given at Astra’s annual assembly in October 1894, central committee member Partenie Cosma explained to the intellectuals present that they had a duty to forge closer ties with their provincial compatriots. He congratulated the assembly for the past successes of the association, but also urged his listeners to fulfill their duty to gather all Romanians around Astra. Through the despărtăminte, he argued, the leadership of the association could come into more direct contact with the people, and he set out a plan of action to interest the popular classes. In particular, he emphasized the importance

\textsuperscript{49} ANS, 200-1894, 271-1894, and 220-1895. See also Transilvania, 1894, 227-30, 268-72; and 1895, 211-12.

\textsuperscript{50} In 1900 the central committee reported that the despărtăminte had only established thirty-two agenturi, nineteen of which belonged to the Brașov and Blaj chapters. These reports, however, are not entirely accurate. The figures do not account for agenturi founded after 1899. Brașov reported fifteen agenturi in January 1900 and Săliște set up three that year. Transilvania, 1900, partea oficială, 224. ANS, 81-1900, 87-1900.
of founding local public libraries, agronomy clubs, agricultural schools, series of lectures, and Astra chapters led by the priest or school teacher in every commune.\textsuperscript{51} Zacharia Boiu, the editor of the association's journal \textit{Transilvania}, reiterated Cosma's message in an article published in 1895, in which he asserted that Astra was established for the benefit of Romanians from all social classes and would only thrive if each person contributed according to his means and ability.\textsuperscript{52}

The calls for more attention to the needs of all Romanians were part of the larger debate on the aims and direction of the Romanian national movement and indicate a general trend toward greater social activism in the cultural sphere. Because Astra was outside the realm of conventional politics, disagreements over political tactics, specifically whether or not Romanians should participate in the electoral process and governing bodies, did not necessarily translate into corresponding disagreements over Astra's general aims. One could hold politically passivist views against Romanian participation in the political process and simultaneously support social activism within Astra. When the new statutes were debated in Astra in the mid 1890s, passivism was losing ground as a political strategy, but many of those who remained wary of active political participation approved of Astra's social movement. The majority of Astra members voted in favor of a more popular association at Astra's 1895 general assembly held in Blaj.\textsuperscript{53} The association submitted a draft to the Hungarian government in 1895. After many negotiations with state authorities, the new statutes went into effect in 1897.

In addition to continued support for scientific and literary studies and the expansion and reorganization of the association's scientific and literary sections, the

\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Transilvania}, 1894, 359-63.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid. 1895, 35-39.
statutes emphasized the importance of founding popular libraries, museums, and other collections; hosting public exhibitions and conferences; eventual assistance in planting schools; and any other legal means that could contribute to Romanian literary, cultural, spiritual, and economic prosperity. The new emphases on popular activities and rural economic development are clear departures from Astra’s early focus on secular scholasticism and signify the association’s desires to transform its elite academic image with a message directed at the average Romanian villager and thereby claim a more influential role in rural Romanian communities.

The revitalization of Astra’s infrastructure was a top priority. The central committee had recognized the networks of regional chapters as the lifelines of the association in the early 1890s and had worked in conjunction with regional leaders to reorganize the system of despărțăminte. Now with the sanction of the new statutes central and regional leaders divided the thirty-three despărțăminte into forty-two so as to reduce the distance between the regional center and the neighboring communes and thus improve lines of communication. To lend some structure to regional activities, the central committee approved and distributed rules and regulations for the establishment and functioning of regional chapters. According to these rules every despărțământ was supposed to hold an annual assembly. In 1899, 33 regional chapters in fact did

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54 Statutele Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român (Sibiu: Tiparul tipografiei archidiecesane, 1897) parag. 37. In 1880 a school section was added to the philology, history, and natural-physical science sections established in 1862. In 1900, after a much needed reorganization of dormant sections, the association also created an economic section devoted to the study of commerce and agriculture for the resolution of the material plight of Romanian villagers.
55 Transilvania, 1893, 360.
56 Statutele Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român (Sibiu: Tiparul tipografiei archidiecesane, 1897), paragraphs 41 and 42. Regulament al afacerilor interne pentru despărțămintele asociațiunii (Sibiu, 1897), paragraphs 17-33.
(compared to 22 in 1898).\textsuperscript{57} At some of these events participants attended cultural festivities, exhibits, and popular lectures on a variety of topics. They also received free books and newspapers. The central committee members, however, were not satisfied. They noted some progress relative to the past, especially in those regional chapters where activities were carried out purposely and steadily, but in many regions they observed that the annual despărtământ assembly was the only event of the year. The committee described some of the activities that did take place as dry and urged the despărtămînte officials to recognize that the most important parts of the regional assemblies were the popular lectures and cultural festivities, which, they argued, were more attractive to the masses and more appropriate means to popularize the association and its national goals. The committee also encouraged the despărtămînte committees to hold their annual assemblies outside of the regional center, in a different commune every year, in order to take the association’s message to the people.\textsuperscript{58}

The sustained attention to local interests and the growth of regional chapters paid off over the years. While only twenty-one of thirty-three regional chapters were active in 1895 and 1896, thirty-eight out of forty-two chapters reported on their active organization in 1900. The following graph gives a better idea of the fluctuations in Astra despărtământ activity from 1895-1910:\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} Transilvania, 1900, 93.
\textsuperscript{58} See the 1900 Astra annual report published in Transilvania, 1901, 56-60.
\textsuperscript{59} To be considered active it appears that the chapter had to submit an annual report showing minimal activity. Transilvania, 1911, 482. There is a discrepancy in the number of total chapters reported in 1902. Transilvania, 1902, 98-99, lists 46 chapters, instead of 44.
After 1910 the level of regional activity continued an upward climb. By 1912, the association recorded that seventy percent of its chapters provided programs that satisfied the central committee.\textsuperscript{60} Five more regional chapters were established in 1913, and in 1914, before the outbreak of hostilities, Astra reported having 87 despărțăminte.\textsuperscript{61}

The growth in regional chapters paralleled the growth in Astra membership. Astra had four levels of membership: founding, lifetime, regular, and associate (membri fundatori, pe viață, ordinari, și ajutatori). Founding and lifetime members made a one-time dues payment respectively of two hundred and one hundred florins. Regular

\textsuperscript{60} Transilvania, 1913, 197.
members paid five florins a year (after the currency change in 1892 they paid 10 crowns) and associate members paid one florin a year (or two crowns after 1892). From 1861 to 1894, the number of regular members (*membri ordinari*) who paid annual membership dues wavered between 400 and 600 individuals.\textsuperscript{62} In 1895, 668 regular members paid their dues.\textsuperscript{63} Not satisfied, the leaders of the association kept up an on-going membership drive. Typical of the advertisements for members was a circular published in 1899 and sent to the administrative district headquarters (*protopopie*) of both churches, to every regional chapter in Astra, to Romanian financial and commercial institutions, and to particular individuals. Addressed to the Romanian public, the circular noted with satisfaction the increase in membership but also recognized that the potential number of members far exceeded the current numbers. Writing on behalf of the central committee, the author explained that Astra's leadership was aware of its responsibility to enroll all the national community's forces to work for the advancement of the Romanian people on the path of civilization and, for that reason, urged the readers to work together and realize the association's lofty goals by signing up as members and by using all of their influence in their own communities to solicit others to join the association. If each person would support Astra with the membership level corresponding to his means, the circular concluded, Astra would have the necessary funds to concentrate on the large and vital

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\footnotetext{61} *Transilvania*, 1914, 246; ibid., 1915, 102.

\footnotetext{62} I have only evaluated the membership of regular and associate members because their annual contributions are the best indication of the support Astra had among the general population from year to year. Membership dues were quite expensive for most Romanian peasants. Although the income of day laborers (*zileri*), approximately 47% of the peasantry, and farm hands (*argati*), approximately 13% of the peasantry, varied from region to region, according to I. Kovács both groups made about 300 crowns a year (day laborers on average 278 and farm hands 300-310). Women made 16% less than men, and children 50% than men. I. Kovács, "Despre nivelul dezvoltării agriculturii din Transilvania la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea și începutul celui următor și formele de exploatare a țărănilor," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj*, IX (1966): 150-53, 160. Thus a membership dues of 2 crowns on a 278 crown income is comparable to a U.S.$350 dues payment for a U.S.$50,000 income.

\footnotetext{63} *Transilvania*, 1896, XLVI.
\end{footnotes}
cultural interests that lack of funding in previous years had prevented it from
addressing.\textsuperscript{64} By 1900, annual regular memberships had jumped to 1311 and at the end of
1910 they reached 1939.\textsuperscript{65} Just before the outbreak of the war in 1914, the association
reported that 1732 regular members had paid their annual dues.\textsuperscript{66}

Another aspect of Astra’s membership drives was the decision in 1899 to begin
editing a collection of books for provincial readers. The idea was not new. A decade
earlier Astra’s annual assembly had allocated one thousand florins for printing popular
works and approved holding contests to award authors who wrote for popular
consumption. Consequently ten pamphlets were published from 1892 to 1899. The new
collection of 1899, however, marked the beginning of a more systematic production of
popular literature.\textsuperscript{67} The booklets were supposed to supply rural villagers with an
inexpensive source of information written in a colloquial style which would develop a
love of reading, provide entertainment and useful instructions, and at the same time
promote a sense of cultural sophistication and moral judgment. Despite good intentions,
the series, entitled Biblioteca populară a asociaţiunii (The Popular Library of the
Association), got off to a slow start. The initial competitions for the best manuscripts
attracted few applicants and in the first two years only two issues appeared.\textsuperscript{68} In order to
ameliorate the situation, the central committee sent a letter to literary section member

\textsuperscript{64} Transilvania, 1899, partea oficială 1-3.
\textsuperscript{65} Transilvania, 1900, 223; and 1911, 487.
\textsuperscript{66} Transilvania, 1914, 249.
\textsuperscript{67} An earlier Transylvanian popular library, Biblioteca poporală a Tribunei, was founded in Sibiu in 1884.
Mihai Sofronie, Aspecte ale activităţii Asociaţiunii Transilvane (ASTRA) pana la 1918 (Sibiu: Editura
Caleidoscop, 1996), 103.
\textsuperscript{68} Two volumes by Ioan Pop Reteagul, bearing the same title, Povestiri din viaţa târanilor români, made
up an anthology of rural tales. The first volume was originally published in 1895 in response to a similar
competition offered in 1892 for which Reteagul’s collection of short stories and Simeon Stoica’s booklet
on child hygiene both received awards. Stoica’s book was widely distributed in the 1890s and 1900s. The
re-edition of Reteagul’s book as part of this collection and its free distribution at Astra’s 1900 annual
assembly added to its previous circulation.
Andrei Bărseanu, requesting his recommendations for appropriate subject matter for the popular library. His report, officially approved and printed in the association’s journal in August 1901, stressed the importance of clear, basic prose; argued forcefully for historical and geographical works; and outlined eight broad themes, each with a series of subpoints, designed to address the Romanian national community’s “defects” that were evident in comparison with the advances of other nationalities. These themes included: hygiene and medicine; agriculture, gardening, and livestock; household management; pedagogy and child rearing; national economics (banking and credit); trade and professions; legal notions; and popular science.69 The booklets were designed to educate and emancipate the Romanians from material and spiritual poverty; in short, to help them catch up. Bărseanu also recommended making members of the scientific and literary sections responsible for writing these works and restricting the use of competitions to instances in which qualified authors could not be found. No immediate progress resulted from his proposal; in 1902, two more pamphlets appeared, followed by three in 1903. But, by the end of 1904, the series had sixteen booklets with a moderate increase of approximately four issues a year until, in 1910 the series contained thirty-seven works.

Gradual progress spurred Astra to create more publications. In 1910 the general assembly authorized the creation of a new series, also entitled, confusingly perhaps, Biblioteca populară a asociațiunii, which consisted of ten booklets and one calendar every year. Each associate member who paid annual dues of two crowns received the books free. The response was impressive: each booklet had a run of over 10,000 copies.70 In 1912 Astra reported 11,851 associate memberships, 9,536 of which were held by

69 Transilvania, 1901, 185-87.
peasants.⁷¹ According to the central committee’s annual report for 1912, Astra distributed 246,840 booklets throughout the countryside during 1911 and 1912.⁷² The success, however, caused numerous tracking and distribution problems. The increase in associate memberships, a direct result of the new booklets offered, combined with poor postal services in rural areas and problems procuring printing materials, overwhelmed those responsible for publishing and distributing the brochures. The central committee received numerous complaints, and many associate members who had paid their annual dues but received nothing in return refused to renew their memberships.⁷³

**Astra’s Local Leaders**

Scholars have long noted that the influence of church officials over the Romanian national movement in Transylvania waned after 1865, but they have underestimated the importance of the influence the rural Romanian clergy maintained in Hungary until the First World War.⁷⁴ Astra’s determination to extend its influence throughout the Romanian-inhabited regions of the empire before the First World War depended on the enthusiasm of clergymen and village professionals to advance the association’s activities and goals. Astra’s secular and urban members numbered only in the hundreds and could not effectively spread the association’s message outside of the cities and towns by

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⁷⁰ In the previous “Popular Library” (1900-1910) Astra had between 2000 and 5000 copies of each booklet printed. The sale price varied from 0.10-0.40 crown.

⁷¹ Both regular (*ordinari*) and associate (*ajutatori*) members paid annual dues. For 10 crowns a year regular members received Astra’s journal *Transilvania*. Although the number of associate members was not officially tabulated until the book offer was made available in 1910, it is clear that associate memberships rose dramatically after 1910 when associate members received tangible goods for their dues payment.

⁷² *Transilvania*, 1913, 205-6.

⁷³ In 1913, the number of associate members had fallen to 7,664. For detailed reports on the disappointment and distrust resulting from Astra’s inability to deliver books peasants had purchased, see ANS. 686-1898 and 974-1911.

Therefore, they urged clerics and Romanian professionals to join the association and take charge of its regional organization. The directors of regional chapters were potentially important because they were supposed to schedule all regular meetings and help organize Astra activities and events in their region. They represented their despărtămînte at Astra’s annual assembly and made proposals to the assembly on behalf of their chapter members. They also arranged regional competitions with prizes, published instructive or entertaining brochures, held scholarly conferences, and at times gave local popular lectures. Perhaps most importantly, they were instrumental in founding local, rural chapters (agenturi); creating and in some cases circulating public libraries; and communicating information from the central committee to the agenturi. The majority of the directors performing these functions were churchmen even after the turn of the century. The membership lists of the 46 chapters recorded in Transilvania in 1901 reveal that fifty-five percent of all known regional directors were priests, archpriests, vicars or other members of the church hierarchies, thirty-one percent were lawyers, eight percent were professors, and six percent were other professionals. In 1911, when chapters elected new directors for another three-year term, priests and other church officials still accounted for more than fifty percent of Astra regional leaders. Lawyers

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75 Romanian intellectuals in Hungary accounted for roughly 3% of the Romanian population in Hungary and more than half of this group was made up of priests and primary school teachers. For this reason Astra’s secular and largely urban elite needed the support of churchmen for the realization of its goals. More information on the social demography of the Romanians in Transylvania can be found in Keith Hitchins, Rumania 1866-1914 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 217-19; and in Ioan Bolovan, Satul românesc din Transilvania de la revoluția pașoptistă la primul război mondial. Aspecte demografice (Cluj-Napoca: Universitatea "Babeș-Bolyai," 1998).

76 Transilvania, 1902, Analele, 63-99; Transilvania 1898 partea oficială 167-70 (Dicio-Sâr-Martin); Transilvania 1901, partea oficială 164 (Târja), 180 (Verset); Transilvania 1902 Analele, 10 (Sibiu), 182-3 (Alba Iulia), 193-4 (Sighișoara), 194 (Zernesti); and ANS, 581-1902 (Sâliște), 730-1902 (Năsăud).
accounted for twenty-seven percent of all regional directors, and other professionals for twenty-one percent.\textsuperscript{77}

The organization of the regional chapters was an important accomplishment, but, if Astra was to raise the national consciousness and the socio-economic well-being of the peasantry, it needed to reach the villages. *Despărțământ* leaders may have had contact with Romanian villagers in the regional center, but they were often somewhat removed from village life. The president of an *agentură*, or local chapter, however, was part of the rural population itself, facing the same problems as his neighbors. Leaders at the *agentură*, or rural, level have not received scholarly attention corresponding to their importance, for these men were responsible for taking Astra’s message directly to the peasantry. Although the scarcity of precise information makes it difficult to provide a comprehensive view of the *agenturi* leaders, it is safe to say that the majority of these leaders were either priests or confessional school teachers. Even for regional chapters situated in commercial centers, like the Brașov *despărțământ* with twenty-six *agenturi* in 1913, the known local Astra officials were all church representatives.\textsuperscript{78} The information on other *agenturi* officials in the Brașov *despărțământ* -- the vice-presidents, secretaries, treasurers, or librarians -- is incomplete, but available documents record that

\textsuperscript{77} *Transilvania* 1912, 315-408.

\textsuperscript{78} Out of twenty-four known *agenturi* leaders in the Brașov chapter, twenty-two were local priests and two were teachers at confessional schools. Given that Brașov regional chapter leaders were generally careful to record activity at the local level and document when an agentura was reorganized or established, and that the records leave no indication of regular committee changes, it appears that *agenturi* committees did not serve three-year terms like the *despărțăminte* and central committees, but rather served as long as they were willing and accepted. Thus, when a president of an local chapter was elected in 1900, for example, it is likely that that person remained until the *agentură* was reorganized. Priests led *agenturi* in Brașov-vechii and Măruș (ANS, 333-1989); Satulung (ANS, 726-1900 and 528-1910); Viadeni and Tântari (ANS, 874-1900); Preșmer, Cristian, and Dărste (ANS, 81-1900); Râșnov (ANS, 607-1903); Hâlchiu (ANS, 588-1904); Bod (ANS, 666-1904); Vulcan (ANS, 770-1905); Târlungeni (ANS, 1310-1906); Rotbav, Tocile, and Hârman (ANS, 625-1907); Ghimbav (ANS, 112-1907); Arpătac (943-1908); Stupini (164-1909); Turcș and Előpatak (ANS, 1184-1911); and Bacifalău (ANS, 1117-1912). Teachers led the *agenturi* in
professionals were elected to an agentură committee only in two cases. The remaining officials were teachers or villagers (economi). When Astra despărțăminte leaders began to focus their attention on establishing agenturi, they generally sent letters or circulars to priests and “other local leaders” (aliții fruntași) asking them to take responsibility for organizing a communal chapter and reporting back to the despărțămân. When this did not prove effective, members of the regional chapter committee communicated most often with the local priest and even traveled to the commune to hold a founding meeting at which local notables and villagers gathered to meet the regional representative: organize an agentură; listen to a popular lecture, sometimes illustrated with overhead projections; receive free books; and attend local exhibits or musical performances. After the meeting, the despărțământ representatives returned to the district center and the local Astra authorities resumed their leadership of the agentură.

Astra succeeded in drawing support from many priests and teachers at the end of the century in large part because church hierarchies emphasized service to the Christian community. Although they refused to sacrifice church autonomy or turn their religious institution into political organizations, church authorities considered the fate of the church and the clergy closely linked to that of the people and encouraged clergymen to concern themselves with the everyday economic and social affairs of their communities. Religious officials, like the lay intellectuals, blamed social ills on a lack of education. Unlike lay leaders, however, the hierarchs considered clergymen the natural leaders of

Codlea (ANS, 666-1904) and Feldioara (ANS, 317-1906). No information is available on the heads of the agenturi in Purcăreni and Sângeorgiu.

79 ANS, 874-1900. In Vlădești, agentură members elected the local notary to the post of secretary and the mayor to the position of agentură treasurer.

80 See for example ANS, 9-1890, 70-1891, 645-1906, and 257-1908.
the Romanian people who they hoped would, in time, with the assistance of the church, be capable of assuming their place among the advanced European nations.

In his 1909 pamphlet written specifically for newly ordained priests, Orthodox archbishop and metropolitan Ioan Mețianu argued that Romanians were behind (înapoia) other peoples only because they were not as learned and enlightened as the others. The solution, he explained, lay in taking advantage of pedagogical opportunities provided by the local church. He urged priests to devote themselves to their own continuing education, setting an example for their communities. He also insisted that priests equip the faithful with the tools and knowledge necessary to satisfy their practical and spiritual needs and to organize associations for the benefit of the church and society. If someone suffered a setback or was sick, Mețianu instructed the priests to address immediate problems and then give guidance for future health and prosperity. The priest was also called to advise parents on raising and educating their children who, he hoped, would pursue higher education to study agronomy, commerce, and trades. In order to overcome material and financial shortages, the Orthodox metropolitan prescribed founding banks, taking up community-wide collections, combating alcoholism, promoting self-sufficiency at home, and living within one’s means. In conclusion, Mețianu cautioned, the priest needed to understand that he committed a grave sin against the people and himself if he did not work with all his strength to improve the people’s future in every possible way.81

The churches were equally concerned with ebbing priestly influence among the general population and hoped that the participation of local priests in organizations like Astra would shore up this influence. Church officials were never excluded from national

81 Ioan Mețianu, Sfaturi arhierești pentru preoții nou hirotoniși (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1909).
discussions or organizations like Astra, even at the level of the central committee, but they perceived a decline in their social status and sought to regain their social influence. In 1899 Mețianu initiated annual pastoral conferences at which priests gathered under the direction of the protopop (regional church administrator) to discuss specific topics. For the 1899 conference, Mețianu asked the clergy to define reasons for people’s religious indifference and to think of ways to defeat popular apathy and encourage support for the church. While many respondents accused their pastoral colleagues of neglecting their duties and talked about rural poverty and a general lack of education or culture, some priests blamed the decline in religious sentiment squarely on the shoulders of the cultured classes and craftsmen who, they claimed, did not attend religious services, donate to the church, or send their children to church schools. Others leveled attacks against vices of the cultured classes, like materialism and egoism, which they argued, caused hatred, jealously, and expensive litigation. Alcoholism, card playing, smoking, and reliance on luxury goods were considered corrupting factors at every social level. To correct the problems, priests called on their colleagues to take seriously their own responsibilities, promoted education for adults and children, argued in favor of temperance societies and agricultural associations, and advocated setting up libraries with a greater number of religious books so that educated readers (to whom books would appeal) would have opportunities to better themselves.\textsuperscript{82}

Concerns about moral decay and diminishing respect for clergymen were common topics of discussion at subsequent pastoral conferences, as were the oft repeated solutions of more education and true pastoral leadership. If the clergy would just lead the rural population and provide proper education, it was argued, national progress was

\textsuperscript{82} Arhivele Mitropoliei Ortodoxe (AMO), III-514-1899.
certain to follow.\textsuperscript{83} The problem, however, was finding time and energy to do everything required. In addition to tilling his own fields, continuing his own education, leading religious services, supervising school instruction, maintaining and making improvements on church property, reporting to the regional archpriest, and caring for the sick and hungry, the village priest was also asked to establish social organizations to combat alcoholism and smoking; direct choirs; set up reading societies, cultural groups, and agricultural associations; hold literacy classes and agronomy courses; give popular lectures; provide public libraries; and arrange industrial and agricultural exhibits at which prizes would be awarded. State supplements to pastoral incomes, legalized in 1898, did improve the material situation of many priests, but not immediately or dramatically.\textsuperscript{84}

As the listing of obligations and duties in the previous two paragraphs suggest, very few priests were able to meet the expectations of church officials. The tasks prescribed to transform the countryside overwhelmed rural resources, already stretched quite thin at the beginning of the twentieth century. Burdened by overpopulation, lack of credit, inefficient cultivation methods, and insufficient plots of land, Romanian villagers simply did not have the resources available to transform the economy from the bottom-up. Rural priests complained about these burdens in their conference reports. Augustin Chetian from the village of Bobohalma, for example, described the pastoral dilemma well at the Târnava priestly conference in 1899. He argued that priests could not fulfill their calling when distracted by agricultural labor and additional occupations but could not exist without them. Not likely to receive donations from the local congregation, the


\textsuperscript{84} Hitchins, \textit{A Nation Affirmed}, 184-89.
village cleric had no choice but to find outside employment to make ends meet.\textsuperscript{85} The seriousness of the problem was compounded by the absence of any real proposal to resolve the situation. Chetian merely suggested that church representatives describe their plight to the rural population and request their material and financial support. The situation did not improve before the First World War. In 1911, when rural clergymen gathered in Bistrița, the regional archpriest who supervised the annual conference lamented that while everyone expected everything from the priest, no one was concerned with his well-being. Almost the only remaining natural leader of the people, the priest was counted on to combat social evils and provide the population with modern, almost universal culture as well as education that corresponded to present-day needs. At the same time, however, the priest was expected to perform his duties virtually gratuitously. Consequently the clergy had reached a point of desperation, the archpriest concluded, that should be addressed by the next pastoral conference.\textsuperscript{86} Critiques of the priests' accountability balanced the discussions of the clerical problems. Regional church directors (archpriests) complained that very few priests submitted acceptable reports on their activities and interpreted the poor performance as further indication of extensive pastoral apathy and negligence.\textsuperscript{87} More likely, the noncompliance reflected the difficulties of village life and the desperation that ordinary priests continually faced.

The inability of the church to address the predicament of village priests forced some pastors to look for outside sources of help. Astra was one such source. Priests who joined the association benefited in several ways. In the first place, they enjoyed the professional distinction that secular intellectuals lent to Astra's educational and cultural

\textsuperscript{85} AMO, III-514-1899, Târnava.
\textsuperscript{86} AMO, III-474-1911, Bistrița.
pursuits. Because Romanian scholarship was becoming increasingly specialized at the end of the nineteenth century, the average cleric could not claim the competence of a specialist. He had neither the time nor the means at his disposal. But Astra permitted him to join a network of professional scholars who gave him access to new ideas and academic works that stimulated the interest of otherwise isolated priests. Village pastors also profited from Astra’s material resources. The association supplied rural libraries with newspapers and books.\textsuperscript{88} It provided funding to bring speakers to the village communities. In some cases the association even allocated stipends to rural priests and educators willing to attend special agricultural schools for the purpose of sharing their new knowledge with their communities. In addition, Astra provided opportunities for impoverished clergy to earn a little more money. The association, for example, awarded small cash prizes to primary school teachers who provided evidence that they improved local literacy rates or cultivated the school garden according to rational agricultural methods. These publicized awards boosted the clergy’s social standing and provided modest incentives for overburdened priests and teachers to focus on the social activism encouraged by church authorities.\textsuperscript{89}

Throughout the early 1900s numerous rural priests wrote directly to Astra’s central committee, bypassing \textit{despărtăminte} officials, to request reading materials. The association made the materials available on the condition that the local priest established

\textsuperscript{87}AMO. III-602-1912.
\textsuperscript{88} In 1900 Astra even considered an annual subsidy of two thousand crowns for confessional schools, but because the number of schools in need were so great as to make contributions negligible, in 1901 the association decided its money would be better spent on public libraries. See \textit{Transilvania}, 1901, 183, 197.
\textsuperscript{89} Amounts generally ranged from 10-50 crowns and were budgeted by the central committee or the local chapter. In many cases before (and even after) these prizes were institutionalized in the 1890s, better-off members of a local chapter voluntarily financed a specific competition. The degree to which they effectively encouraged the local clergy to take on educational and cultural work, however, varied widely.
an agentură in his commune.\textsuperscript{90} In this way, parochial initiative spurred on the growth of local Astra chapters. To some extent the appeal of Astra’s support can be measured by the increasing number of agenturi founded. After the reorganization of regional chapters in 1899, Astra only had 32 local chapters, two-thirds of which were located in the Brașov and Blaj chapters and established with the aid and enthusiasm of the regional leadership.\textsuperscript{91} Within three years, however, the number of local chapters almost tripled, totaling to 84.\textsuperscript{92} In 1905 the central committee placed greater emphasis on the network of local chapters by including a subsection on agenturi in the annual report and promoting the importance of local Astra organizations. There were no immediate improvements in the situation. In 1906 the association reported just 122 active agenturi. 17 more than the previous year.\textsuperscript{93} Four years later, however, the number of active local chapters had doubled at 259.\textsuperscript{94} The excitement generated by the popular books Astra began to publish in 1910 accelerated the number of new agenturi founded. Although there was only a small growth of local chapters (total of 274) in 1911, in 1912, 395 agenturi existed. At the end of 1913 Astra recorded having 488 agenturi. By summer 1914, there were 523, though few remained active after the outbreak of war.\textsuperscript{95} The following graph illustrates this growth.

\textsuperscript{90} Astra Central Committee Minutes (Procese Verbare) are full of such requests. See Transilvania, Partea oficiala or Analele or the original committee minutes at the National Archives in Sibiu, especially from 1908-1914.

\textsuperscript{91} Transilvania, 1900, 224.

\textsuperscript{92} Transilvania, 1903, 64.

\textsuperscript{93} Transilvania, 1907, 70.

\textsuperscript{94} Transilvania, 1911, 492.

\textsuperscript{95} Membership at the local agentură level is difficult to determine, but it is also not indicative of Astra’s influence because local activities were open to members and non-members alike. Membership merely conferred voting rights at the local level.
Success was not uniform of course. Some regions were better organized than others. At the end of 1912, for example, Astra had seventy-seven despârtăminte, nine of which had been established just that year and consequently did not have any local chapters. Fifteen others also lacked local organization. Thirty had nine or less agenturi within their borders. Nine despârtăminte reported between ten and nineteen local chapters. Only four regional chapters had between twenty and twenty-nine agenturi. Two despârtăminte had more than thirty local chapters organized in their administrative territories.\(^{96}\) The pie chart below illustrates these differences.

\(^{96}\) Eight regional chapters did not submit annual reports in time for publication. Transilvania, 1913, 296-318. It is possible that some agenturi, established by local pastoral initiative, were not counted by the despârtâmintê officials who submitted the annual reports from which this data is gathered. Because the association had numerous problems keeping track of its members over the years, it is conceivable that more local chapters existed that are recorded here.
Once established as an *agentură*, the local members and their community were gradually integrated into the regional chapter. The local chapter became a potential host site for the *despărțăminte* annual assembly, an event that touched on many aspects of pastoral social, educational, and moral responsibilities described above. It also became a potential site for Astra lecturers throughout the year. In 1912, 456 individuals gave
2258 popular lectures in 382 separate communes.\textsuperscript{98} Although local leaders delivered many of these lecturers, in some cases Astra representatives traveled to Romanian villages to give a talk or practical demonstration. In any case, lectures backed by the association and held in conjunction with an exhibit or festival often drew large audiences. Of these 2258 lectures, the smallest audience numbered 30 people. The largest audience recorded totaled 1200 people. Most lectures drew crowds ranging from 150-400 people.\textsuperscript{99}

The success of Astra initiatives depended in large part on the enthusiasm of the local priest. Because of this, the association's programs did not always bear fruit. In 1909, Astra hired an agronomist to give practical lectures in the countryside. He had only modest success and repeatedly blamed his troubles on local priests to whom he had written before his scheduled talk and asked for help with the local arrangements. In some cases the local priest never picked up the registered letter from the post office. In almost every case, the agronomist claimed, neither the despărtământ nor the local community had funds to spare to pay the lecturer's travel expenses. He complained that many communal leaders showed interest in hosting agronomist lecturers until they learned of the costs involved. The agronomist criticized the village intellectuals for their lack of commitment to rural education. Conversely, he noted that everywhere he went the people were eager to learn from him. Their drinking habits, however, consumed their meager incomes and contributed to their grave economic situation. Their plight was aggravated, he continued, by popular superstition and numerous church holidays which traditionally

\textsuperscript{97} For details of these events, see chapter six.
\textsuperscript{98} Transilvania, 1913, 256-74.
\textsuperscript{99} Ibid.
were days of rest. In some cases, he encountered hostile priests who cautioned the people to respect such holidays and this, he argued, hindered his success.\textsuperscript{100}

In spite of the fact that clerical support for Astra varied widely, it was vital for Astra to carry its message to rural areas. Lay leaders of the association could not have extended Astra’s influence in the countryside at the end of the century without the help of the churches and their officials. For one thing, church involvement in Astra legitimized the association. Since the eighteenth century the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches in Transylvania had served the national community with political representation, primary education, and local leadership.\textsuperscript{101} When a local priest joined Astra, the churches’ historic influence over the Romanian national movement conferred a certain authority on the association at the local level. Astra also needed the infrastructure of the organized religions. Absent a Romanian national state or other political institution capable of organizing the isolated communities throughout Transylvania and Hungary, Astra had no means of assembling people or conveying its messages to the overwhelmingly rural Romanian population.\textsuperscript{102} Romanian intellectuals accounted for two to three percent of the Romanian population in Hungary in 1910. Because priests and elementary educators

\textsuperscript{100} Transilvania, 1912, 366-370; and 1913, 275-79. In 1911 he gave 60 popular lectures in 31 communes, and a three-day course on growing fruit trees. In 1912, he gave only 30 lectures in 17 communes in addition to a five day course on viniculture and another three day course on the cultivation of fruit trees.

\textsuperscript{101} For more information on the national leadership provided by the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches see: Hitchins, Orthodoxy and Nationality; Augustin Bunea, Din istoria românilor: Episcopul Ioan Inocenți Klein (1728-1751) (Blaj: 1900); James Niessen, ed., Religious Compromise, Political Salvation. The Greek Catholic Church and Nation-building in Eastern Europe, The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies, Nr. 1003 (University of Pittsburgh: The Center for Russian and East European Studies, 1993); David Prodan, Supplex Libelli Valachorum (București: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1984).

\textsuperscript{102} Neither a Romanian large landowning class nor an industrial bourgeoisie existed before the First World War. Hitchins argues that only 4.5 percent of Romanians in Hungary lived in urban areas in 1910. Hitchins, Rumania 1866-1947, 219. Ioan Bolovan claims that Romanians constituted 12.7 percent of the Transylvanian urban population in his “Contribuții privind situația demografică a Transilvaniei în anii 1850-1910,” in Istoria României. Pagini transilvane (Cluj-Napoca: Centru de Studii Transilvane Fundația Culturală Română, 1994), 300.
made up more than half of this group.\textsuperscript{103} Lay leaders could not initiate the social
transformation they sought alone. They needed church officials, and particularly, the
village priests and teachers, to back the association. Since churchmen were typically the
most educated people in the villages and were also intimately involved in the lives of
many parishioners, rural clerics had considerable moral, educational, and even political
influence in their communities. Astra’s secular elite tried to take advantage of this
privileged position. With the approval of the church hierarchies, the central committee
communicated pertinent information to the clergy through church circulars or Astra
announcements mailed to all church officials. The priests and teachers then transmitted
that information to their communities. The local places of worship and education not only
housed Astra’s rural meetings and events, as they were the only suitable accommodations
available in most villages, but they also became Astra’s province-wide communication
network within which Romanians who gathered for church services or school learned of
the association and its activities.

The very success of local involvement (increases in local chapters and associate
members), however, helped lead the association to a decidedly rural focus. Under the
influence of the neo-activists, the central committee worked with regional and local
leaders to encourage peasant identification with the association. Astra leaders calculated
that they could draw peasants to the association’s educational programs by projecting an
image of the ethnic Romanian nation as a community of rationally educated farmers.
Although they were fully aware that the peasantry was not yet to that level, they hoped

\textsuperscript{103} Hitchins argues that the intellectuals and white collar professionals (including clergy and school
teachers) constituted less than two percent of the Romanian population in Transylvania in \textit{A Nation
Affirmed}, 106; and less than three percent in Ibid., \textit{Rumania 1866-1947} (Oxford: Oxford University Press,
that involvement in Astra programs would raise the national consciousness of the masses and transform the dependent and illiterate Romanian agricultural laborer into a self-sufficient homesteader.\textsuperscript{104} They expected fully conscious independent farmers to form a more prosperous and enlightened base for the Romanian nation.

These concerns for creating a rationally-educated, agricultural population as the basis of the Romanian nation in Hungary was an integral part of the neo-activist political agenda that was spelled out at the 1905 conference of the Romanian National Party. The party had virtually dissolved after the crisis in the mid-1890s over the Memorandum. Passivists officially retained authority over the party but the leadership’s influence suffered from the abstention of neo-activists who instead involved themselves in university societies and cultural groups like Astra. In 1902 passivism bore a more severe blow when the leader of the passivist faction, Ioan Rațiu, died. By 1905 when Hungarian parliamentary obstruction turned into a constitutional crisis, many Romanian leaders, including prominent passivists, were willing to abandon passivism altogether. It had achieved none of its intended goals after forty years, and the crisis presented an opportune moment to re-enter party politics.\textsuperscript{105} Disputes between Vienna and Budapest over uneven industrial development, languages used in the military, and questions of Hungarian independence and financial contributions to the empire encouraged many Romanians that the discussion of fundamental electoral reforms was feasible and merited their participation.\textsuperscript{106} Their hopes were bolstered in 1905 when, in light of the

\textsuperscript{104} For details of these programs and this image, see chapters four through six.

\textsuperscript{105} According to Liviu Maior party members were also inclined to adopt activist strategies out of fear that the peasantry might be lost to the socialists if they did not act soon to recruit peasant support. See his Mișcarea națională, 44-47.

\textsuperscript{106} For an overview of the growing disruption in relations between Vienna and Budapest see Géza Jeszenszky, “Hungary through World War I and the End of the Dual Monarchy,” in A History of Hungary, 267-94.
revolutionary events in Russia and demands at home, Franz Joseph entertained the idea of introducing universal manhood suffrage in Cisleithania. He even threatened to impose universal voting in Hungary to force the Hungarian opposition to make concessions.\textsuperscript{107} Thus during the 1905 elections the Romanian National Party held a political conference at which leaders decided to abandon passivism and set out a new platform with universal manhood suffrage at the head of their demands.\textsuperscript{108} They renounced the 1881 article in favor of Transylvanian autonomy and instead called for national autonomy for all Romanians in the empire without, however, addressing the difficult question of borders for an autonomous Romanian nation.\textsuperscript{109} They also demanded equal and secret ballots, a new organization of electoral constituencies, and greater attention to social issues like tax reform and land distribution. Although party leaders never entertained radical solutions to social concerns and mostly gave lip service to the problems of the peasantry, their subsequent focus on an expanded suffrage affirmed a significant role for the peasantry in the life of the nation. An enfranchised peasantry would serve as the foundation of a new political and social order. But Romanian political leaders did not consider illiterate peasants a very solid base and discussed ways to create an educated and prosperous farming society.


\textsuperscript{108} No law prohibited parties from forming and functioning in Hungary, but an electoral law permitting parties to organize during electoral campaigns was used to suppress political organization between campaigns. If parties had parliamentary representation, they could maintain their administrative organization in political (parliamentary) clubs, which in effect headed the parties. After January 1908, the Romanian National Party continued its work between electoral campaigns by registering as a section of the Nationalities Club of the Hungarian Parliament. Maior, \textit{Mișcarea națională}, 47-48, 69, 82-87.

\textsuperscript{109} The modification of goals from Transylvanian autonomy to Romanian national autonomy was greatly complicated by questions of territorial boundaries. See Bocșan, \textit{Ideea națiune}, 169-224.
Astra and its educational programs figured prominently in these discussions. The association provided the institutional framework through which neo-activists hoped to create economically self-sufficient and nationally consciousness citizens. In practice the association did reach out to the peasantry, but because the neo-activists maintained an elitist attitude toward all rural leaders, they encountered some opposition. Neo-activists anticipated that the peasantry would realize their national importance only under the tutelage of Astra elites. They never considered peasants or their local representatives capable of leading the nation. Astra’s leaders at the central and regional levels agreed to establish programs suited for rural audiences, but they did not expect to benefit from them directly and instead maintained separate activities for themselves. The educated elite may have publicly recognized and even celebrated peasant contributions to Romanian national culture in an attempt to help villagers recognize their own place in the national community. But they did not personally identify with the characterizations of the peasant-based nation that they had formulated. Astra’s elite thought they were above village life and considered themselves the rightful leaders of the national community with the responsibility for overcoming the rural backwardness that they despised with rational education and enlightened culture. The emphasis Astra placed on education in both its academic and popular programs accorded the intellectuals and professionals a leading social role in the national community. But their (often self-imposed) distance from peasant culture and the backwardness of rural life forced them to rely on rural leaders for the success of the association’s popular programs. They regarded these rural leaders as their natural subordinates who would be integrated into the association hierarchically
below the regional and central leaders. The heads of Astra’s local chapters (*agenturi*), however, did not necessarily accept a subordinate role.\(^{110}\)

By and large, rural clerics espoused the association’s educational and economic goals and worked to create a sense of national unity, but priests also rejected urban materialism and endorsed a strong moral vision of the Romanian nation with a deep religious base. Many of them never wholly shared the secular outlook of lay intellectuals and continued to uphold the church as an important moral and autonomous national institution. In so far as Astra pursued goals that they also valued, clerics supported the association, but not unconditionally for they had their own agenda. For example, in 1900, many began to call for the allocation of association funds to confessional schools, but without success.\(^{111}\) Undeterred, church representatives attempted to gain increased access to Astra’s upper-decision-making bodies. At the Astra general assembly in 1912, pastor Emil Bran proposed that Astra grant all school directors (in most confessional schools the priest was also the school director) and all teachers membership in the association’s school section, which made important recommendations on funding and other resources.\(^{112}\) In good bureaucratic fashion the proposal was referred to committee. Bran’s proposal was clearly not feasible but the committee did make one hundred fifteen secondary school educators (*profesori*) non-voting members and strengthened ties between Astra’s school section and the confessional teacher’s associations (*reuniunile învățătorilor*).\(^{113}\) Astra’s intellectual elite may have been able to overlook the demands of

\(^{110}\) Consequently, the association’s elites had to justify their leadership over the national movement. See chapter six for details.

\(^{111}\) The central committee took the requests seriously but the overwhelming demand prevented Astra from making significant contributions, and the committee subsequently decided not to make any. *Transilvania*, 1901, *partea oficială* 197.

\(^{112}\) ANS, *Procese Verbele* 1913, 155.

\(^{113}\) *Transilvania*, 1913, 385-87.
the rural priesthood had a younger generation of outspoken intellectuals with populist tendencies not allied with rural clerics and expressed similar concerns in the early 1900s.

The Populist Focus on the Masses

Populists came to the fore of intellectual life in Romania in the 1890s.

Bessarabian born Constantin Stere was the most notable populist thinker in Romania. He had fled to Romania in 1891 after eight years of exile in Siberia for revolutionary activity associated with the radical Russian populist People's Will Party. In 1906 he founded the influential journal Romanian Life (Viața Româneasă) and made public his views on Romanian society. Like many Russian populists in the 1870s (the narodniki), Stere and his colleagues saw the peasantry as the foundation of the nation's future. Stere believe that social progress depended on the moral unity of fully autonomous individuals who had been grouped according to natural selection and acted in concert in order to survive. He maintained that nineteenth-century Romanian society had become unnaturally divided into urban and rural communities, and although he romanticized the historic village community, he did not advocate a complete return to traditional village life. Like other Romanian proponents of agrarian ideologies, Stere found an authentic Romanian civilization in the historic village, which he believed provided the most appropriate model for the development of the nation. But unlike other reactionary agrarianists in Romania, Stere did not overlook the harsh realities of rural life. He sought to transform the village into a prosperous farming base with the most modern technologies and insights available in Europe. In his journal he argued that intellectuals had a moral

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114 It is difficult to compare Romanian populism in the 1890s and early 1900s with Russian populism because populists in Russia pursued vastly different ideas and goals. For more information on Russian populist thinkers see A. Walicki, The Controversy over Capitalism. Studies in the Social Philosophy of the Russian Populists (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969).
obligation to defend villagers' interests, including land reform, universal suffrage, and basic education. By the early 1900s Stere's ideas had become commonplace throughout Romania and Hungary.

Romanian populists in the Dual Monarchy lamented the division Stere noted between the urban and rural communities, and they criticized Romanian political leaders for neglecting the socio-economic interests of the Romanian people. The populists acknowledged the need for an expanded suffrage, but they were dissatisfied with the Romanian National Party for focusing exclusively on parliamentary politics and argued that the party direct more attention and resources to raising educational standards and national consciousness among the masses. They also chastised party leaders for separating themselves from rural life. Instead of disdaining village communities for their backwardness, Romanian elites, the populists argued, should revere the Romanian village for historically sustaining the Romanian nation. They urged their co-nationals to give up their elitist pretensions and renew themselves by returning to the people, not just consulting and leading them, but working alongside them for the benefit of the entire national community. Their dissent further factionalized the party and in 1910, after the Romanians suffered electoral defeats, two prominent populists, Octavian Goga and R. Ciorogariu, resigned from the central committee of the national party.

What the populists could not accomplish in the Romanian National Party, they did achieve in Astra. Vocal proponents of populism Octavian Goga and Octavian Tăslăuanu

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115 For the goals of Romanian populists and Stere specifically, see Z. Ornea, Poporanismul (București: Editura Minerva, 1972), 158-74. Keith Hitchins offers a succinct analysis of the different agrarian movements in his Rumania, 1866-1947, 55-75. For a detailed investigation of the reactionary movement Sământorism, see Z. Ornea, Sământorism, (București: Editura Minerva, 1971).

116 The local doctor in Săliște reported on similar concerns in 1901. ANS, 98-1901.
served as officers in Astra’s central committee beginning in 1906 and were responsible for, among other things, editing academic and popular works and enriching the collection of the Romanian national museum that Astra established in 1905. Their colleagues also offered important contributions to their cause by giving lectures, authoring articles and booklets for village audiences, and serving on various association committees. The populist focus on rural needs and interests was not subject to great controversy within Astra because the association was a cultural and educational organization designed to raise national consciousness and encourage general prosperity for all Romanians. Indeed, the neo-activists had discussed ways to diversify Astra programs in the 1880s and by the late 1890s they had begun to turn their deliberations into concrete activity. In fact, the populist program did not differ substantially from previous years. Like their neo-activist colleagues, populists urged Romanian leaders to get involved in rural educational programs which they strove to develop in greater number and variety. They proposed that Romanian banks buy state and church estates, parcel the land, and sell it at fair prices to the peasantry. Also like the neo-activists, they encouraged the establishment of agricultural cooperatives and associations (primarily after German models) and advised villagers to teach their children trades and professions. The populists also brought fresh

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117 Maior, Mișcarea națională, 162-74. The populists sought to create a new political formation in which a younger generation of leaders could lead the masses, but their most influential work after 1910 was done in the cultural movement.
118 For a report on the unanimous election of Goga as first, or literary, secretary in 1906 see "Adunarea dela Brașov," Telegraful român, 14/27 September 1906, 426.
119 Goga, Tăslăuanu, Ioan Lupșa, Ion Agârbiceanu and Ilarie Chendi produced literary works for popular consumption in the journal Astra founded in 1907 for villagers Tara Noastră, (Our Country) and in the popular book series. ANS, Procese Verbale, 40 (254-1908). In addition to Goga and Tăslăuanu, Lupșa and Agârbiceanu sat on Astra’s central committee. ANS, 994-1910; ANS, Procese Verbale, 441 (1665-1913). All of these men offered lectures to Astra audiences.
enthusiasm to the association, and they pressed harder than the neo-activists had for the implementation of programs and activities designed for rural audiences.\footnote{For details of the kind and increase in activity see chapters four and five.}

In spite of the similarities between the neo-activist and populist agendas within Astra, the differences between the two groups were significant. In the first place they had very different economic goals. The majority of neo-activists wanted to create independent Romanian economic institutions that would eventually lead to industrialization. Romanian intellectuals had debated theories of national economy by Friedrich List and Adam Smith in the 1870s, and many prominent thinkers espoused their ideas but promoted agriculture as the basis of a Romanian economy because it was the only potential source of economic development available to most Romanians.\footnote{Within Astra the neo-activists supported rural education, the distribution of landed estates among the peasantry, and the establishment of agricultural cooperatives as the first step toward creating an economic base that could lead to industrialization. Like the neo-activists and passivists, Romanian populists in Transylvania and Hungary envisioned a singular solution to overcome rural poverty and powerlessness: the creation of independent Romanian smallholders able to meet production needs for their own families and for the nation. Unlike other Romanian nationalists, however, the populists did not look at an agricultural society as a stepping stone to an industrial society in a world market. They saw a need for industry that suited agricultural goods (flour mills or sugar refineries for example), but they blamed foreign capitalists, rulers, and the landed Magyar aristocracy for the dismal living standards of most Romanians. They were also the most enthusiastic proponents of the slogan “By ourselves” (“Prin noi înşine”) and argued that Romanians}
needed to work together to create their own national economy. The populists sought to build an autonomous, national, agrarian economy and hoped to use the institutional infrastructure of Astra to create a self-sufficient Romanian nation that pooled its resources to realize its potential.

Populists’ reverence for the peasantry also distinguished them from the neo-activists. When Romanian populists looked to the countryside, they saw more than potential economic development. In their eyes the village was the foundation of the Romanian national character upon which the future of the nation depended. Although their thought was not fully developed before the outbreak of war, Goga, Tăslăuanu, and their colleagues held both realistic and romantic attitudes about village life. In their literary work they recognized the brutality of village life in harsh detail, but they also described the village as the locus of national renewal where the preservation of authentic Romanian tradition and culture would provide the only basis for a national revival and a vibrant future. Because of these views Goga and Tăslăuanu argued for greater national solidarity between the intellectuals, professionals, and villagers. Within Astra they pushed neo-activists not only to help educate villagers but also to acknowledge that villagers constituted the authentic Romanian nation for only they had upheld its traditions and ways of life.

The populist mystical romanticization of peasant life as the source of rejuvenation for the Romanian nation is hard to explain. Goga, for example, grew up in a peasant household, but by his adolescence he was far removed from the confines of village life.

122 Gavrîl Seridon, Octavian Tăslăuanu și problemele culturalizării țăranimii (Miercurea-Ciuc: 1978) 1-9; Ion Dodu Bălan, Octavian Goga (București: Editura Minerva, 1971); Ornea, Poporanismul, 175.
Born in 1881 to the son of a Greek Catholic priest in the relatively prosperous village of Rașinari (just outside of Sibiu), Goga attended local schools until the age of nine when he went to Sibiu to study at the Hungarian high school. After eight years of study, Goga transferred to the Romanian high school in Brașov to complete his secondary education.\(^{123}\) Goga left Brașov in 1900 for Budapest in pursuit of a university degree. There he joined the Romanian student literary society “Petru Maior” and alongside other Romanians students, notably his future colleague in Astra Octavian Tâslăuanu, he began to publish work in the prominent literary journal *Luceafăru*. that had been established in Budapest in 1902. After graduation in 1904, Goga received a stipend from the Transylvanian Society in Bucharest to study in Berlin and then in Paris. After a year in Berlin, however, he returned home to fulfill family obligations brought on by his father’s death. In 1906 he married Hortensia Cosma, the daughter of one of the wealthiest Romanian bankers in Transylvania, Partenie Cosma, and immediately jumped up the social ladder.\(^{124}\) On the face of it, Goga could not have been further removed from rural life. But unlike other prominent Romanian intellectuals who maintained their distance from the village, Goga did not despise the Romanian peasantry and instead somehow found in them a romantic redemption of the nation. He made it his goal to address their needs and interests, and Astra provided an avenue to realize this goal.

Goga got involved in Astra soon after his return to Transylvania, becoming the secretary of the central committee in 1906 and the editor of the new journal for rural readers, *Tara noastră (Our Country)*, which he founded in 1907. In the first edition of the paper, Goga published an article in which he argued that a Romanian soul existed

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\(^{123}\) His departure to Brașov was the result of a disagreement with a professor in Sibiu. For more information on Goga’s elementary and secondary education see Bălan, *Octavian Goga*, 27-56.
throughout history in villagers who plowed the land and lived in the mountains with their flocks. "We are the same today," he wrote. "Only the face of things is different, the foundation is the same... (and) in our soul the same urges and the same needs remain. Today," however, he explained, "there is a strata of educated elites, the sons of peasants who have shunned their national role as the leaders of the village communities. All educated Romanians must," he argued. "stand at the helm and provide education and guidance to the people from whom they came, the Romanian villagers." Goga chastised Romanian elites and craftsmen alike who rarely visited village communities and instead pursued their own interests. "We must work together," he wrote to the intellectuals, "shoulder to shoulder [with the villagers], and realize that a closeness to the soul of Romanian villagers is the only foundation for the nation. The future of the nation is tied by the soulful bonds between its leaders and its soldiers."\(^{125}\) According to Goga, education was the key to national development. Thus he retained a prominent role for the educated elite but insisted that Romanian educators provide proper leadership by respecting the traditions of the Romanian people. Detailed instructions on how to accomplish this were not provided.

The emphasis Goga and other populists placed on the peasantry's role in the national community was designed to promote social harmony. Tăslăuanu expressed most clearly concerns that the Romanian national community was divided into two distinct and unequal groups: the educated, more prosperous, and more urban elite whose interests were at the forefront of national life and the masses of impoverished Romanian peasants whose needs were largely neglected. He saw a need for a homogeneous national

\(^{124}\) Ibid., 57-102.

\(^{125}\) Goga, "Cătră cătrurii noștri," *Tara noastră*, 1 January 1907, 3-7.
community, which, he argued, could only come about when the entire national attention was directed at the plight of the peasant.\textsuperscript{126}

The peasant question had dogged leaders of the Habsburg monarchy since the eighteenth century. Like all other vocal groups, Romanians in Hungary did not have coherent solutions to this question, but they were equally concerned about peasant living standards, albeit for different reasons. Passivists and neo-activists who wanted to integrate the peasantry into the mass national movement hoped an efficient and rational peasantry would provide the prosperous foundation for the nation's first step toward an autonomous future. The transformation of peasant agriculture would require, however, a greater degree of interaction between the masses and the educated elites. Leading members of Astra thus began to talk about national unity too, but they did not have in mind the same kind of unity as the populists who saw in the peasantry the essence of the Romanian nation. Populists urged educated elites to get closer to the peasantry, not only to help them advance but also to renew their ties to the true nation. Chapter four explores the different approaches to economic development in Astra and the different ways Astra leaders tried to use plans for economic development as attempts to bridge the divide between two Romanian groups in concrete, material ways.

The populists expected that an increase and diversification in Astra's programs would build greater social harmony in the national community, but in reality the programs did not redress national divisions. As explained in chapters five and six, the newer popular programs had very little in common with established programs set up for the elite and thus failed to promote greater interaction or understanding between Romanian intellectuals and the masses. When local Astra organizations established

\textsuperscript{126} See his article "Două culturii," \textit{Luceafărul} VII, no. 4 (1908): 63-64.
public lectures, for example. the talks were designed for specific audiences, preventing the kind of social harmonization many believed necessary to enhance national unity. Students were invited to certain lectures, the local intelligentsia to others, and the people (villagers) to still others. The only thing both the popular and intellectual activities had in common was the larger goal of promoting Romanian education. Thus, Astra essentially established two parallel programs, reinforcing the social distinctions that the populists in particular sought to erase. This created problems for the association because the very programs designed to recognize the importance of the peasantry and thereby increase social harmony actually legitimized and reinforced the strength of priestly claims that the clergy who served as leaders of village communities could speak on behalf of the authentic Romanian nation and that their concerns should be given greater priority.

Astra was never able to overcome the divide between the more urban, professional elite and the village communities in its economic, educational, or cultural programs. In fact the association's practice of employing two separate programs and two different representations of the same national community in order to maintain the interest of all social classes in its organization undermined its potential to build the nation as the organic whole most nationalists envisioned. Because both images were equally validated in Astra, it became possible to think of the nation as a homogeneous community while simultaneously contesting the boundaries of that community. That contestation, it is argued in chapter six, allowed the rural leaders to challenge Astra's educated elite for more influence over the national movement. The challenge, however, was only possible because Romanians could conceive of a coherent national community to which they belonged at the beginning of the twentieth century. The successful propagation of this
conception within Astra is remarkable for the Romanians in the Dual Monarchy did not benefit from the governance of a Romanian national state or other national institutions (excepting the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches) but had to build an organizational infrastructure with lines of communication and power structures that raised national consciousness. Astra was effective precisely because it remained outside larger political disputes and all parties could support its goals. Nevertheless, as it became more effective in creating the sense of national unity, unity itself eluded it. The nation proved more difficult to build than first imagined.
Chapter Four
National Organization as a Remedy for Underdevelopment

The underlying rationale for all Astra activities was to build a Romanian national community on equal footing with the more developed and more prosperous European nations. Lacking a prosperous, diversified economy and not able to create a new nation-state within a strong Hungary. Romanians of Transylvania sought to pool the intellectual and material resources of the national community in order to achieve higher standards of living through a mass national movement. The economy in Hungary grew significantly in the second half of the nineteenth century, but the Romanian peasantry did not benefit substantially from this growth. Comparing themselves to the Saxons and Hungarians, the Romanians complained that they were falling further and further behind. In search of a brighter economic future, Romanian leaders looked to the more prosperous and industrialized countries in western Europe for insight on economic development. They equated the national organization of western European nations with growing prosperity. Within Astra, Romanians argued that if they could organize their nation in order to develop a vibrant economy, their empowerment as a contending European power was certain to follow.

The economic plans Astra members promoted reflect the members' convictions that Romanian political and economic failures were rooted in the ignorance and backwardness of the peasantry. Astra's economic programs focused on three main objectives: raising educational and moral standards, creating common bonds between Romanians, and increasing material prosperity. Initially the association tried to realize these objectives with popular lectures, public demonstrations, and economic literature.
Later calls for Astra to establish mutual aid societies that were popular across Europe took concrete form in a campaign to establish cooperative enterprises after 1910. With help from regional and local leaders, Astra's central directors strove to create and coordinate a cooperative institutional base for economic development that would give Romanians a competitive edge against other nations. Despite the difficulties involved, the association successfully attracted thousands of Romanians to its agricultural lectures and incorporated hundreds of villagers into its rural cooperative movement before the outbreak of the First World War. Peasant responses indicate that many accepted Astra's assertions on the importance of Romanian national economic organization. The unity of the national economy and the national community was, nevertheless, an intangible goal.

Cleavages in the nation became apparent as leading Astrists discussed their educational and cultural plans for social and economic development. Since Astra members based their strategy of development on national unity, they rejected revolutionary change or class-based conflicts. Instead they promoted social harmony. They urged Romanians to work for the good of the collective national community, which, they argued, would ensure the individual advancement of all Romanians. Disputes occurred, however, over the means to organize the nation. Astra's professional elites who hoped Romanians would eventually industrialize and integrate more fully into European life advocated top-down reforms dependent on their expert advice. Populist intellectuals who came to the fore in the early twentieth century argued that Romanians could achieve the status of a European nation without advancing whole-scale industrialization. Agriculture was the most important Romanian economic base, and any industry should, these men argued, suit agrarian needs. Populists also expected greater sacrifices from the
experts. The populists wanted to preserve the "fundamental Romanian essence" of villagers and their ways of life. Like their educated and professional colleagues, the populists accorded the elite the leading role in society, but they also insisted that the elite assist the organization of the people. Most urban professionals rejected this idea. Rural Romanians, in their view, had to learn to help themselves.

Before the First World War, these disputes did not obstruct the work of the association in large part because Romanian leaders had to orient their activities to the agrarian sector. Peasants comprised the vast majority of the Romanian population in Transylvania, and Romanian nationalists agreed that the social and economic development of the nation depended on the peasantry's well-being. Thus whether the ultimate goal was industrialization and integration into Europe or the protection of independent smallholders, Romanian leaders concluded that improving the lives of the peasantry was the necessary first step toward national prosperity. Widespread agreement on this first step hid the other differences behind Astra's rhetoric of national unity. It is almost impossible and ultimately not necessary to determine whether Astra's leaders intended to hide their differences. The important point is that as a result of their cooperation, many Romanians retained their assumption that national unity, an intangible goal in the best of circumstances, could facilitate their economic success. Most Romanians trusted that the solutions Astra devised for chronic underdevelopment - more and better education, cooperation, and altruism - would help them achieve the unity they believed inherent to collective empowerment.
The Romanian Economy in Transylvania

Beginning in the late 1860s the predominantly agrarian Hungarian economy experienced sustained growth spurred on by the expansion of mechanized farming on large estates. The economic growth, while impressive, was not evenly distributed across the empire. The increase of grain production on the large estates of Inner Hungary gradually closed off the borders of Hungary's peripheral lands (Transylvania and Croatia-Slavonia) from the larger Habsburg market.

Although the stagnation of agriculture in Transylvania did not preclude development in other areas, like timber or mining and metallurgy (1898-1910), the Romanian peasant masses of Transylvania gained little from these sectors. At the end of the nineteenth century approximately eighty-five percent of the Romanian population depended on agriculture. Plots of land under ten iugare, or 5.78 hectare, could not sustain a peasant family, but over seventy percent of Romanian peasants in Transylvania owned ten iugare or less: 20.4 percent owned less than 1 iugar, 29.5 percent owned between 1 and 5 iugare, and 22 percent owned between 6-10 iugare. When Romanians owned

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1 Scholars dispute the percentages of annual growth. In his book on the economic development of the Habsburg Empire, David Good analyzes the various arguments and agrees with Scott Eddie that agricultural productivity grew at 1.6 percent annually in the late 1860s and at 1.5 percent annually (for crop and livestock production) from 1870-1913. By contemporary standards, Eddie and Good contend, this was a high rate of growth. "In the United Kingdom, the maximum average productivity increase over a three-decade period was 1.3 percent (1821/1831-1851/1861). The comparable figure for both the United States (1869-1899) and Germany (1850-1913) was 1.2 percent." Good agrees with John Komlos that industrial output per person reached 2.7 percent from the mid 1860s until 1913. David Good, The Economic Rise of the Habsburg Empire, 1750-1914 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 138, 140-41.

2 Ibid., 141-42.

sufficient land to meet household needs, they faced steep tax rates, amounting to as much as forty percent of rural income. A significant percentage of household profits also went to pay creditors. These farmers were in no position to benefit from the expansion of commercial credit institutions and railroad construction that economists acknowledge as the foundation for the fledgling Transylvanian economy in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Romanian leaders who wanted to transform peasant plots into productive, modern farms faced many challenges in addition to the insufficient size of rural holdings. The lack of affordable and available credit in rural communities was a key problem. Before the establishment of commercial banks, Romanian villagers had few sources to provide them cash. Guilds made loans to members, but non-members like the Romanian peasantry in Transylvania had to turn to private persons to whom Romanian leaders often referred as loan-sharks (cămătari). These lenders could reportedly make between fifty and two hundred percent interest on short-term loans.

To alleviate the credit shortage, prominent Romanians followed Saxon efforts to found credit cooperatives for villagers in southern Transylvania in the 1860s. Inspired by Saxon activity, Romanian leader Visarion Roman set up the first Romanian credit

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4 The mining and metallurgy industry did not develop fast enough to sustain domestic industrialization. It "came too little and too late to generate significant linkages to a domestic machine building industry." Good, Economic Rise, 145.
5 1 iugur or 1 hold equals 0.5775 hectare or 1.43 acres. Less than one percent of Romanian landowners had more than 100 iugare. 17.9 percent owned 10-20 iugare. 8.9 percent owned 20-50 iugare. 1.3 percent owned 50-100 iugare. A. Egyed, "Structura proprietății funciare în Transilvania la sfârșitul veacului al XIX-lea," Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie Cluj-Napoca XVII (1974): 142-48.
7 I. Kovács estimates, for example that approximately forty-eight percent of the Romanian peasantry in Hungary were day laborers who earned on average 278 crowns a year. Women earned sixteen percent less, and youth under age sixteen earned fifty percent less. I. Kovács, "Despre nivelul dezvoltării agriculturii din Transilvania la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea și începutul celui următor și formele de exploatare a țăranimii," Anuarul Institutului de Istorie din Cluj IX. 1966: 149-52.
cooperative in Rășinari in 1867.\textsuperscript{8} It suffered from lack of local interest after Roman left the village in 1872 to found the Sibiu-based commercial bank Albina and disbanded in 1881. Six other credit cooperatives Roman later established in Transylvania and the Banat under the authority of the new bank also floundered. The local cooperatives were supposed to be run by elected local leaders who would channel capital to their communities. Problems occurred, however, when bank administrators tried to intervene in the cooperatives' administrative affairs and when debtors failed to make payments according to schedule. In 1877 Albina's directors closed the credit cooperatives, and many Romanian bankers concluded that villagers were not yet ready to participate in cooperative enterprises.\textsuperscript{9}

Romanian villagers rarely turned to the credit institutions that Hungarians and Saxons had organized in Transylvania. Before the turn of the century Hungarian and Saxon cooperative credit unions remained locally based and largely served their respective language and religious groups.\textsuperscript{10} Banking facilities the Hungarians and Saxons ran in the Banat, Brașov, and Sibiu also failed to provide credit to Romanian villagers. In the first place the locations of the banks deterred rural customers who were reluctant to spend the money and time necessary to travel to town for banking services. In the second place, it was not in the bank's interest to help out the individual peasant who desired a loan for the seasonable operations of his small homestead. The ten to fifty crown, short-


term loan was simply not profitable enough for bankers seeking moneymaking ventures.¹¹ Bankers also required more collateral than most peasants could offer.

Romanian leaders protested that the Hungarian and Saxon lenders discriminated against Romanian nationals, but Romanian bankers faced the same dilemmas with peasant customers. As the Romanian commercial banking industry in Transylvania expanded during the last decades of the nineteenth century (from one bank in 1872 to approximately one hundred fifty banks by 1914). Romanian bankers expressed concern about the plight of Romanian villagers. They discussed their responsibility as bankers to assist Romanian villagers, and many banks donated hundreds of thousands of crowns to Romanian schools, churches, and societies. But in the end, the lending practices of Romanian banks were intended to make a profit, and the bankers did not accommodate peasants seeking small loans.¹² Albina, the largest Romanian bank in Transylvania, made payment exceptions and interest reductions for agrarian borrowers suffering from weather-related catastrophes, but it restricted loans to villagers who wanted to buy large tracts of land.¹³ Few Romanian smallholders were in a position to take on such debt. Beyond a handful of large, prosperous Romanian commercial banks that dominated Romanian financial circles in Transylvania, numerous smaller banks remained modest joint-stock institutions with limited capital, rudimentary accounting and administrative procedures, and inexperienced staff (often village priests or teachers). Even after the creation of the banking association Solidarity in 1907, which was designed to consolidate

¹² Albina, for example, donated over six hundred eighty thousand crowns to Romanian organizations. Mihai D. Drecin. Banca "Albina" din Sibiu. Instituție națională a românilor transilvăneni (1871-1918) (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1982). 163. For more information on the conflicting roles banks had as national institutions and financial institutions, see Drecin's discussion in Banca "Albina," 144-62.
¹³ Ibid., 118.
and organize the Romanian banking business so as to ease the flows of capital and make small Romanian banks more attractive partners to larger banks. Romanian banks remained at a competitive disadvantage.\textsuperscript{14}

Without sufficient capital or affordable credit, Romanian villagers could not purchase new tools, new seed, or other agricultural innovations even if they had been willing to abandon traditional farming methods, which, most Romanian leaders complained, they weren't. Learning about new methods like crop rotation systems was unlikely in any event. Romanian elites admitted, because so many Romanian villagers were illiterate. In the Habsburg Empire only Galicia had lower literacy rates than Transylvania.\textsuperscript{15} Tax burdens, work obligations to landlords, and debts to private lenders also restricted peasants' options.

Romanian national leaders who came to the fore of Astra toward the turn of the century became convinced that Romanian economic underdevelopment limited their social and political advancement. Their leadership over a robust national movement capable of gaining influence in Budapest and national autonomy in the empire required a robust national economy.\textsuperscript{16} Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century they discussed solutions to the backwardness they saw all around them. Many feared that the 1878 renewal of the customs union, which had eliminated many trade and tariff barriers between the two halves of the monarchy, obstructed their efforts to improve Romanians' economic status in Transylvania and Hungary. The underdeveloped and underfunded


\textsuperscript{15} Good, Economic Rise, 156.

\textsuperscript{16} Teodor Ionescu, Idea unității naționale reflectată în gindirea economică din Transilvania 1848-1918 (București: Editura științifică și enciclopedică, 1983), 156-76.
Romanian agricultural and industrial economies, they argued, could not compete against Austrian firms and farms in the freer market. Hence Romanians would be forever relegated to the production of raw materials and the consumption of foreign goods. To compensate for their disadvantages and to overcome perpetual dependence on foreign powers, Astra leaders chose the economic organization of the national community as a strategy for development. If they could coordinate the resources and labor of the entire Romanian population in Hungary, then many hoped that they could foster Romanian industrialization and eventually compete in the international market.

**The Ideal of the European Other**

National economic organization appealed to Astra leaders because most nineteenth-century Romanian elites associated the construction of a strong nation with European greatness and prosperity. As an ideal, the nation was supposed to comprise a collective body of individuals, an all-inclusive "we." existing as a autonomous, homogeneous community, defined by precise spatial, temporal, and cultural boundaries; distinct historical origins; and an autonomous future. Because nationalists assumed the

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18 Richard Handler, "Is ‘Identity’ a Useful Cross-Cultural Concept?" in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John Gillis, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 29. The idea of homogeneity applies even in nations, like France, where the modern concept of the nation refers to the sovereign people with homogeneous rights and not explicitly homogeneous characteristics. Nevertheless, as Rogers Brubaker argues, French nationalism was a political-ideological product of war, in which the nation, and hence citizenship, were based on territorial acquisition. Those residing in conquered territory administered by French armies were conceived as potential Frenchmen to be assimilated (read homogenized) in the dominant culture. Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992). Likewise British nationalism, sometimes seen as a compact among individuals to defend certain freedoms, still assumes that the individuals have a homogeneous commitment to those freedoms. In the case of nationals believed to respect a principle, squabbles emerged when people tried to define the principle. Perceptions of liberty or equality were rarely as alike as imagined. Linda Colley drives this point home in her excellent study *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837*. For more on the we-ness of nationalist rationalizations, see Gale Stokes. "Containing Nationalism: Solutions in the Balkans," *Problems of Post-Communism*, 46, no. 4 (July-Aug 1999), 3-10.
nation to be sovereign, the concept implied that members could determine their own fate. Because nationalists accepted that members of the nation shared common backgrounds and features as well as similar interests, they assumed that members of the nation would treat each other more justly than non-members. Romanians believed their own disadvantageous position resulted from Hungarian and to a lesser extent German practices of exclusion in the imperial and local governments, economies, and societies, which had enabled the Hungarians and Saxons to advance at Romanian expense. The nation was an attractive model of social organization for the Romanians in Transylvania precisely because it promised them more control over their own lives and resources and more equitable political, social, and economic playing fields. They consequently sought greater personal liberty and prosperity through national autonomy.

Romanian nationalists recognized that they had a lot of work ahead of them before they could achieve the status of "western" European nationhood. By and large the Romanian elite in nineteenth-century Transylvania espoused the Enlightenment notion of evolutionary progress that had led to the conceptual division of geographic Europe into unequal western and eastern halves at the end of the eighteenth century.¹⁹ This division privileged the west, equating it with affluence, rationality, and civilized European life, in contrast to a backward, irrational, and crude non-western other generally found to the east. Nineteenth-century western Europe became an essentialized, normative standard used to gauge the development of all non-western others.²⁰ The Romanians of

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²⁰ The problem with this formulation is that the west could only be known in comparison to its other, so that neither the west nor the non-west had any concrete, historical existence. Because one form exists only as the negation of the other, neither term makes sense outside of its relational juxtaposition. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978). For an informative critique of Said’s ahistoricism and a more
Transylvania internalized the inferior status of a non-western other, but they did not understand their differences with western Europe to be absolute or eternally fixed.\textsuperscript{21} Although Astra's leaders regularly compared the political, economic, and social situation of the Romanians in Transylvania with that of the European nations (i.e. the west) and found the Romanians lagging behind, they believed that progress generally moved from west to east and that with hard work and education they could determine their own future and achieve full-fledged European nationhood, a marker of advanced European status and the vehicle of western progress. All they needed were the right tools, proper instruction, and concentrated efforts to realize common goals.

Astra Central Committee member and editor of the association's journal *Transilvania* Zacharia Boiu clearly expressed these notions in an 1894 article on the importance of supporting associations (*reuniuni* or *intrunire*) that promoted Romanian crafts and commerce. Boiu argued that these kinds of associations, which offered both educational, financial, and organizational networks, were necessary for the development of a strong Romanian middle class. A strong middle class was important to Boiu because he presumed it would help unify the Romanian nation, binding (*lēga*) the upper and lower classes together. Such organizations had been active for centuries in western Europe (*apusulă Europei*), but, he explained, they had existed among the Romanians for a few decades because the dawn of human liberty, equality, and fraternity that had slowly advanced eastward across the European continent had only arrived in Transylvania (our

\footnotesize{nuanced understanding of how difference is sometimes posited in ambiguity, see Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).}

country—patria nóstră) in the middle of the nineteenth century. One of many Romanians in Transylvania who put their faith in the eastward evolution of western progress, Boiu avoided discussing specifics of more serious obstacles to development, such as the parcelization of land, and concluded that a solution to the social and economic problems lay in coordinating the individual strengths of all the members of the national community through educational and mutual aid societies.

Boiu's pleas for his readers to do their part to support Romanian commerce and industry at the local level suggest the predominantly agrarian nature of Romanian economic activity. In 1910 only 4.5 percent of all Romanians in Hungary lived in urban communities. Thus when Boiu spoke about a middle class he described a prosperous Romanian villager engaged in some kind of skilled labor. Like most Romanian leaders in Transylvania, Boiu considered the creation of a class of independent professional craftsmen, often with landed interests, the first step to greater Romanian affluence. Romanian elites were well aware of the prosperity of the western bourgeoisie, especially the industrial bourgeoisie, but they faced the daunting challenge of creating this prosperity. Without significant capitalist development or a bourgeois class, the Romanians in Hungary started with the national community. If they could establish mutual aid and educational organizations with the backing of a united national community, the combination of Romanian resources and labor could achieve the wealth and status that flowed from a diversified, and eventually industrialized, European economy. The creation of economic diversity where such opportunities existed for the

22 Z. Boiu, “Clasa de mijlocii a poporului nostru,” Transilvania, 1894, 142-145.
rural masses, namely in the crafts and trades, was, thus, one of the primary tasks on Astra’s early-twentieth-century agenda.

Boiu’s admiration for a middle class not only characterized Astra’s general emphasis on bourgeois values like hard work and individual responsibility, but it also supported the notion that Romanians were obliged to improve their own future through rational social organization. When most Romanian nationalists like Boiu viewed the world, they thought of nations as individuals, each with their own characteristics, in competition with one another. In similar fashion they considered the Romanian nation an individual whose collective members were in control of their own destiny and just had to work for its advancement. The task before these nationalists was to get all the members to combine forces properly so that collectively they could achieve the status and prosperity that would enable them to contend with other nations.

Leaders of Astra regularly used comparisons between Romanians of Transylvania and seemingly advanced European others (individual European nations) to justify Astra activity and to convince Romanians to support it. When Boiu declared that craftsmen’s associations had existed for centuries in western Europe, he just assumed that his audience would understand the importance of supporting similar associations in Transylvania. According to his logic, Romanians needed to follow western European examples in order to catch up to the western "others." Vicar and regional chapter director Alimpițu Barboloviciu expressed similar concerns for Romanian inferiority when he urged Romanians at the 1892 Șimleu despărtământ assembly to get behind the association so that they would no longer lag behind the European banner (drapel) of

24 Liviu Maior refers to these prosperous villagers as țarani instarii. See his brief discussion of the concept of a Romanian middle class of trained craftsmen in Mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania 1900-
culture and civilization. If fathers, mothers, school teachers, professors, priests, lawyers, and peasants would work as one in order to promote Romanian culture, he argued that they could create a happier future for themselves. Their destinies, thus, depended on personal desire, direction from Astra, and coordinated and collective work.

The assumptions Astra leaders made about the existence and motivational appeal of the Romanian nation convinced them that Romanians would willingly sacrifice their own interests to advance national goals. They discovered, however, that many Romanian nationals did not behave as expected. Efforts to increase the number of Romanian smallholders illustrates the problem. Astra leaders expected that independent agricultural producers could provide a solid social and economic foundation for national development. They would have liked to provide peasants with favorable terms of credit to purchase land, but the association did not have significant capital or official governmental approval to act as a lending institution. Thus prominent Astrists appealed to Romanian banks and churches to buy land or make portions of ecclesiastical estates available for the association’s use. At the end of the century many Romanian nationals did acquire land formerly held by Hungarians with loans from Romanian banks, but the banks did not make loans on the basis of nationality. Profit was their ultimate goal. It was not in the interest of the banks to offer high-risk loans with low interest rates to thousands of customers, and it was not in the interest of either the Orthodox or Greek

26 Transilvania, 1904, 191.
27 Keith Hitchins offers a succinct discussion of this controversy in his chapter “Economics” in A Nation Affirmed: the Romanian National Movement in Transylvania 1860/1914 (Bucharest: The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999), 221-55. Other notable works provide more detailed information on the development of Romanian banking institutions before 1914. See Nicolae N. Petra, Băncile românești din Ardeal și Banat (Sibiu, 1936); Mihai D. Drecin, “Înființarea uniunii bancare “Solidaritatea;” Drecin, Banca Albina; and Dobrescu, Elita româneasca.
Catholic Churches to parcel out land that helped provide for their existence. In this case, as in many others, the national ideal alone did not provide sufficient motivation for Romanians to risk losses on shaky investments.

Prominent Astra members nevertheless held fast to their convictions that all Romanians would act in the interest of the national community. They began their work with two assumptions: that the Romanian nation existed and that its members merely needed to be awakened to realize their collective potential. These rather idealistic assumptions persuaded Astra elites that if they could make Romanian villagers aware of the importance of the nation and their place in it, the villagers would accept the intellectuals’ guidance and work to achieve greater prosperity and independence for themselves and for the national community.\(^{28}\) Associations and societies, like Astra, would provide that national direction.

**Astra's Institutional Support and Pedagogical Approach**

Astra's efforts to develop a national economy were sporadic before the end of the nineteenth century. In the 1880s as Romanian leaders in Transylvania pondered the need for prosperous villagers to take a more active role in the national movement, they published ideas for the economic organization of the countryside in prominent journals.\(^{29}\) Within Astra, leading members discussed plans to organize educational forums for villagers, but the only concrete program they advanced focused on educating specialists in agriculture and crafts. There was an acute shortage of learned Romanian agronomists

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and economists. Even as late as 1904 only 2.3 percent of all students in Transylvanian agricultural schools were Romanian.\textsuperscript{30} The focus on specialists also arose from general agreement that educated men would lead the reform movement. Most Astra elites expected that they would provide the necessary information rural Romanians lacked, and that the villagers armed with their advice would begin to change the way they farmed and did business. But the association encountered several problems. Establishing agricultural schools proved too costly. Literature with economic content that Astra published was not accessible to most villagers. Some local initiatives, like public lectures on agricultural themes, had favorable results, but their limited scope did not correspond to Astra’s desires for a coordinated campaign to promote modern agricultural development. Centralized programs to cultivate a Romanian national economy only took root after the finalization of the new statutes in 1897, which directed Astra to concentrate more attention and resources on rural needs and interests.

The broadened scope of Astra interests after 1897 required an expansion of Astra’s administrative bodies. Committees, called sections, oversaw Astra activity in conjunction with the central committee.\textsuperscript{31} In addition to the history, philology, and science sections, the new statutes outlined tasks for school and economic sections. The economic section had responsibilities for investigating the state of the Romanian national economy. Before economists could propose ways to spur economic development, they

\textsuperscript{29} Some of the many late-nineteenth-century journals publishing articles with social and economic topics include \textit{Economul}, \textit{Foaia poporului}, \textit{Bunul econom}, \textit{Revista economică}, \textit{Tovărășia} and a variety of popular calendars. See Dobrescu. \textit{Elita românească}, 85-92, 135-38.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 111.

\textsuperscript{31} For details of this history see information in chapter five, under section heading \textit{Organization and Education}. 154
needed to establish the current economic condition of the Romanians in Hungary.\(^{32}\)

Astra’s economists concentrated on agrarian concerns. Ultimately they wanted to transform the traditional conception of cultivating the land through the introduction of new technologies, machines, and tools. The economists outlined plans to popularize up-to-date techniques on cultivating vegetable gardens, fruit trees, industrial crops, vineyards, livestock and their feed, silkworms, and other diverse agricultural occupations, like bee-keeping and cooperative dairy production. They hoped that a sustained focus on all of these areas would increase peasant prosperity and make it possible for villagers to purchase machines and tools.

In order to maintain Astra's educational and cultural charter intact, association economists tried to meet the above goals through formal education, literature, and popular lectures. The prohibitive cost of founding an agricultural school (much less several) convinced Astra leaders to continue providing stipends to Romanian agronomy students and encouraging the churches, which oversaw rural education, to offer more practical farming instruction. To encourage village teacher compliance, regional and local Astra members often offered small cash prizes to the teachers who cultivated the best school gardens.\(^{33}\) Astra hoped to reach literate adults through journals and informative booklets. Not only did Astra's economists cooperate with the editors of many prominent Romanian journals, they also published more colloquial works for literate villagers. These included re-editions of Astra member Ioan F. Negrutiu's works *Cultura*

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\(^{32}\) Part three of the 1900 "Proiect de regulament pentru secțiunile științifice-literare," *Transilvania*, 1900, partea oficială, 104-06.

\(^{33}\) Usually the prizes ranged from twenty to thirty crowns. ANS, 538-1896, 579-1900, 756-1910. Occasionally the prizes were advertised in newspapers. See for example. "Concurs," *Telegraful român*, 24 June/7July 1906, 297.
cucuruzului (The Cultivation of Maize) and Gradina de legumi (Vegetable Garden) in the 1904 issues of the association's popular book series.  

Astra leaders recognized these efforts as a significant advance in the association's programming, but they also admitted that more was needed to address the situation of hundreds of thousands of illiterate villagers. At the urging of section members and regional chapter directors, the central committee decided in 1905 to fund lecturers who would travel throughout the countryside. The details of this initiative are covered in chapter five but here it is significant to point out that this was one way Astra tried to make specialists who would oversee the economic campaign available to rural communities. Astra sections were supposed to approve lecture topics, but in practice this proved unrealistic. Few regional chapters organized lectures with enough advance notice for the sections to meet and make decisions. A shortage of specialists willing to travel to rural communities also created obstacles that association leaders tried to circumvent with calls for their colleagues to design model lectures that local leaders could give. Few complied. In the end, the association had to rely on regional and local leaders to give lectures that Astra began to keep track of only in 1907. The expansion of association activities prevented Astra from maintaining the centralized structure it had devised for rural reform. Consequently the work Astra concluded throughout the countryside remained more limited in scope and irregular than association leaders desired.

For the first few years agricultural themes dominated popular lecturers Astra funded. Morality was, however, an important part of Astra's economic campaign: a part

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34 The Blaj despărtământ originally published these books after Negruțiu offered them as lectures at the regional annual meetings. "Cultivarea cucuruzului" was published in 1896 and "Gradinele de legumi" in 1899. They were sent to the central committee and distributed throughout the region, but exemplifying
that Astra's categorization of lectures does not fully represent. Few written records
remain on Astra's popular lectures, but a newspaper article from 1906 provides a telling
example of the moralistic implications of a presentation that would have likely been
classified as an agricultural or financial topic. Dr. Ioan Stroia, an archpriest and regional
Astra director in Sălişte, gave a popular lecture in 1906 entitled, "A look at the social and
material conditions in Sălişte and at a cooperative livestock association as a means of
economic strength" ("Priviri asupra stărilor sociale și materiale din Sălişte și despre
asigurarea vitelor ca mijloc de întărire economică"). During his presentation, Stroia
discussed the importance of proper care for livestock and manufacturing of milk products
for the prosperity of the community. He gave examples of cooperative dairy associations
in other European countries and argued that German models were the most practical. He
also explained that Romanian villagers needed to appreciate the value of work to get
ahead. Stroia, according to the newspaper article, showed that only serious and honest
work, not idleness, could provide satisfactory living standards, and he encouraged his
audience to follow three steps to improve their work habits. First he urged them to be
wise and search for the best means to stretch the resources of the community. Next he
advised them to be frugal and not waste their hard-earned profits on luxury items,
because, he asserted, extravagant expenses (on manufactured cloth for example) impeded
progress and led to decadence. Finally he exhorted his listeners to work diligently on the
land that their ancestors had farmed.  

Astra's attempt to overcome sporadic regional activities, the association published them again in the
popular book series for the benefit of a larger audience. ANS, 592-1901.
35 Transilvania, 1907, 107.
This account of Stroia's lecture offers an insight into the ways in which Astra leaders thought about national economic development and shows how they tried to make villagers more aware of national status and the responsibilities associated with it. Astra leaders like Stroia who almost always looked to European models of development for examples that could benefit Romanians found the Romanians lacking and stressed the need for change according to their recommendations. The solutions these men promoted often had both material and moral dimensions. They argued that Romanians could make the most of their limited capital and underdeveloped assets by pooling their resources together in cooperative enterprises. If each Romanian national participated, the profits for everyone increased. National development thus depended on collective contributions. But organization was not enough. Astra leaders indicated that moral defects also hindered rural progress. Romanians needed to guard against idleness and frivolous purchases. Hard work and greater self-sufficiency led to real prosperity. Astra elites legitimizd this message with references to the past. Stroia reminded his listeners that they farmed the same land as their ancestors. This created a sense of continuity between the past and the present, inserting members of this agricultural community into the popular historical record and giving them a sense of commonality and national purpose. A brighter future was up to them, and Stroia merely offered the audience a way to realize it.

The storybook format of Stroia's lecture typified the messages Astra's elites sent to the masses. In addition to offering practical advice, Astra leaders provided optimistic tales of positivistic progress, in which downtrodden villagers overcame severe hardships. Villagers portrayed almost always lived in miserable conditions until some individuals
took the proper action to change the local state of affairs. The changes highlighted in the stories gradually led to a better life for everyone involved.

Romul Simu's book "The Future Commune" is a good example of this narrative form. Simu explained how a village plagued with poverty escaped its misery and rebuilt itself. The story features the work of a young village priest, Ion Peptea, after his arrival in "the Future" (the name of the village). Simu paints a dismal scene of the village before the priest's appearance. Residents of the Future suffered at the hands of lazy leaders who were more concerned with their own well-being than that of their fellow villagers. The people did not attend church, but spent most of their time carousing in the local inn. The school also failed the community because it did not offer the enlightened education the villagers so desperately needed. Residents lacked basic literary skills and thus could not apply wisdom that could have been gleaned from books. The gardens remained unkept. Only two bee hives existed in the entire village. No one had introduced the cultivation of silk worms. The cattle and other livestock were neglected and sickly. Moreover, no one had set up a cooperative enterprise to organize collective work. As a result, the villagers' situation became increasingly dangerous. Many suffered from malnourishment. The situation was so bad that when provisions were available, the women did not even know how to cook. Without hope, young men like Ştefan Tempea left the village and emigrated to America. After a lengthy, perilous journey, Tempea found work in a factory that required him to labor long hours in dangerous conditions. Six years later, he returned to the Future and found a very different village.

Shortly after Tempea's departure to America, a young priest replaced his older predecessor. He immediately understood the destructive influences that prevailed in the
village and set a course to alleviate the poverty and suffering of his parishioners. He began his work preaching to the people about the importance of the church. He also organized priests from neighboring villages to give lectures in his community which prepared the villagers for the work that needed to be done. These talks focused on love for God and one’s neighbors, hatred of sin, duties to the church and one’s children, as well as the importance of education, work, and frugality. The priest devoted great attention to education. An elderly teacher remained in control of the village primary school, so Peptea opened a night school for adults, forty of whom, prodded by his sermons, began to attend. With his motto “haste makes waste” (“graba strica treaba”), he embarked on the tough task of teaching them basic literary and math skills, and gradually watched them develop a love for learning. After a year, the elderly teacher retired and a young, energetic teacher replaced him. The younger one began new classes for adults while Peptea continued on with his second-year students.

During his second year, Peptea called in a specialist to set up a rural bank. The specialist, Domnul Spornic (Mr. Efficient or Productive), told the villagers the story of F.W. Raiffeisen who discovered the power of the unity of people and gave them instructions to establish a local lending institution. Instructions the author took several pages to explain. With difficulty the villagers followed his advice, but within a few years their efforts paid off. They had enough profit to purchase new agricultural equipment, fruit tree saplings, and vegetable seed, all of which gradually increased their standard of living.

The young churchman did not rest. He helped establish an efficient, local government to give the village laws and needed order. He also implement a rotating crop
system, and continued to give practical lectures that enabled villagers to help themselves. In addition, he set up a local library and organized civil groups like a men’s choir, a reading society, a volunteer firemen’s association, and even an orchestra. His wife, too, was a model of industriousness. The daughter of a priest, she learned all her home industry skills from her mother. Knowledgeable in spinning, weaving, sewing, gardening, caring for animals, milking, baking, and cleaning, she set an excellent example for all the women in the village to whom she taught her skills with patience and without charge. Persuaded by her example, the women also bought sewing machines, made clothing, and sold it to a nearby merchant the priestly wife knew. The women no longer wasted their time gossiping, Simu explained, but spend it all working hard to improve the lives of their families. The men, too, refrained from their former debauchery. The inn was closed, and instead, they frequented night school, choir practice, or the reading society.

Those who had returned from the difficult life in America, like Tempea, had an eye opening lesson on the value of education, work, and thrift. They found at home all the tools necessary to improve themselves. Simu concluded his book with descriptions of the village after twenty-five and forty more years of proper leadership and hard, cooperative work. He hoped that his example village would encourage Romanians to remain at home and improve their own lot.37

In many ways this romantic and nationalistic expose is a manifesto of the association’s creed for rural development. Astra authors championed the traditional authority of the rural patriarchy and emphasized the value of self-sacrifice, hard work, sobriety, education, and cooperation. In so doing, they often overlooked some aspects of reality. Their strategies for development (popular lectures, cooperative enterprises, rural
libraries, and literacy courses) did not address fundamental problems like unaffordable credit, lack of land, scattered plots, insufficient capital even when pooled collectively, or the time commitments required of a day laborer. Simu's brief discussion on the importance of vegetable gardening, for example, ignores the fact that the model gardens Astra expected church representatives to cultivate did not materialize in many places because the school and church did not have available land. Some Orthodox priests complained to church hierarchs that the church cemetery was the only land at their disposal.  

Leading Astrists avoided many pressing problems not only because they were complex, thorny issues, but also because the association had to contain the potentially explosive side of its calls for fundamental rural reform. Any hint of radical prescriptions for change would have attracted the attention of Hungarian authorities and threatened the existence of the association. It also would have threatened the influence of Astra's elite over the national movement. In 1907, the year Astra first published Simu's book as part of its popular book series, a widespread peasant revolt broke out across Romania.  

If a similar rebellion had been sparked in Hungary, armed state repression would certainly have followed and potentially jeopardized the construction of the Romanian nation that leaders in Astra oversaw. Romanian leaders of Astra's national movement needed to maintain enough social stability to realize their nation-building plans without endangering their leading social role in the national community; a role that they assumed

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37 Romul Simu, Comuna viitorul (Sibiu: 1907 and 1912).
38 Arhivele Mitropoliei Orthodoxe, IV-615-889.
would be significantly enhanced if Romanians' achieved their goal of national autonomy within the empire.\textsuperscript{40}

Hard at work in their own social spheres, Astra's professional and intellectual elite did not take personal responsibility for organizing a national economy in the countryside. As Simu's work illustrated, the rural priests and teachers did the day-to-day work among Romanian villagers. The elite might travel to the village in the event that rural leaders reached limitations to their knowledge and needed specialists to fill in the gaps. The young priest serving in the Future, for example, called on "Mr. Efficient" (Domnul Spornic) to help the villagers establish a rural bank. Once the villagers got the proper provincial leadership and received the right information, they raised themselves up from the choking poverty of everyday life. As this story illustrated the Future depended on contributions from both the young priest and teacher working in concert to better the lives of Romanian villagers. These men had to cooperate in order to realize their missions. Historically this had been a problem in Transylvanian villages. The Orthodox Church documented numerous reports of conflicts between generations and between the priests and the school teachers. The details of these conflicts have not yet been studied, but Simu's examples illustrated the accomplishments possible if the churchmen could set aside their

\textsuperscript{40}That is not to say, however, that Romanian leaders remained silent about the desperate conditions of the peasantry in Transylvania and Hungary. The peasant question was a burning issue for all Romanian thinkers at the turn of the century. In 1907 outspoken populist critics and leading Astra members Ioan Lupaș and Octavian Goga publicly sympathized with their rural conationals and even warned Hungarian authorities that the situation of peasants in Hungary did not differ much from those who revolted in Romania. They were arrested, tried, and served jail time for their actions. Goga even used Astra forums in 1909 and 1910 to protest against the Hungarian repression of the Romanian nation, but he was an exception. Within Astra most Romanian leaders confined their work to the educational and cultural goals outlined in the association statutes. Romanians could take up the political cause of Romanian smallholders within the framework of the Romanian National Party, which after 1905 initiated a new program aimed at tax reform, minimal property guarantees for the peasantry, access to state forests and pastures, and social protections for workers among other things. Dobrescu, \textit{Elita românescă}, 48-49, 67-68; Maior, \textit{Mișcarea națională}, 80-114.
differences for the benefit of the local community. Simu's book sent a concise message to these men: get along and work together.

Cooperation among Romanian nationals was, in fact, the key component of Astra's rural campaign. Romanian leaders throughout Hungary recognized the lack of affordable credit as a fundamental economical problem Romanians faced. They hoped villagers, like those in Simu's "the Future," would pool their meager resources to set up credit cooperatives that would eventually have surpluses to purchase tools or seed and to found other cooperative enterprises. After the failure of the credit cooperatives Visarion Roman established under the bank Albina, many Romanian leaders dismissed the ability of the peasantry to handle financial transactions responsibly. They counted on a Romanian banking industry to foster economic growth. But not all gave up hope on cooperatives. The early credit cooperatives Roman established under the bank Albina, may have failed, but, Romanian economists argued, these institutions were not suited to the needs of an impoverished peasantry. Romanian villagers needed a different kind of credit union.

"Capital Created out of Nothing:" Popular Banks and Populists

There were two main types of popular banks operating in central Europe at the turn of the century, the Schulze-Delitzsch system and the Raiffeisen system. The early Romanian credit cooperatives that Roman organized according to the German Schulze-Delitzsch model, initially popular in southern Transylvania and Romania, were profit-

42 Eidelberg, The Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt, 84. Eidelberg's excellent investigation of the 1907 peasant revolt contains detailed information on the banking systems and laws in Romania and more general information on these two popular banking systems in central Europe.
making enterprises designed to attract relatively large amounts of capital from the bank members. Despite the failure of Roman's organization of popular banks under the bank Albina, Romanian leaders established fifteen more such popular banks in Transylvania and the Banat from 1891-1900. These banks served the richer peasantry and were often located in prosperous, urban regions.43 Seven of them even turned into commercial banks.

Romanian economists who wanted popular banks to provide credit to peasants of any means turned to the system first advocated in 1849 by German economist Frederick W. Raiffeisen. They considered that the Raiffeisen system attended better to the needs of rural communities. It put locals who understood specific village needs in control of the institution. A local committee had to approve all individual loans made as well as the total amount the cooperative society would loan its members. These provisions were important because unlike Schulze-Delitzsch systems, which made each member liable only for the amount of his or her individual investment, in Raiffeisen credit cooperatives each member was liable potentially to the extent of his wealth to cover corporation debts.44 The committee in charge of approving loans under the Raiffeisen system thus had incentive to exclude villagers it did not consider responsible to repay loans and also to prevent the institution from lending more money than members could afford. Romanian economists also considered Raiffeisen popular banks better suited to Romanian

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43 Thus in 1900 there were twenty-two Schulze-Delitzsch popular banks serving Romanians in Năsăud, Săliște, Ilva-Mare, Borgo-Prund, Deva, Chiusbaia, Feldru, Brad, Vad, Jidovin, Hondol, Feleacul Săsesc, Chiseteu, Liged, Bicaz, Pecica-Română, Lugoj, Jebel, Ghiroc, Bucium-Poieni, Timișoara, and Govosdia. Those that reached the status of a commercial bank include "Aurora" in Năsăud, "Casa de păștara" in Săliște, "Crișana" in Brad, "Hunedoara" in Deva, "Economia" in Lugoj, "Speranța" in Borgo-Prund. Dragoș, Cooperația în Ardeal, 33-37. Dragoș writes sarcastically that the transformation of commercial banks from cooperative enterprises suited the desires of local intellectuals who all wanted to have their own little "Bankette."
communities because they could offer loans at lower interest rates than the Schulze-Delitzsch organizations. In contrast to the Schulze-Delitzsch system, Raiffeisen cooperatives did not pay administrators salaries (except for the cashier) and did not award dividends. Profit was directed to a common fund. If a Raiffeisen credit cooperative disbanded the society devoted its capital to a public or charitable purpose. These stipulations reduced overhead costs, made more money available for loans, and discouraged members from liquidating the association. Raiffeisen cooperatives also depended largely on loans and deposits from outside, not on private capital as the financially self-reliant Schulze-Delitzsch banks did.\[^{45}\] Without much private capital Romanian villagers in Transylvania needed the outside funds that the Raiffeisen system required to get started.

Proponents of Raiffeisen popular banks trusted that the rural credit cooperatives would "create capital out of nothing." In their view Raiffeisen banks made it possible to turn the limited resources of individual farmers into substantial sums that could in turn be used to free smallholders from the exploitation of private lenders. Proponents of Raiffeisen popular banks also trusted that credit cooperatives could create enough revenue to found other cooperative organizations to produce dairy products for example, or to buy and sell seed and farming implements. In short the Raiffeisen system was a panacea for the underdeveloped rural world.

\[^{44}\] The Raiffeisen system "discriminated against relatively wealthy members in the sense that they (had) the most to lose." Eidelberg, 85, fn. 2.
\[^{45}\] Ibid., 85-86 Eidelberg argues that the consumer orientation of the Raiffeisen banks were less dynamic than the Schulze-Delitzsch banks, and were suited to preserve the status quo. Leaders in Romania preferred the Schulze-Delitzsch system because it was "better suited to effect a socio-economic transformation of the countryside, upon which sheltered industrialization depended."
In 1885 Aurel Brote first translated F.W. Raiffeisen's writings on credit cooperatives into Romanian.\(^{46}\) He argued that for-profit banks were incapable of satisfying the specific economic needs of the peasantry who, he contended, had to organize its own economic unity on a cooperative basis. The debut of the Raiffeisen system among Romanians in Transylvania came in 1893 when members of the Romanian Agricultural Society in Sibiu County (Reuniunea Română de Agricultură din Județul Sibiu) founded the first Raiffeisen credit cooperatives in the region. The goal of the Agricultural Society, set up in 1888 by Eugen Brote, was to contribute to the development of Romanian agriculture by hosting conferences in villages, publishing and distributing economic literature throughout the county, organizing livestock and child exhibits for which they awarded prizes, distributing select seeds and breeding animals to Romanians villagers, organizing agronomic courses, and establishing cooperatives. The society was a notable success, boasting, for example, seventy-three Raiffeisen credit cooperatives by 1914 with one thousand one hundred nineteen members, but it only had government permission to work in the Sibiu county, and its work was thus limited.\(^{47}\) Romanian leaders in other counties also establish Raiffeisen credit cooperatives, but the institutions remained isolated.\(^{48}\) Proponents of Romanian cooperatives searched for an institution with administrative jurisdiction over Transylvania that could coordinate the cooperative movement. They settled on Astra. It had a stable infrastructure, dedicated leaders with reasonably good lines of communication, a proven commitment to educate

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\(^{46}\) Astra’s journal *Transilvania* published excerpts of this work. See volume 1896, 144-51.

\(^{47}\) For more information on the cooperative focus of this association see Dragoș, *Cooperația în Ardeal*, 20, 47-49.

\(^{48}\) Following the example of the Agricultural Society in Sibiu, Romanian leaders established a similar organization in Oraștie. Ibid., 49-50, 68.
rural producers, and, importantly, new statutes that gave it official permission to promote Romanian economic development throughout Hungary.49

The organization of agricultural cooperatives and credit unions got a slow start in Astra because, as noted above, prominent bankers and professionals in Astra did not support the movement. They had argued that efforts to organize the countryside into cooperative enterprises were premature.50 But after the populists gained greater influence over the association in the first decade of the twentieth century and tried to focus Astra activities on the needs and interests of the countryside, and especially after the peasant uprising in 1907, association members came to see the resolution of the peasant question as one of the most important for the success of the Romanian national movement in Hungary.

Populists in Astra strongly supported the cooperative movement as an alternative to capitalist industrialization. Although they recognized the advances of western capitalist economies, they contended that western progress came at Romanian expense. Romanian prosperity, populists argued, did not require western models of industrial development. As they saw it, industrial capitalism was unsuitable for Romanian conditions because it put Romanians at a competitive disadvantage with western producers, because it threatened to subdivide the Romanian national community into antagonistic classes, and because it would render Romanians forever dependent on the westerners, endangering their very existence as a people. Populist leaders did not, however, seek to isolate

49 According to paragraph two of the 1897 statutes, the association can promote any legal undertaking which will contribute to the literary, cultural, spiritual and economic prosperity of the Romanians in Hungary. Statutele Asociației pentru literatură română și cultură poporului roman (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Archidiceasane, 1897).
50 Bankers N. Petra-Petrescu, Parțenie Cosma, and Corneliu Diaconovici all opposed the cooperative movement in Astra as premature. Dobrescu, Elita românească, 133.
Romanians from European life. In fact they pleaded for the adoption of those western norms and legislation which would create the necessary framework for the advancement of the rural world.\textsuperscript{51}

Populists in Transylvania hoped to preserve the village world in which they located the essence of the Romanian nation, but they did not idealize this world. They acknowledged the inefficiencies and backwardness of early twentieth Romanian agriculture and planned to modernize Romanian farming while guaranteeing the "authenticity" of rural life. Their solution entailed creating self-sufficient smallholders capable of meeting all the needs of a domestic market. Populists accepted that modest industrial development in the milling of grains, for example, could benefit Romanian farmers, but their vision of economic growth was limited to the agricultural sphere. The approach of the populists thus differed significantly from Romanian capitalists who feared that reliance on an agricultural economy would relegate Romanians to second-class status in Europe. Romanian capitalists sought economic strength in the eventual diversification of industrial organizations. Although the capitalists often felt a duty to aid rural Romanians, they also believed that villagers needed to take responsibility for their own lives. Populists, on the other hand, argued that Romanian elites needed to work hand-in-hand with Romanian villagers to help them overcome the obstacles to economic development.

In 1907 under the backdrop of peasant unrest and under the influence of the populists who had begun to take prominent leadership positions in Astra in 1906, Astra asked economist and cooperative specialist Vasile C. Osvadă to make recommendations on how the association could establish agricultural cooperative societies. Taking note of

\textsuperscript{51} Z. Ornea, \textit{Poporanismul} (București: Minerva, 1972), 174-82.
the bankers' and professionals' animosity toward credit institutions, they were particularly interested in the production of dairy products and cultivation of fruit trees. Osvadă considered necessary the creation of one or several central organizations to coordinate cooperative enterprises, but without adequate funding the association decided his recommendations were impractical. Until 1910 Astra limited its cooperative movement to propaganda advocating the importance and effectiveness of agricultural cooperatives.

A serious boost came, however, in 1911 after the Paris-based Romanian benefactor Vasile Stroescu donated fifty thousand crowns to the association for the establishment of rural credit cooperatives. Upon Stroescu's request the central committee entrusted Osvadă to study the cooperative movements in Romania, Hungary, and Bucovina and to prepare a detailed report with recommendations for the best use of Stroescu's donation.

While Osvadă prepared his report, the agronomist the association hired in 1910 had some success setting up Romanian cooperative associations. The Braşov despărtământ committee first piqued the central committee's interest in employing an agronomist by entrusting a teacher and a priest to give agronomic talks in 1905. A few years later at the prompting of Braşov regional chapter leaders and economic section members, the central committee decided to hire agronomist Aurel Cosciuc to offer lectures that would encourage more systematic and rational organization of the countryside. As in all of its activities, Astra maintained its pedagogical focus. If lecturers offered the right information, Astra leaders believed rural development would naturally follow.
Cosciuc got to work in 1910.\textsuperscript{52} His initial talks focused on agricultural themes like the rational cultivation of land or fruit trees, types of seed and vines, cooperative associations, breeding livestock, bee keeping, vegetable gardening, or fertilizer, but by 1912 he was also speaking on the life of Christ, alcoholism, and other cultural topics.\textsuperscript{53} The agronomist saw practical results from his talks. He informed the central committee that 17,850 villagers attended his talks in 1913. Regardless of the scheduled subject, he explained the national importance of agricultural and cultural societies to every audience and urged the listeners to establish them. His reports from 1910 until 1914 indicate that in many places villagers followed his advice. In 1911, for example, he reported that villagers began to plant fruit trees and ask for help setting up agricultural cooperatives. In 1912 Cosciuc founded two Raiffeisen credit cooperatives and a mutual-aid society to insure villagers' livestock. Many villagers requested more information on cooperative enterprises so Cosciuc published model statutes and other informational guidelines, which he distributed at his lectures. The financial crisis in early 1913 prevented many villagers from joining the cooperatives Cosciuc helped establish that year, but he

\textsuperscript{52} For information on the initiative the Brașov chapter showed see Transilvania, 1905, 84-85; and 1907, 69. The central committee hired Aurel Nistor, a rural Orthodox priest from the Brașov despărtământ to give lectures in the Olt River valley in 1908 and 1909 before they hired agronomist Aurel Cosciuc. Nistor reported on his activities in Transilvania 1909, 359-65. Several newspapers encouraged the association to hire twenty to thirty agronomists and have the Romanian banks pay their salaries, but the banks did not provide enough funds. Solidaritatea, an association of banks founded in 1907, provided one thousand sixty-six crowns for the agronomist in 1909-1910 and two hundred forty crowns for 1910-11. After 1911 the central committee required the local communities to pay for the lecturer's expenses. This arrangement did not work too well and the central committee agree to pay his expenses in 1913. Transilvania, 1909, 215; 1910, 199.

\textsuperscript{53} He gave thirteen lectures in 1910, sixty-two in 1911, forty in 1912, two hundred thirty-three in 1913 after the central committee agreed to cover his expenses, and one hundred thirty-eight in 1914 before the war began. For lists of his popular lectures see Transilvania, 1911, 545; 1912, 366-67; 1913, 271-72; 1914, 295-300; 1915, 145-47.
explained that many villagers began to practice modern farming methods that he had demonstrated at his lectures.\textsuperscript{54}

Peasant attendance at Cosciuc's lectures and reported interest in changing the way they farmed or banked as a result of the lectures indicate that Astra's messages of national economic organization both attracted and persuaded many Romanians villagers. Not all villagers of course responded so positively, but association leaders remained blind to the limitations of their nationalistic appeals. If Astra's sponsored event did not have the positive effects expected, association leaders did not question their plans for rural development, instead they cast problems as moral dilemmas, accusing Romanian intellectuals and rural leaders alike of apathy to the national cause and labeling villagers with shameful ignorance. When rural priests and teachers did not help organize events Cosciuc planned. Astra's agronomist did not consider that his nationalist appeal might be faulty. He criticized the rural leaders for their indifference to the progress of the nation. In some cases their opposition to his work was fueled, in his words, by superstitious observance of holy days on which priests cautioned people to refrain from work. "With this kind of faith and these kinds of leaders," Cosciuc wrote, "the people can not move forward."\textsuperscript{55} The people weren't the problem. In his mind the people were essentially good. Once they realized that he had come to the village for their benefit, he explained, he earned their trust and could provide the information they clearly sought. To corroborate his faith in the popular masses, he recounted numerous talks he gave when fifty or sixty villagers stayed for hours, even during harvest or planting season, and asked

\textsuperscript{54} Astra published his reports in Transilvania, 1911, 546-48; 1912, 368-70; 1913, 275-77; 1914, 295-300; 1915, 145-46.

\textsuperscript{55} "Cu astfel de credințe și astfel de conducători, poporul nu poate înaintă. Transilvania, 1912, 369."
engaging questions. Moreover, he testified that some villagers approached him years or months later on the road or at a train station and thanked him for the information he imparted in their communities. Cosciuc argued that the rural intellectuals comprised the weak link in Astra’s chain of national organization. In his reports he never showed sympathy for the hardships rural leaders faced or understanding of their religious convictions. He merely chastised them for failing to emulate the hard work of other Astra leaders like himself, for neglecting their responsibilities to further the national cause.

And the real cause was national. The nation justified Cosciuc’s actions. It provided the compelling framework for collective action, through which he and all other Astra representatives could transmit and justify the goals of their social and economic agendas. Cosciuc felt Romanians were in competition with other nations and hoped cooperative associations and greater education would provide a sound foundation for Romanian economic autonomy. After the outbreak of the war in 1914, Cosciuc reflected on his progress during the previous five years. It was a good start, but compared to the work of the Saxons or the Hungarians, the Romanians were far behind. Relative to the enormous progress of the other peoples (of Hungary), he wrote, the progress made with a few lectures completely vanished. He hoped that intellectuals in urban and rural communities would ascertain the significance of Astra’s economic activity and wholeheartedly support it after the war. For, as he explained, the mobilization of all Romanian leaders provided the only means to help villagers improve their fates and catch up with the more advanced Hungarians and Germans. Nationalists like Cosciuc did not seriously consider cooperation between different nations a viable option. The prosperity of the Romanian community depended on its autonomy, achieved through better
education and interdependent organizations that would protect Romanian interests in the rivalry with other nations that was, according to these nationalists, the natural course of human life.

Many Astra members shared Cosciuc's views, including Astra secretary and vocal populist Octavian C. Tăslăuanu. In an article the association published in 1911, Tăslăuanu argued that Romanians needed to back Astra's cooperative movement in order to protect foreigners from conquering the Romanian nation. The maturing Romanian banking industry had successfully opposed foreign capital: economic powers from taking over Romanians' land, but, he warned, they did not offer sufficient national-economic resistance to protect the entire Romanian community in Hungary. Hungarians, he explained, had already conquered Romanian villages (au cucerit mai multe sate românești) by forming cooperative organizations in Romanian communities under the centralized cooperative organization "Hangya" based in Budapest. In order to prevent the Hungarian cooperative movement from conquering Romanian land (teren), Romanians, Tăslăuanu pleaded, had to support Astra's economic organization of the countryside. National unification. Tăslăuanu reasoned, was the only way Romanians could continue the difficult fight for existence, and only those who came together under Astra would have a successful fate.

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56 An 1898 law established the centralized Hangya consumption cooperative that oversaw the buying and selling of cooperative goods, insurance on crops, and coordination between cooperatives. The organization enjoyed widespread support from prominent Hungarians and, in 1907, received credit from the Bank of Austro-Hungary. Hangya also organized cooperatives for the Greek-Catholic clergy. The institution began work among the Slovaks in the empire. By 1910 it coordinated the activities of 995 full-scale cooperatives and 225 subsidiary branches with over one hundred fifty thousand members. Tăslăuanu corrected noted that Romanians did join some of these cooperatives, but the impending danger he reported resulted from his own narrow outlook. Hangya oversaw only twenty-nine cooperatives for Romanians and clergymen. Dragoș, Cooperația in Ardeal, 15, 89, 160-62, 172-74. Osvadă, "Mișcarea cooperativă," 11-12.

Vasile Osvadă, the economist who prepared a report and recommendations on cooperative credit unions for Astra's central committee, agreed with Tăslăuănul and Cosciuc on the national cause of cooperative enterprises. Osvadă reported that the motive and form of cooperative organizations varied from people to people, providing for their needs and aspirations in their fight for life. He explained that cooperative enterprises served as sources of production that helped level out the competitive playing field among the great capitalist and intellectual powers. For the smaller powers striving for an independent life, cooperative enterprises offered them a means to assert their own individuality, which he believed would assure their autonomous existence. All of the Romanians of Transylvania, Osvadă continued, needed cooperatives in order to protect their vital interests. Accordingly the cooperatives would provide the foundation for the economic organization of the villages, but all Romanians, Osvadă argued, should support them, not just villagers, because all Romanians had the same interests.\(^{58}\)

Osvadă's assertion that all Romanians shared the same interests illustrates that nationalists often imagine a national community as a homogeneous entity. When Romanians tried to characterize the nation and outline its interests, many propagated a view of their community as an essential, unitary and unchanging collectivity. Their descriptions of the national collective and its interests communicated knowledge of their community that served to legitimate a particular social order.\(^{59}\) In Osvadă's case, knowledge of the Romanian community's rural interests in agricultural cooperatives endorsed the populist view that independent Romanian smallholders constituted the authentic and solid base for the nation and its future.

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A homogeneous image of the national community and its interests never receives the homogeneous agreement of the members of the community, for disagreements result over the social orders and interests the images project. Thus a nationalist like Osvadă who envisioned an autonomous Romanian national community of smallholders and who strove to advance "the national interests" of the villagers confronted Romanian groups and individuals with competing visions of the nation and its interests. This forced Osvadă to justify a framework for his cooperative enterprise that would offer the best protection for the interests of the national community that he championed.

In his report to the central committee, Astra's leading economist rejected arguments that the churches, the state, individual banks, or an association of banks should direct the Romanian cooperative credit movement. He also rejected a decentralized framework of cooperatives based on geographic location. The cooperative movement needed organization, but if the goal of credit cooperatives was to achieve a real improvement in the fate of the peasantry, in which resided the force of the Romanian people, Osvadă argued, then the cooperatives must operate in the freest conditions possible. The economist understandably worried that the churches, the state, and banks would find it impossible to separate their own interests from those of the cooperatives. Astra, however, had no narrow, local or confessional interest preventing it from overseeing the Romanian cooperative movement in Transylvania, and Osvadă declared that only the association could properly oversee the organization of credit cooperatives in the countryside.  

He could not, however, negate the interests of the banks and churches or escape Astra's dependence on Romanian clerics and bankers for manpower and knowledge. At
the end of his report, Osvadă recommended that the association use Stroescu's donation to establish a central office in Sibiu under the authority of the economic section. The office would coordinate the cooperative movement's propaganda, continued studies, distribution of printed information, relations with Romanian banks (upon whom rural credit cooperatives depended for loans and donations), and educational activities. A commission with a ten-thousand-crown annual budget made up of three or four cooperative specialists, two bankers, two members of Astra, and two representatives of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic consistories would run the office relatively independently, having to report upon occasion to Astra's economic section. The enormous tasks this office assumed required a lot of manpower, and Osvadă recommended that Astra urge the churches to offer courses on cooperative organizations at their seminaries so that rural priests and teachers could aid the association's cooperative movement. He also advised the association to set up uniform credit cooperative based on a combination of Schulze-Delitzsch and Raiffeisen models. He estimated that Astra needed the support of two to four major Romanian banks willing to make affordable loans to rural credit cooperatives. 61

The central committee established a commission to study Osvadă report, which met on 27 April 1912. The commission accepted most of Osvadă's main points, but, considering the interests of the bankers on the commission, it stipulated that cooperatives should help Romanian banks complete the economic organization of the nation and that cooperatives should not be forced on people. Astra would only set up cooperative

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61 Ibid., 31-37.
institutions in locations where the people requested them.\textsuperscript{62} This did not satisfy the critics of the credit cooperative movement who presented strong objections in writing to the central committee. Representatives of Romanian banks argued that the peasantry was not ready to support credit cooperatives responsibly. That credit cooperatives should only be set up in areas where the peasantry had been educated sufficiently, and that Astra should leave the movement in the hands of bankers. One critic even asserted that founding financial institutions exceeded the limits of Astra's statutes. In reply, a former bank director suggested that the association make information readily available, but only offer more concrete help after the local community got government permission to set up a rural credit cooperative.\textsuperscript{63}

When the central committee met the following month, it had to walk a fine line between the proponents and critics of credit cooperatives. It scaled back significantly the recommendations Osvadă had made. There were no provisions for a central office to coordinate cooperative activity. Instead Astra would hire a young lecturer, who, along with Astra's agronomist, would provide rural communities necessary information to establish credit cooperatives. The oversight and funding for these institutions the central committee decided to leave in the control of the bankers. The central committee even decided to ask the Paris-based donor Stroescu if the association could use his money for purposes other than founding credit cooperatives.\textsuperscript{64} Stroescu balked and threatened to withdraw his money. The letter Astra secretary Octavian Tăslăuanu composed to calm the generous benefactor illustrates the difficulties Romanian populists like Tăslăuanu faced trying to get Astra's cooperative movement off the ground.

\textsuperscript{62} Transilvania, 1912, Partea oficială, 281-82.
\textsuperscript{63} Ibid., 1912, 281-84.
Responding to Stroescu's criticism that commercial banks exploited the peasantry, Tâslăuanu argued that it was true that Romanian intellectuals almost exclusively owned and benefited from Romanian commercial banks, but it was not true that all for-profit lending institutions exploited the peasantry. In some areas, Tâslăuanu protested, the needs of the peasantry were well served by commercial banks. He explained that if Astra tried to set up credit cooperatives (also known as popular banks) in those areas where commercial banking worked well, it could provoke an intense conflict that would endanger the entire cooperative movement. Moreover since Astra was designed to serve both intellectuals and peasants the association had an obligation to promote harmony among all Romanian nationals. This required that rural credit cooperatives work in conjunction with commercial banks. And, because commercial banks had already successfully defended Romanian interests against foreign capitalists, had already organized a solid foundation for the national economy, and were the only source of credit for Romanian cooperatives, the association had to take the concerns of bankers and the professional stockholders' concerns into consideration. Capitalism has its downfalls.

Tâslăuanu admitted, but in the hands of Romanian financial circles he thought commercial banking was one of the most important forces of the Romanian people. We believe, Tâslăuanu asserted, that the organization of rural banks has to be closely tied to the capitalist organization of commercial banks. It had to be this way, he argued, because Romanians in Hungary do not share the backing of the state that Romanians in Romania do. In Hungary Romanians have to stand on their own feet. When credit cooperatives are strong enough, they can liberate themselves from commercial banking institutions. It is a natural evolution, Tâslăuanu continued, that must be followed.

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64 Ibid., 1912, 286-87.
In his letter Tăslăuanu also presented Astra's reasons for its request to use the funds donated for other agricultural cooperatives. Romanians' lack many tools and materials that they have to buy either from Jewish merchants in the villages or from foreigners in the towns. Tăslăuanu stated. Agricultural cooperatives that coordinated the buying, storing, transporting, and selling of goods would not only provide needed materials and services at reduced cost, they would also reduce Romanians' dependence on foreign others. It was inconceivable to Tăslăuanu that trade with non-Romanians could benefit Romanians in any way. They had to do it on their own and for themselves if they wanted to determine their own fate. Astra planned to establish credit cooperatives first and then found other cooperative enterprises with affordable credit from the rural banks. For these reasons, Tăslăuanu clarified, Astra decided to set up first credit cooperatives where the terrain was prepared for them (i.e. where commercial banks were not involved) and then other cooperative organizations around existing popular banks. Astra didn't lack direction or interest, he contended. The association had a clear plan designed to aid the entire Romanian community.\textsuperscript{65}

The association did, however, make a significant change of plans in light of Stroescu's concerns. In a letter to the central committee Stroescu had demanded that Astra employ two young specialists who would travel throughout the countryside and set up rural cooperative banks. In its 11 May meeting the central committee had decided to hire a cooperative specialist to hold popular lectures on the importance and kinds of cooperative organizations, urging the peasantry throughout Transylvania to set them up and providing the necessary materials (statutes and forms) to do so. At the 22 June

\textsuperscript{65} For the text of Stroescu’s letter to the central committee and Tăslăuanu’s 6 July 1912 response approved by the central committee. see ANS, 1083-1912.
meeting, the central committee made a significant change in its language. The specialist would not only provide information and encouragement but also establish village banks in areas with "friendly terrain." Stroescu approved. The association, thus, both recognized the antagonism between commercial and popular banks and, with Stroescu's insistence, did not completely back away from the problem. At the 1912 general assembly, Astra members agreed to the central committee's plans.

In a circular sent to all Astra regional chapters in early 1913 to inform them about the newly hired specialist and the importance of his work, the central committee used the ideals of highly evolved European culture and educated European others to provide a sense of competition that might motivate and oblige members to support Astra's efforts to organize a Romanian national economy. The circular stated that European nations had advanced because their members had better access to institutions through which they could educate and organize themselves. If they had a proper institutional base, they could successfully compete with European others. The central committee explained to regional chapter members that "the history of other people who today are powerful and more advanced than us gives us sufficient evidence that the existence and forward advancement of a people is strictly tied to its economic and moral power. The better economic organization a people has, the easier it is (for that people) to sustain the difficult, competitive struggle with other peoples." According to the circular, "the most advanced peoples from other countries owe their present power in large part to cooperative organizations. The educated leaders of these countries and the people, recognizing that economic organization through cooperatives is the basis for the

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66 Transylvania, Partea oficială, 1912, 285-89.
67 The cooperative specialist received 2400 crowns a year plus paid expenses. ANS, 1614-1912.
assurance of a better future, supported such organization with all available means. The hard times and harsh circumstances in which our people live,” the communiqué continued, “force us to recognize our duty to support in the quickest manner possible the economic organization of the peasantry through the establishment of popular banks and village cooperatives. For this reason.” the circular explained, “our association continues to use all possible efforts to urge all Astra regional chapters to support the cooperative movement.”68 The central committee also made known that the lecturer Astra had hired to establish cooperatives and rural banks could not be successful without the full support of all Romanians, especially the leaders of the regional chapter, and it urged the directors to contact the lecturer with their needs and interests.69

Transylvania as Europe: Cooperatives Across the Continent

Astra’s cooperative movement paralleled efforts across Europe to organize rural communities in mutual-aid societies. Early success came first in Germany where William Frederick Raiffeisen established a cooperative bakery, supply organization, and bank in the 1840s. Raiffeisen’s credit cooperatives took a while to get off the ground, but by the 1880s they had taken root in the German Empire and began to spread throughout Europe. Cooperative credit institutions benefited greatly from government sponsored legislation

68 “Istoria altor neamuri. azi puternice și mai înaintate decât noi. ne da dovada în ceajuns, că existența și înaintarea unui popor este strâns legată de puterea lui economică și morală. Cu cât un popor este mai bine organizat economic și, cu atât mai ușor poate ține piept în luptă grea de concurență cu celelalte neamuri. Cele mai înaintate popore din alte țări au să mulțumească azi puterea lor în mare parte organizației cooperative. Cârmitorii acestor țări și popoare recunoscând că organizația economică prin cooperative este baza pentru asigurarea unui viitor mai bun, au sprijinit-o cu toate mijloacele disponibile.

Vremurile grele și împrejurările vitregi în cari trăiește poporul nostru. ne împun datorința, că să sprijinim înfăptuirea căt mai în graba a organizației economice a țăranimii prin înfiintarea de banci poporale și alte cooperative satești.

Iată, de ce Asociațiunea noastră iși tine de datorință a îndemna cu toata staruința pe toate despărțăminteale sale să sprijinească mișcarea cooperativă.”


69 Ibid.
in favor of rural banks in Italy in 1884, in Austria in 1886, in France in 1894 and then 1899, and for Hungarians in Hungary in 1898. By 1913 the German Empire boasted almost seventeen thousand credit cooperatives serving one-and-a-half-million members. Austria had more than eight thousand credit cooperatives, and Italy had more than two thousand. In all of these cases a central organization coordinated the activities of the local banks. Europeans did not limit their cooperative enterprises to rural banks. In France the number of cooperative associations exploded after the 1884 repeal of a law requiring organizations with more than twenty members to get governmental approval. Most of these organizations served local communities, and some were integrated into larger district unions. They reportedly promoted more efficient agricultural techniques, created greater buying power for the members who purchased fertilizer or seed in common, helped members sell their produce, and guarded against fraud. In 1913 just under one million rural producers joined such societies, the most prominent of which manufactured dairy products and wine.

The Italian cooperative movement which reportedly settled migrant agricultural workers on tenant farms proved most interesting to leaders of countries with large

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70 The 1898 Hungarian law, which established a central credit bank that issued to local cooperative tax-free debentures (unsecured bonds backed by the credit standing of the issuer), required that local cooperative bank branches could only be founded by local government administrative authorities; by public corporations such as agricultural associations, chambers of commerce and industry, and industrial corporations; or by the Hungarian Central Cooperative Credit Society, an institution under government subsidy and subject to government oversight. These stipulations almost guaranteed that Hungarians would control the local cooperatives, and few non-Hungarians took advantage of the legislation. James B. Mormon, _The Principles of Rural Credit as Applied in Europe and as Suggested for America_, with an introduction by John Lee Coulter (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1915), 37-42. This book presents in a popular form the findings of the U.S. Commission on Rural Credits. The Commission's work is bound in a nine-hundred page volume, Senate Document No. 214, Sixty-third Congress, First Session.

71 Ibid.


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populations of landless agricultural laborers. A report published in 1915 explains that Italian cooperative societies, which introduced scientific methods, cooperation, and cooperative credit in Italian agriculture, "practically put an end to destitution among farm workers." Wages increased from nineteen cents a day in the early 1900s to a range of sixty cents to one dollar fifty cents a day in 1913. Cooperative banks made low interest loans (at 4.5 percent) available to cooperative societies that bought seed, fertilizers, machinery and cattle for members and later sold products to consumers without fees incurred from "middlemen." The transactions of these various Italian enterprises totally annually to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The Romanians in Transylvania were not the only ones studying successful European cooperatives for the purposes of stimulating economic development and creating a stable social base for the nation's future at the beginning of the century. The governments of Hungary, Russia, and Romania sent commissions to Italy in order to study the cooperative enterprises that the Italians adapted to the needs of landless laborers. Americans in the early-twentieth-century United States also tried to glean information from successful European cooperative organizations. Although the American situation differed dramatically from that of the Romanians in Hungary, the Americans were as concerned as Romanians leaders about the fate of tenant farmers who tilled the soil but did not own the land. Without credit institutions these farmers, American authors explained, fell pray to usurers and to storekeepers who supplied credit for seed, household goods, food, tools, etc. until they established control over the farmer's business. Wanting to protect the interests of smallholders upon which the U.S.
government hoped to build a strong nation, the government authorized a commission in 1913 to study European cooperative societies.73

Most Romanians in Hungary, distrustful of the Hungarian government and determined to run their own financial institutions so as to guarantee their independence from foreigners, did not benefit substantially from government sponsored studies, legislation, or programs. The Hungarian government established a Ministry of Agriculture only in 1889, but with enough power over agricultural production in Hungary that one American observer stated that "the whole agricultural policy of Hungary is state conceived and state endowed."74 Herein lay the fundamental problem, for Romanians in Transylvania viewed most governmental activity with suspicion, supposing that most state initiatives were attempts to Magyarize the Romanian community and dispossess them of the heritage that they believed defined their very being. State-sponsored agricultural education in Hungarian state schools benefited few Romanians because the language of instruction was Hungarian. Romanians religious and lay leaders alike feared that attendance at state schools with instruction in Hungarian would lead to the loss of the Romanian language, and they urged Romanians to send their children to confessional schools run by the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches. Doubts about the motivations of government activity also hindered Romanian participation in the centralized Hungarian consumption cooperative "Hangya" established in 1898. Hangya oversaw the buying and selling of cooperative goods, insurance on crops, and coordination between cooperatives. The organization enjoyed widespread support from prominent Hungarians and, in 1907, received credit from the Bank of Austro-Hungary. Hangya also organized cooperatives

73 Mormon, 68.
74 Metcalf and Black, "Rural Credit, Cooperation and Agricultural Organization in Europe," 134.

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for the Greek-Catholic clergy. The institution began work among the Slovaks in the empire. By 1910 it coordinated the activities of 995 full-scale cooperatives and 225 subsidiary branches with over one hundred fifty thousand members. Romanians did join twenty-nine Hungarian consumption cooperatives, but the rest of the Hangya branches served predominantly Hungarian and Slovak communities. Romanian who fixated on the autonomy of their national community were determined to further their independence from Hungarians with their own cooperative organizations.

Cooperatives in Astra: a Short-lived Campaign

Astra’s economists, like most European proponents of national credit cooperatives, decided to adapt the successful European credit cooperatives to their own national situation. Astrists focused on the Raiffeisen and Schulze-Delitzsch banking systems and decided to combine the two in order to meet the specific needs of Romanian peasants. Not only did the Romanian cooperative offer rural banking facilities, but it also handled the purchase and sale of seed, cereals, fruit, saplings, livestock, fodder, fertilizers, household items, and insurance. Instead of limiting the organization to one commune as the Raiffeisen system did, the Romanian cooperative could extend its activity to several communes. Members could have unlimited liability as in the Raiffeisen system or they could have limited liability up to ten times the capital they invested. Profits from the Romanian system did not go entirely into a common reserve fund. Twenty percent of profits were directed to the common fund. At least five percent helped meet the institution’s goals. The general assembly had the discretion to use the remaining money. Like the Schulze-Delitzsch system, Romanians cooperatives that Astra advocated

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paid dividends. But unlike the Schulze-Delitzsch banks, Romanian cooperatives serving impoverished peasants needed outside loans.\textsuperscript{76}

The first cooperative lecturer Astra hired, George Stoica, had a slow start, and consequently the central committee did not renew his contract the following year.\textsuperscript{77} The second specialist Astra hired, Nicolau Iancu, had better success, but he too faced numerous challenges, the largest of which was a struggle against profit-making enterprises. Iancu and many populists and Romanian nationalists like him assumed that national sentiment took precedence over private interests. When stable Romanian banks did not make favorable loans available to the rural credit agencies as Iancu expected, he reported his disappointment to the central committee. In his published report he tried to explain that the future of the Romanian credit institutions depended on the cooperation between rural communities and Romanian professionals, and he urged Romanian bankers to pursue altruistic capitalism in favor of the people.\textsuperscript{78} He failed to realize that national appeals might not inspire Romanian bankers. Many Romanian banks gave generously to Romanians institutions (churches, schools, Astra, and other cultural organizations), but good will alone did not motivate their directors. Profit did.

Iancu recognized that the pursuit of profit and self interest of capitalist economies conflicted with the goals of Astra’s cooperative movement, but he, like most Romanian leaders, was reluctant to take on the existing social and economic and political orders. The success of Astra’s cooperative campaign depended on these orders. Not only did

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 78-79.
\textsuperscript{77} Transilvania, 1913, 289-93. He drew up statutes and other documents necessary for official business, established five popular banks, and gave several lectures. Like Cosciuc, he too complained that the indifference of village intellectuals hindered the progress of his work.
\textsuperscript{78} “Raportul conferențiarului cooperativ despre activitatea sa, desfășurată în luniile Noembrie și Decembrie 1913, și în prima jumătate a anului 1914,” Transilvania, 1914, 301-05.
Astra's coops need capital from commercial banks, but the association also needed the consent of Hungarian authorities to continue its activities. Public expression that could be deemed to exceed Astra's cultural and educational missions could be considered grounds for the government to suppress the association. In order to overcome the tension between individual and collective advancement under capitalist economies, Astra leaders tried to link individual profit-making to the needs of the national collective. If individuals would ban together for the profit of every Romanian national, then the entire group would benefit. When the linkage failed, many Astra leaders sought ways to incorporate the needs of the collective into the capitalist mainstream. Cooperatives became a means to bolster altruistic, agrarian capitalism among Romanians at the rural level, and thus guard the importance of the village smallholder in the larger capitalistic development of the national community.

Even if Astra populists like Iancu had wanted to oppose capitalism publicly, they recognized their weakened position. In his report to the central committee in 1914, Iancu explained that it was not the right time to engage in a battle against capitalism or argue with the heads of Astra regional chapters who had largely ignored him. He took his message directly to the rural leaders. And for now bypassing opponents proved successful. According to his report, Iancu had direct contact with over two hundred villager leaders in several different counties. The enthusiastic response of village leaders to his offers to help establish rural banks allowed him to found twenty-four village credit cooperatives between November 1913 and June 1914.\textsuperscript{79} He also noted that he was in the

\textsuperscript{79} *Transilvania*, 1914, 307. But not all rural clerics and teachers responded positively. Because Romanian banks did not have a large pool of educated people to employ, many hired priests and teachers whose own personal interests thus conflicted with the goals of the cooperativist movement in Astra and they failed to support the specialist Astra employed. See George Stoica's report in *Transilvania*, 1913, 291-92.
process of organizing seven more popular credit unions and that he anticipated that villagers from eleven other communes would establish popular banks in the immediate future.\textsuperscript{80}

In addition to credit cooperatives, Astra leaders established other kinds of mutual aid organizations. In the Bistriţa despărţământ, for example, peasants in Sereşel attended a lecture in 1908 by teacher V. Onigaş on how peasant families could save money.\textsuperscript{81} After the lecture, members in the audience decided to pool their cash and they purchased seventy-seven iugare (about forty-four hectares or one hundred ten acres) of wooded land for their collective use. That same year in the commune of Cusăiş in the Beiuş despărţământ, villagers organized their own agricultural cooperative (tovărăşire de consum) and a church choir following professor and despărţământ director Nicolau Fabian’s lecture on the importance of associations and the means to establish them.\textsuperscript{82} The villagers who joined the church choir did not sacrifice material resources, but, for the purposes of understanding Romanian nation building in Hungary, it is important to recognize that they perceived enough of a need to associate with other Romanians that they established an organization to meet regularly. The central committee did not calculate how many associations Astra lecturers helped establish over the years. but despărţământ reports for 1908 through 1910 indicate that villagers organized other societies as a result of Astra lectures.\textsuperscript{83}

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\textsuperscript{80} The largest had one hundred thirty-five members and the smallest had 21 members. On average participants in the credit cooperatives contributed between twenty and thirty crowns each. Villagers amassed the largest capital (4950 crowns) in the commune of Dragomireşti, Maramureş. Transilvania, 1914, 306-07.

\textsuperscript{81} The lecture was entitled “Cum să agonisească o familie începătoare de țăran.” Transilvania, 1909, 271.

\textsuperscript{82} His lecture was entitled “Folosul și calea înființării reuniunilor.” Transilvania, 1909, 215, 259, 271.

\textsuperscript{83} See the regional chapter reports for 1908 and lists of the popular lectures in Transilvania, 1909, 257-59, 262, 266, 271, 274. See the 1909 reports for regional chapters in Lăpuşul-unguresc. Murăş-Luduş, Năsăud,
Cooperatives attracted Romanian interest in Transylvania for several reasons. In the first place cooperatives theoretically provided a means to combat pressing social and economic problems using a pedagogical approach. Astra leaders hoped that their lectures would inspire Romanians to form cooperative organizations, which in turn would encourage enough economic growth to alleviate widespread poverty. They also hoped that the expected economic growth would discourage further Romanian emigration to the United States, which had increased significantly in the early nineteenth century. Astra leaders were also mindful of the growing influence of socialist movements in Hungary and around Europe. Certain strands of European socialism informed Astra's cooperative movement, but Romanian leaders in Astra never advocated openly a socialist position. Socialism contradicted their respect for private property and organized religion.

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84 In fact, however, Romanian cooperatives generally suffered from insufficient funds and resources. The capital Romanians pooled together in rural credit unions, for example ranged from five hundred to five thousand crowns. Transilvania, 1914, 306. Rising emigration rates were a chief concern for many prominent Romanians. Between 1899 and 1914 over a quarter of a million people emigrated from Transylvania. Most of these people went to the U.S. Ioan Bolovan, Satul Românesc din Transilvania de la revoluția pasoptistă la primul război mondial. Aspecte demografice (Cluj-Napoca: Universitatea "Babeș-Bolyai," 1998), 64-65. Astra leaders expressed concerns over rising emigration rates and the dangers of socialism in their published reports. See for example Transilvania, 1904, 57, 206.

85 The working-class movements in Hungary got a slow and fitful start. Members established a Social Democratic Party of Hungary only in 1890 and it remained a weak force among Romanians for many reasons. In the first place Hungarians dominated the policy and organization of the Social Democratic Party. Hungarian socialists worked to establish a Romanian section of the party from 1903 until 1905. But they gave the leaders of the Romanian section neither latitude to manage their own affairs nor funding adequate for a vigorous socialist movement among Romanians (who needed, for example. Romanian-language papers because many Romanians did not read Hungarian). Leaders of the social democrats did not give enough assistance to the minority nationalities because they suspected that non-Magyar party members with national aspirations would fragment the unity of the larger movement. Romanians and other non-Magyars doubted the sincerity of Hungarian leaders and accused the Hungarian socialists of national chauvinism. Just before the Great War broke out, the nationality question dominated the discussions of the Social Democratic Party of Hungary. Socialists in Transylvania also faced harassment from governmental officials and censors, as well as competition for members from other national organizations like Astra. The most concise English-language discussion of Romanian socialism in Hungary can be found in Keith Hitchins, A Nation Affirmed, 263-95.

86 Many Astra leaders were well aware of contemporary European cooperative and socialist movements and their leaders, including Robert Owen, I.P. Buchez, Franz Hermann Schulze-Delitzsch, Ferdinand Lassalle,
Socialism also conflicted with their national model of development, which relied on harmony between all Romanians. Cooperative enterprises on the other hand were thought to promote the necessary harmony the national community needed to prosper. Because cooperatives relied on individual Romanian contributions for the benefit of all Romanians contributors, Astra leaders expected them to resolve the prevalent conflict between the individual and the group and between the urban and rural communities. They expected the material incentives cooperatives offered to create commonalities and bonds among members, forcing villagers to trust each other and creating a spirit of solidarity in rural communities.

Cooperatives also upheld the existing Romanian social order in rural communities. They provided space for elite leadership without demanding great sacrifices from those at the top. They were moreover supposed to create greater prosperity, happiness, and national unity for villagers, without drastically changing the social organization of rural communities. Raiffeisen and Astra's credit institutions, for example, preserved the traditional pattern of Romanian small-holders. Populists like Iancu and Astra’s agronomist Cosciuc did not seek to transform the peasantry into large landowners. They professed a sincere faith in the inherent goodness of the villagers, and they wanted to help rural Romanians become and remain self-sufficient producers.

Furthermore cooperative enterprises where thought to have a beneficial moral effect. As members became more interdependent and realized that collective success


87 Indeed Eidelberg argues that because Raiffeisen banks were more egalitarian than their Schulze-Delitzsch counterparts they were also less dynamic and thus suited to preserve the status quo. Great Rumanian Peasant Revolt, 86.

88 Ibid., 84-92.
ensured profits for each individual, Romanian leaders reasoned, they would voluntarily adopt a spirit of personal sacrifice and self-discipline. Villagers proved their devotion to the national cause with an initial sacrifice of time and money to join the cooperatives. Rural leaders affirmed their national duty by accepting responsibilities in the credit unions without payment. They received neither salaries nor commissions for their work.

According to Iancu, villagers also demonstrated their commitment to the unity of the Romanian nation by attending Astra lectures in nearby communes and taking the information they learned back to their own communities. 89 Personal sacrifice for the benefit of the larger community marked these men as genuine Romanian nationals in Iancu’s eyes.

Cooperatives also helped solve the problems Romanians faced trying to build a nation without building an independent nation-state. Although many prominent and politically active Romanians began to look to Bucharest for leadership by the end of the nineteenth century, they understood that their inclusion in the Austro-Hungarian empire restricted their activities and ambition to forging an autonomous Romanian nation in Hungary. Independent statehood for Romanians in Hungary did not become a viable option until the conclusion of the Great War. 90 Before the war, without the resources, authority, and power of a state, Astra had to get Romanians to accept its leadership voluntarily. Romanian nationals had to agree to surrender at least partial control over their own resources, time, and energy to build the nation. When villagers joined

89 Transilvania, 1914, 303-04, 308.
90 Richard Crampton argues that “The first world war made possible the emergence of national states which had previously been considered impracticable, even by nationalist leaders. The demand for such states, however, was not the cause but the consequence of the war.” Eastern Europe in the Twentieth Century—and After (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 7.
cooperatives they demonstrated that they were willing to organize themselves within the national framework espoused by Romanian elites.\textsuperscript{91}

It is unlikely, however, that Romanian villagers joined cooperatives merely out of a sense of national duty. They wanted to gain something from these organizations. Nevertheless, they joined as Romanians, not as citizens of Hungary or Habsburg subjects, and they learned that their actions contributed to the autonomy of the Romanian nation. Iancu, like many of his colleagues in Astra, didn’t just extol the economic benefits of these institutions at Astra events. He also repeated Astra’s mantra on the importance of national unity and economic autonomy and explained that the popular banks were designed to advance both. Notwithstanding the modest and even meager accomplishments these institutions realized, the fact that over nine hundred rural Romanians joined cooperative banking societies on the advice of an Astra representative during a period of seven months indicates that Astra convinced many rural Romanians of the importance of national organization for collective prosperity.\textsuperscript{92} Very few Romanians joined state-sponsored Hungarian cooperatives. Rural Romanians could not ignore that the coops they joined were designed by Romanians and for Romanians with the slogan one for all and all for one. Their participation in Romanian organizations reflects a trust that national economic organization was a viable path to collective and individual advancement.

The cooperative movement in Astra floundered almost as soon as it got started. The outbreak of war did not help the situation, but it was not the immediate cause of

\textsuperscript{91} For more information on a view of the voluntary nature of Romanian national organization, see Nicolae Bocșan, \textit{Idee de națiune la românii din Transilvania și Banat} (Cluj-Napoca, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 1997).

\textsuperscript{92} \textit{Transilvania}, 1914, 306.
Astra's cooperative demise. In addition to the intellectuals' disinterest that plagued Iancu, opposition from commercial bankers in the central committee and in Astra's economic section, which oversaw cooperative activity, hindered Astra's cooperative success. Central committee member and head of the economic section Parteniu Cosma and economic section member Nicolae Petru-Petrescu were two of the staunchest opponents of cooperative credit unions. They contended that cooperative credit unions should organize under the aegis of commercial banks. Proponents of the cooperative movements argued for the establishment of a central organization in Astra to coordinate cooperative activity, but the bankers resisted these arguments. Cooperative leaders could not ignore the concerns of these vocal and powerful Romanian bankers. They also could not overlook the fact that the largest and most powerful Romanian banks, including Albina in Sibiu, Ardeleana in Orăștie, Someșana in Dej, Economul in Cluj, Furnica in Făgăraș, and Timișana in Timișoara among others, were founding and lifetime Astra members. In 1912 nine more commercial banks became founding and lifetime members, injecting much needed cash into the association's general fund. The prospect of increasing future bank memberships gave the concerns of Romanian bankers additional weight.

The opposition in Astra to the creation of a central organization that would finance and regulate cooperative activity forced leaders of local cooperatives to take up the task themselves. In April 1914 the association of Raiffeisen credit cooperatives initially set up by the Romanian agricultural society of Sibiu established such a center.

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93 Dobrescu, Elita românească, 133. Other bankers in the economic section included Ioan Lapedatu, Constantin Pop(p), and Constantine Herța. Transilvania, 1913, 212-14.
94 In total forty-seven banking institutions had founding and lifetime memberships. Transilvania, 1913, 196-97.
called "Înfrățirea" or brotherly union, with the goals of directing, supervising, and unifying the cooperative movement. The organization that had first turned to Astra for cooperative leadership, thus, reclaimed direction over the movement to the exclusion of the association. Their work was of course truncated by the outbreak of the war.

The disagreements over Astra's plans for economic development as illustrated by Astra's short-lived cooperative campaign should neither overshadow the limited success cooperative proponents had in the face of overwhelming odds against success nor obscure the prominent place the national strategy of economic organization retained among Romanian leaders. Those Romanians who organized cooperatives, who joined cooperatives, and who opposed cooperatives all subscribed to the model of national economic organization. Whether Romanians advocated economic development via non-profit organizations, mutual-aid societies limiting profitable returns, or joint-stock banking ventures, they designed all of these institutions to serve Romanian interests and Romanian people. If a Romanian institution had to rely on a non-Romanian lending institution for credit, as some Astra credit cooperatives did in 1913 and 1914, it was only because they could not get the same favorable lending terms from the Romanian institutions that they had first petitioned. In these cases, Romanians were forced to transgress the national model of economic organization. But even in the face of the limitations to this model (when Romanians did not pursue altruistic capitalism) proponents of national economic organization did not lose their confidence in a Romanian national economy. Reliance on non-Romanian banks was a temporary fix. As soon as village banks became strong enough, Iancu explained, they would no longer need

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95 See Iancu's 1914 report to the central committee in Transilvania, 1914, 301-05, in which he gives examples of Romanian cooperatives turning to "foreign" institutions after Romanian banks shut them out.
the capital from larger banks and would stand on their own feet. In 1914 Iancu continued to explore avenues of development that depended on the goodwill of Romanian co-nationals, planning to work harder to convince others to support Romanian economic societies.\footnote{Ibid., 305-07.}

The faith Astra leaders retained in national economic organization and their disagreements over the means to organize the nation often distracted Romanian leaders from finding alternative (non-national) strategies for economic development. To their credit, problems of economic development were terribly complex, troubling not just Astra leaders but also the heads of well-funded government commissions in the United States and across Europe. Astra leaders’ inability to settle on a comprehensive plan for the development of credit institutions does not mean that they were unable to agree on other solutions to economic underdevelopment that corresponded to their national strategy. The divisive lack of credit troubled Astra members trying to put forth a coherent economic policy for the association. But other issues like the importance of education united the association’s members. Romanian leaders firmly believed that economic prosperity required a minimum level of literacy in order for rural producers to benefit from new agricultural methods and technologies. They may have run into a wall when it came to solving the credit issue, but ignorance they believed they could conquer.
Chapter Five
The NationPreached and Read: National Unity through Education

Romanian leaders in Astra who set out to build an autonomous national community at the turn of the century confronted apparent paradoxes. They assumed that the Romanian nation existed in latent form in Transylvania, but they had to build it. They could identify the members of the community, but they had to raise the national consciousness of the members themselves. They proclaimed the potential strength of a unified Romanian national community, but the obvious social and economic gults between the leaders of the association and the peasant masses obstructed the potential. These problems did not deter Astra's leadership. In fact, they provided justification for the leaders' demands that Romanian villagers turn from their backward ways. Presuming the existence of an organically unified nation capable of social, economic, and political progress, but which had remained unconscious of its unity and expected progress. Astra's educated elites called on all Romanians to follow the course they deemed necessary for the nation to realize its collective potential.

Many Romanian elites considered the lack of education the principle cause for the failures of the Romanian nation in Transylvania. Villagers, Romanian leaders believed, needed better education not only to overcome economic backwardness, but also to free them from superstitions and open their minds to future possibilities. Education, they concluded, would create virtuous and moral characters and help defend the individuality of the Romanian nation.¹ Before rural Romanians could take their place in a strong political movement and demand the autonomy that would give them more control over


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their own lives, they had to be responsible enough, elites believed, to use that autonomy wisely.

When Romanian leaders considered making villagers responsible members of the national community, they hoped to make them more like the advanced European others discussed in chapter four. Astra's educated elites juxtaposed the advanced westerner against the backward Romanian and aligned themselves with the advancement of western others against the average villager's ignorance, which they despised. Their personal identification with the advanced European contradicted their idea of national individuality. Romanians were supposed to share homogeneous cultural traits that constituted their individuality and differentiated them as a whole from other nations. But clearly, if Romanian elites identified more readily with non-Romanians than with the Romanian peasant masses, the Romanian nation was not the organic and homogeneous cultural whole nationalists envisioned. The villagers, elites determined, would have to change and become better educated in order to achieve the unity and the advancement of a European nation.

Demands for villagers to change and join a mass national movement among Romanians in Hungary forced Astra to abandon its exclusive focus on highbrow educational programs. At the turn of the century the association made accessible general education one of its main goals. Prominent Astra members wanted average villagers to have access to information that would help transform them into prosperous, independent farmers who would embrace methods, technologies, and lifestyles the professionals admired. Thus in addition to offering practical education, Astra intellectuals and

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2 Romanian efforts to make education accessible to the Transylvanian peasantry paralleled activities of elites in other European countries. For information on Bulgarian peasant movements, see John D. Bell.
professionals hoped to instill in villagers moral values Romanian elites appreciated, like respect for hard work, cleanliness, and sobriety. In short Astra's programs and publications promoted the unity and progress of the nation by encouraging the villagers to become more like the association's educated elites.

From 1890 to 1914, Astra's central and regional directors worked in conjunction with the heads of rural communities to develop activities that would attract Romanian peasants to the association and educate them. In many ways the association succeeded. Leaders built up an organizational infrastructure and designed programs to incorporate the lived experiences of rural Romanians into Astra's national narratives. As a result Astra attracted thousands of villagers to its rural educational activities before the outbreak of the first World War. Peasant responses indicate that the programs and activities did help the peasantry identify with Astra's conception of the Romanian nation.

Astra leaders hoped their success would close the social and economic gaps between the intellectual elite and the Romanian peasantry, but their efforts had the opposite effect. Transforming peasants to make them resemble Astra's intellectual elites proved to be a more difficult task than raising a collective national consciousness among the peasantry. Astra's more urban elites had little in common with ordinary villagers. The intellectuals and professionals did not identify with the provincial programs they helped design, and they did not participate in them readily. After Astra's elite members spent several years focusing on rural needs, they began to demand that the association pay more careful attention to their own interests. In response, Astra created additional

programs specifically for intellectual audiences. In so doing they reinforced the very differences between the elites and the villagers that Astra's rhetoric of national individuality denied. 3

Astra's Rhetoric of National Unity

The ways in which Romanian elites in Astra articulated national unity illustrates the extent to which they tried to build the Romanian nation on their own terms. Using possessive pronouns, Astra elites made proprietary claims on the Romanian nation in Hungary. Astra's spokesmen often described the peasant masses in paternalistic ways as our peasants, our people, or our plowmen. 4 "Let's give books to our talented and desirous peasant," the president of the association Iosif Sterca Șuluțiu told the members gathered at Astra's 1905 general assembly, "so that he can familiarize himself with his rights and duties, his value." Empowered with the information from books the president explained, the peasant "will no longer be exploited like a cow." 5 Șuluțiu knew his audience of educated Astra members. When he argued about the importance of putting books in the hands of our peasant, he implied that the communities of educated elites had a collective, custodial obligation toward the Romanian villager who belonged to the elites just as people often think children belong to their parents.

Press, 1983) offers information about attempts to organize and educate the working class and the peasantry in Poland and Ukraine.

3 The Romanians were not the only ones who faced this problem. It appears to trouble unempowered groups more generally when they try to empower themselves using references to group unity or sameness. See for example Joan Wallach Scott's insightful essays in Only Paradoxes to Offer. French Feminists and the Rights of Man (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).


5 "Discursul de deschidere cu ocaziunea adunării generale a Asociaționii țîinută în Sibiu la 19 si 20 August st.n. 1905" Transilvania, 1905, 157. Șuluțiu who was a legal expert, bank director, and author served as Astra president from 1904 until 1911.
Good parents try to help their children become independent, responsible adults with a healthy sense of their own self-worth. Astra's elites tried to use books to help their peasants come to age as independent, responsible Romanians capable of demanding their rights. Although children ultimately leave the modern family as adults, they can still retain a paternal unity with that family. Thus the modern family could provide a model for a national and paternal form of national pluralism. Astra's elites believed that with their help the peasantry could advance and fulfill its particular role in the national community while maintaining its distinctive (familial) characteristics that separate it from other national groups.

In the hierarchy of Romanian national pluralism, each Romanian national fulfilled an important function in the collective community. Peasants might become mature, prosperous Romanian nationals, but the nation needed them to play their traditional roles in order to preserve its distinctiveness and its stability. Şuluţiu explained in his 1905 speech that all Romanians were indebted to the peasant because all Romanians were raised with the religion of the peasant and had been sustained by his sweat. "Everything that gives us pride." Astra's president exclaimed, "comes from the peasant. He preserved our language, law, dress, folk songs, renown courage, customs and everything else that makes up our Romanian character."\(^6\) Considerations of the peasant as the guardian of Romanian national character gave Astra members who claimed custody of the peasant the ability to claim custody of the Romanian national character too. Astra's elites wanted to transform the peasant into a rational, productive farmer, but they also wanted him to keep

\(^6\) "mai ales noi Românii suntem datori, pentru că mai toți au crescut cu prescura țăranului și se susțin din sudoarea lui. Apoi tot cu ce ne putem mândri, dela el avem. Țăranul ni-a păstrat limba, iegea, portul, doina, renumele de viteaz, datinile și tot ce poartă caracter românesc." Transilvania, 1905, 157.
his Romanian national character intact. Astra leaders thus put limitations on peasant development.

According to the passage above, the Romanian national character could be defined and quantified in terms of degrees to which it remained closer to its rural origin. Populist leaders interpreted the association between the Romanian national character and its rural origin in mystical and sometimes controversial ways. Astra's populist and outspoken central committee secretary Octavian Goga argued in early 1907 that the peasantry embodied the timeless Romanian soul. "The complete story of our people." Goga wrote, "reveals a significant and powerful truth: we ... have always been a people of field and mountain, villagers who settled to work plots of land ... We didn't have cities, walls, or water towers," he explained. "And today we are the same. Only the surface of things is different. the foundation is the same ... in our souls we have the same urges, the same needs." But, Goga cautioned, a strata of scholars, the sons and nephews of peasants who are called to stand at the helm of village communities, offering educational insights and helping villagers realize greater prosperity, avoided the village and did too little for the rural homes whence they came. Educated men who separated themselves from the peasantry, Goga claimed, were building a people without soulful roots in their past and thus fumble without knowing it. Goga saw the Romanian nation divided into two camps: learned gentlemen (domni) and impoverished masses (prostine). He argued that the Romanians had to change their course and work together shoulder to shoulder. Romanians needed to realize that only a closeness to the soul of villagers could be the foundation of our strength. All literate Romanians, Goga insisted, had spiritual and blood ties to the fate of villagers. These men had to draw near to the villagers and to
village needs and advise villagers on how to overcome their troubles. Goga thus went beyond Astra president Ţuluțiu's call for educated Romanians to help rural Romanians. He implied that the educated elite who had separated themselves from the Romanian soul of the peasant needed the help of Romanian villagers to recover their national character.

Goga's romanticization of the villager (although importantly not his living conditions) and his criticisms of the elite reflect his efforts to confront a changing world. The stratification of predominantly agrarian Romanian communities that began at the end of the eighteenth century and accelerated throughout the nineteenth century prompted Goga and many other nationalists to search for origins and identity. Knowing from whom and from where one comes can lend continuity and stability to a turbulent world. Goga did not argued that Astra could reverse the economic and social stratification of the Romanian nation, but his attempt to create a synthesis of the increasingly diverse socio-economic groups rooted in the peasantry constituted an attempt to recreate a perceived unity lost in historical change. Goga did not want to abandon the national soul of the agrarian villagers or even the soul of the scholar embodied in educated Romanians. He wanted to blend the two in order to root the educational transformations of rural Romanian communities into the past and thereby guarantee the wholeness he thought necessary for a national community's future existence.

Goga's contemporaries agreed that the nation should come together in unity to eradicate the isolation of Romanian gentlemen from the peasant masses, but most of them, like Goga, refrained from spending much time in the villages. Goga's pleas for educated elites "to return from where they came" and "draw near to villagers" were

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7 Octavian Goga, "Catră Cărturani Noștri," Tara Noastră, January 1907, 3-6.
published in his article explaining the importance of the new journal he began to edit for Astra in 1907. He did not plan on spending much time in the village himself. His contribution to national unity took the form of the new journal *Tara Noastră* (Our Country) that he explained would bridge the gap between the soul of the scholar and the soul of the peasant. "The journal," Goga wrote, "must give learned advice, awaken memories of a past that must live in the soul, and call all to work in anticipation of the future."9 Perhaps Goga believed he was drawing near to villagers needs, but he did not draw nearer to them physically. Most educated Astra members also managed to avoid a physical return to village communities. Instead they advocated popular programs and activities that would attract villagers to rural Astra chapters to be run by village leaders.

The rationale behind these programs was not simply to offer enlightened instruction that would help raise national consciousness and improve the living standards of rural Romanians, but also to convince villagers of the importance of the intellectuals' goals and thereby foster unity of vision among all Romanians. As one author explained to the educated subscribers of Astra's journal *Transilvania*, "popular lectures are without doubt one of the most appropriate ways we can draw close to the people, and one of the most appropriate ways," he continued, "through which we can attract the people and always keep them in the sphere of our national, religious, moral, cultural, economic, and social interests."10 The clear distinction between the people and the elite and the candid association of Astra's programs with *our* intellectual interests illustrate that while Astra

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10 "Prelegerile poporale sunt fără îndoială una din căile cele mai potrivite, pe cari ne putem apropiia de popor, și prin cari îl putem câștiga și ţine mereu în sfera interesele noastre naționale, religioase-morale, culturale, economice și sociale." "Prelegerile economice în despărțeșmintele asociațiunii," *Transilvania*, 1901, 311. The article is "signed" by S.
members professed the existence of a homogeneous national character rooted in the
traditional peasantry, they had a more complex idea of the nation. The formation and
strength of the Romanian nation did not require social homogeneity. It involved different
people carrying out different functions. Their idea of the nation affirmed distinctions
among Romanians and similarities among Romanians, thus allowing Romanians to
distinguish themselves from other national groups and work together for the benefit of
the collective community.

In this case Astra made clear distinctions between educated Romanian elites who
functioned as the natural leaders of the national community and the peasant masses who
comprised the agricultural base of the national community. They also made clear
distinctions between Romanians and non-Romanians. Astra leaders judged the
differences between Romanians and other nationalities as more significant than other
social distinctions among Romanian nationals. In his 1905 speech Şuluţiu asked his
audience to "believe in the power of the life of the Romanian people" and not to forget
that "only the Romanian can help the Romanian."\(^{11}\) Şuluţiu was trying to persuade Astra
members to back the association's popular programs, but his pat justification for the
necessity of Romanian-elite support illustrates that many Romanian nationalists
considered social distinctions among Romanians less of a barrier to social relations with
the Romanian peasantry than commonly accepted differences between nations.
Romanians shared enough similarities, men like Şuluţiu believed, to be able to
understand and help one another in ways that non-Romanians could not. Nevertheless
Astra leaders feared that the divisions in the Romanian national community were too

\(^{11}\) "să creadă în puterea de viaţă a neamului românesc, ș i se nu uite că: Românului numai Românul îl poate
extensive, and they sought to minimize them with the popular programs the association began to promote at the end of the nineteenth century. Astra leaders hoped these programs, like the popular lectures Şuluţiu advocated, would provide conditions necessary to the homogeneity and consequential unity of the disparate groups, which could be manifested in a shared national character and in a common purpose determined by Astra elites. They thus strove to create programs that would meet not only the different needs of different Romanians but the common needs of all Romanians.

**Organization and Education**

In their efforts to establish an organizational infrastructure that could advance educational programs for the rural masses, Romanian nation builders in Hungary lacked the financial support, power of enforcement, and bureaucratic network of a state. For reasons explained in chapters two and three, few Romanians tried to gain access to the Hungarian state after 1867 or to establish an independent Romanian state separate from the monarchy (it was not a possibility and some, most notably A. Popovici, argued the benefits of remaining under the monarchial umbrella). Instead Romanian intellectuals and professionals in nineteenth-century Hungary sought greater control over their own lives in a vaguely defined form of national autonomy. But before they could begin to work for autonomous status and presumably self-rule, they had to awaken their rural co-nationals to the importance of that work and convince villagers to join their national movement. In this endeavor "enlightened," nationalist elites began from scratch. Although they used the communication and administrative networks of both the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches to the extent that they could without sacrificing their own goals, they also had to create their own infrastructure, rules, financial resources, and policies. Hence an
underlying tension resulted between their faith in the existence of an organic Romanian nation in Hungary and their efforts to "awaken it" and realize its autonomy.

Romanian intellectuals who established Astra in 1861 believed that only learned men could lead the nation and resolve its problems. They thus began their nation-building work with scholarly activities. A year after leading Romanians founded Astra, association members decided to set up three scholarly sections (secțiuni) to study philology, history, and the natural and physical sciences. Two years later at the 1864 annual assembly participants meeting in Hâțeg elected presidents of the committees and stipulated where each committee would be situated.\textsuperscript{12} Although the assembled members discussed the qualifications of section members, they never defined the purpose or agenda of the sections, which immediately stagnated. Insufficient funds hampered committee work and politics distracted many members in the 1860s. The newly elected Transylvanian Diet in Sibiu (1863-64) provided the first real opportunity for Romanians to debate and pass legislation that gave them a more equal footing in the empire.\textsuperscript{13} Orthodox leaders were also immersed in negotiations to establish the Transylvanian Metropolitanate. Academic associations outside Transylvania further diverted the attention of many Astra leaders. When the precursor to the Romanian Academy, the Romanian Literary Society, was founded in Bucharest in 1866, philology section president Timotei Cipariu and Astra central committee secretary (and future history section president and future Astra president) Gheorghe Barițiu collaborated extensively with the new Literary Society, drawing up the society statutes and in Cipariu's case even serving as vice president of the

\textsuperscript{12} The philology section, headed by Timotei Cipariu, was seated in Blaj. Gavril Munteanu led the history section located in Brașov. Orthodox Bishop Andrei Șaguna presided over the natural and physical science section in Sibiu.
new association. Cipariu, Barițiu, and Astra history section president Gavril Munteanu became founding members of the Bucharest society. Many other prominent Astra members also held various kinds of memberships (activi, correspondenți, sau onorari) in the new academic institution.\textsuperscript{14} Thus the scholarly work Astra leaders might have overseen in Transylvania was actually carried out in the southern Romanian province during the early decades of Astra’s existence. The relatively independent Romanian principality provided the necessary funds and structure the Romanians in Transylvania lacked.

The stagnation of the sections was not addressed until 1876, but plans to reorganize them with clear goals and specific budgets did not improve the situation.\textsuperscript{15} Insufficient funds, political activity and infighting, and participation in the Romanian Academy in Bucharest continually distracted Astra sectional leaders.\textsuperscript{16} The sections reported on their inactivity over the years, but the central committee did not take up the problem again until the mid 1890s when the association statutes were finally modified. The sections were specifically mentioned as an integral part of Astra activity in the new

\textsuperscript{13} See chapter three; and Simion Retegan, \textit{Dieta românească a Transilvaniei (1863-1864)} (Editura Dacia: Cluj-Napoca, 1979).


\textsuperscript{15} Five hundred florins were set aside to fund committee work in 1876, and at the 1877 assembly in Blaj Astra members approved a series of regulations for the sections and elected committee presidents and members. Association members reelected Cipariu as president of the philology section. Barițiu became the head of the history section. Dr. P. Vasici led the natural science section. Additional members included: I. Hodoș, I. Antonelli, Gr. Silași, I.M. Moldovan, Al. Hogătel, and Dr. A.P. Alessi among others. Mihai Sofronie, \textit{Aspecte ale activității Asociațiunii transilvane până la 1918} (Sibiu: Editura Caleidoscop, 1996), 70.

\textsuperscript{16} Others, notably Octavian Goga, have argued that the professional class of Romanian scholars was not yet sufficiently developed to sustain sectional activity. This is true to the extent that Romanian scholars in Transylvania did not pursue avenues of academic study independent of the newly emerging Romanian Academy. Sofronie, \textit{Aspecte}, 71.
statutes (approved by the Hungarian government in 1897). At the 1898 general assembly members discussed a new series of regulations for the sections, which were drawn up in 1899, published for the 1900 annual assembly, debated, approved, and revised in 1901.

In keeping with the centralized top-down approach Astra's professional elite used to oversee the "awakening" of the nation, the new regulations established five sections to oversee the literary, historical, scientific, educational, and economic activities of the association. Many Astra members hoped the new organization would benefit more Romanians in rural communities. Instead of aligning the activity of Astra sections with that of other academic societies, the central committee stipulated that each section pursue practical goals, advising the association how it could best fulfill its function as a cultural organization for all Romanians. In order for the center to plan activities in the countryside, Astra leaders needed to know what would benefit rural communities. Each section was directed to study and debate questions specified by the association; propose new topics of study that Astra would support; review works for rural readers, which Astra would publish; and help create or augment Astra collections, exhibits, and cultural activities.¹⁷

¹⁷ The tasks for the history section included conducting archeological explorations and ethnographic studies (especially concerning the conservation of national folk costumes and evidence of household industry), editing historic documents and studies, and correcting any misinformation published about Romanian history. The responsibilities of the literary section involved studying Romanian dialects and provincial expressions, reediting the works of important Romanian writers whose biographies needed to be written, collaborating with other Romanian artistic societies like rural choirs (coruri de plugarini) in order to record the lyrics of folk music, publishing booklets suitable for village readers, compiling an annual bibliography of Romanian literature, and making recommendations for books to be added to the Astra central library in Sibiu. The central committee entrusted the scientific section to complete geographic studies of all regions inhabited by Romanians, examine ways to improve the "hygienic" condition of the general population, and edit a dictionary of Romanian natural history. The school section was to play a largely advisory role, analyzing the state of Romanian education and suggesting ways Astra could improve it. If possible the school committee was supposed to establish special institutions that would provide instruction in areas neglected by Romanian education. The economic section also had advisory duties. It was charged with investigating the state of the Romanian national economy and proposing ways to spur its development through publications, lectures, and cooperation with other economic societies. Like the school section, the
Members of the central committee designed the new regulations with the aim of expanding Astra’s network of institutional support necessary to build the nation. Originally the central committee assumed the responsibility for coordinating all Astra activity, but when Astra diversified its agenda in the 1890s, the central committee alone could not handle the increase in Astra activities. The new statutes had substantially enlarged the goals of the association. In addition to the earlier aims of scholarly education and publications, Astra members sought to establish local libraries, popular book collections, museums, and exhibits; create public conferences and popular lectures; and organize competitions and prizes in the arts, sciences, agriculture, and crafts, as well as any other activities that could foster the literary, cultural, or economic prosperity of the Romanian community in Hungary. The central committee could not meet these goals without expanding its infrastructure. The committee executed all decisions made by the annual assembly, but it only consisted of roughly twenty members, nine of whom served as officers with specific duties. The literary secretary had the most important duties. Not only did he edit the association’s monthly journal *Transilvania* he was also solely responsible for initiating the development and prosperity of Astra’s goals. He maintained the link between the sections and the central committee, directed all literary and scientific economic section was also supposed to help establish professional schools when possible. See part three of the 1900 “Proiect de regulament pentru secțiunile științifice-literare,” Astra document number 362-1900, published in *Transilvania*, 1900, partea oficială, 104-06.

18 *Statutele Asociației pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Archidiecesane, 1897), paragraph 2.

19 The posts in the central committee included: the president, vice president, first or literary secretary, second or administrative secretary, treasurer, controller, librarian, archivist, and economic advisor. The annual assembly elected the president, vice president, and literary secretary for renewable three year terms. The central committee chose the remaining officers with the stipulation that the same person could not serve as treasurer and controller. For their specific duties see Ibid., paragraphs 21-34. All Astra members, except associate members, could vote at the annual assembly meetings. Associate members only had voting rights in regional and local chapter meetings. Ibid., paragraph 12.
activities of the association, and coordinated Astra’s ties with other associations.\textsuperscript{20}

Obviously one man could not adequately fulfill all of these broadly defined functions. With this problem in mind, in the early 1900s Astra literary secretary Cornel Diaconovich pushed for some administrative help. He intended that specialists serving on the sections would recommend, devise, and carry out specific projects.\textsuperscript{21} The sections faced serious problems, however, and they never worked as efficiently as Diaconovich expected.

General disorganization prevailed from 1900 until 1903. One of the largest problems was getting qualified people to take on the responsibilities of section membership. In 1900 each section had five active members. Although some of these men devoted themselves to the work of the section from the beginning, many resigned within the first three years.\textsuperscript{22} The enthusiasm the new statutes generated did not sufficiently motivate sectional leaders, so the central committee created incentives for sectional work. Astra recognized section members as both national leaders and area experts and granted them exemptions from dues payments. Unlike Astra’s rural leaders, section officers (presidents and secretaries, called referenți) received a salary, and members were reimbursed for some expenses incurred from sectional activity.\textsuperscript{23} The central committee also made provisions to hold the members to a minimal standard of accountability. If

\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., paragraph 28.
\textsuperscript{22} Some members did not live near the section headquarters and could not attend regular meetings. Others resigned due to age, illness, or busy schedules. In a few cases, members died and had to be replaced. Only one member was dismissed for two years of inactivity. During the first three plenary session, section members spent a disproportionate amount of time proposing and voting on new members. These proposals went to the central committee which confirmed them and passed them on to Astra’s general assembly for a vote. For reports on the plenary sessions see \textit{Transilvania}, 1901, \textit{partea oficială} 140-50; 1902, \textit{partea oficială} 150-166. Diaconovich places the blame for the failures of the sections squarely on the shoulders of the section secretaries (referenți) in his report “O dare de samă,” \textit{Transilvania}, 1903, 215.
\textsuperscript{23} Each section stipulated the amounts to be paid to their members and included the details in their annual budgets submitted to the central committee. The money to support the sections came from the general Astra fund, income from the “Gheorghe Barițiu” endowment, and from special donations specifically destined for
members of any section did not perform their duties, or if conflicts prevented the
resolution of sectional activity within a period of two years, the central committee
reserved the right to dismiss a member or disband the entire section and establish a new
one.\textsuperscript{24}

The president and referent, or section secretary, were the most important people in
the sections. If competent self-starters did not fill these posts, the section did not run
smoothly. The president scheduled and ran the meetings and divided up tasks among the
members. The referent had numerous responsibilities, including care for all meeting
minutes, agendas, section correspondence, annual reports, compilation of indices, and
books or reviews for publication. In practice the referent often took on the job of the
president (in large part because he was responsible for the agenda and could schedule and
run meetings more effectively). In the early years only the president and referent of the
literary section carried out their duties satisfactorily.\textsuperscript{25} Qualified and devoted members
were secured for all sections by late 1903, but even then the members had difficulties
accomplishing their goals.

Setting agendas proved to be a large hurdle in the beginning. Members of the
central committee, especially the secretary, wanted the sections to initiate specific and
systematic plans of action corresponding to the guidelines they established in 1900 in
order to reduce some of their workload. The sections, however, often referred back to the

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\textsuperscript{24} Astra sections. "Proiect de regulament pentru se\c{s}tiunile știin\c{t}ifice-literare," Transilvania, 1900, partea ofici\c{s}tal\u{a}, 110-12.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., 103, 112-13.

\textsuperscript{25} Sections were required to meet individually twice a year and all together at a plenary session once a year. In 1901 the literary section met four times, maintained active members, and began to address a detailed agenda. The history, science, and school sections only met once before the plenary session. Each postponed making any decisions and left the referent primarily responsible for examining all items on the agenda before the next meeting. Transilvania, 1901, partea ofici\c{s}tal\u{a}. 29-31, 39-40, 197-98. The economics section
central committee for more direction. In some cases a section tried to reject an assigned task. The literary section, for example, entrusted to compile a bibliography of contemporary and classical Romanian works, argued that the central committee secretary should continue to perform this task. In part, because the members of the committee did not want to become quasi-official censors who would pronounce a verdict on the value of different literary publications. They also complained that they did not have enough time or the materials to compose such an index. In the end, the section members agreed to review works in their own areas of expertise and provide more detailed reports on the general trends and strengths of Romanian literature.\textsuperscript{26} Despite such disagreements, the sections did eventually work out individual agendas. The literary, science, and school sections established theirs by July 1901. In the case of the economics section, however, it took four years.\textsuperscript{27}

The sections encountered many difficulties even after they established stable memberships and agendas because several of their assigned tasks were too vague or too large to be carried out quickly by a limited number of people. The gathering of statistical information, a modernizing product the Romanians lacked, was one such overarching task. The central committee wanted a better idea of the current state of Romanian affairs in order to determine what kind of programs were needed. No central Romanian institution, except the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches, looked after the specific interests of the Romanian people in Hungary or gathered information about them.\textsuperscript{28} Thus,

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\item did not meet at all during 1901. In 1902 all sections fulfilled the minimum meeting requirements, but the turnover in personnel distracted them from focusing on specific concerns.
\item Transilvania, 1901, parteia oficială, 18, 45-46, 144, 150.
\item Transilvania, 1904, 54-59.
\item Although the Hungarian state published census information and other statistical documents, the Romanians in Astra generally chose not to use these sources. The churches compiled data for their own
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the central committee asked the sections to compile certain data. The history section had
the job of composing a topographic dictionary of all the regions inhabited by Romanians
in Hungary.29 The economic section was called on to collect detailed information about
Romanian agriculture and industry. The school section was required to study the state of
Romanian education in Hungary. In each case, the section began from scratch. The
economic and school sections, for example, drew up questionnaires to be sent to
Romanian priests and teachers for completion. This created a significant problem for
section members because it forced them to rely on the cooperation of hundreds of
individuals to complete the task. Many rural leaders simply did not cooperate because of
the tremendous amount of work involved. The questionnaire drawn up by members of the
economic section consisted of twelve pages of single-spaced typed questions requiring
detailed answers. The range of questions and details requested on this form would have
required months of work to satisfy.30

Astra members who, for example, undertook statistical investigations of the
nation assumed the coherence of the nation. They did not so much discover the
discontinuities between their assumptions and physical realities as much as they
reconfirmed their convictions. There was thus, within Astra, a basic tension between the
elites' assumptions that the nation existed and their attempt to grasp it in more concrete

records and for the state, but when section members tried to cull information from church archives, they
frequently found them unorganized or their access restricted.
29 Transilvania, 1901, partea oficială, 31; 1902, 12, 142-45. In 1904 the section decided to approach this
task as a collaborative project to be completed with the help of the other sections and the Romanian
Geographic Society. Transilvania, 1904, Analele, 158. In 1907 the section abandoned the topological
aspect of this project and settled for a reference work that provided the Romanian, Hungarian, and when
possible German names of each commune. Nicolae Togan and Silvestru Moldovan assumed responsibility
for the work which they published in 1909. It remains an important work today.
30 For example, part a) of question seven asked for the specific numbers of fifteen different kinds of
animals possessed by Romanian households in the village. Part 1 of question thirty-one requested the
specific number of Romanian villagers skilled in over sixty different crafts. Transilvania, 1903, 172-85.
terms. Romanian nation building required that intellectuals investigate the boundaries of the national community statistically, historically, linguistically, and institutionally. This kind of information, a precondition for national development, which most states would have gathered, was not yet present for Romanian nation builders in Astra to use. Astra leaders hoped that information gathered from sectional investigations would provide the tools for Romanian intellectuals to determine and then advance the interests of the national community. But their hope was in vain. They had neither the bureaucratic organization of a state-like institution, nor the authority to demand compliance from Astra members.

Additional problems plagued the sections because prominent Astra members remained too optimistic about their own leadership. Astra leaders hoped to encourage national unity with programs that would introduce greater systematization and uniformity in Romanian life. The central committee asked the economics section, for instance, to draw up a dictionary of financial terminology. Two members of the section, Nicolae Petra-Petrescu and Nicolae Vecerdea, agreed to contact Romanian bank directors to discover which terms their institutions employed. After investigating the usage of the terms, they planned to publish the information in a single volume and present it to the 1905 conference of Romanian bankers, expecting the directors of financial institutions to apply the information to their businesses in a uniform manner. Meeting minutes suggest that they did not consider the expenses involved to introduce these changes.31 As in other endeavors, Astra leaders anticipated that Romanian nationals would follow their recommendations. They remained blind to the unrealistic dimensions of their strategy because Astra’s elites firmly believed that once every Romanian recognized that the
future of the nation and its members depended on the cooperation of all Romanian nationals, each person would do his or her part to realize the nation’s potential. All they needed, prominent Astrists believed, was more communication and systematic plans in place for others to follow.

Problems arose, however, when they could not agree on the plans. For example, a decision to increase the number of section members in 1902 helped boost the productivity of each section by 1904, but the sections did not work as intended at the outset because Astra lacked general consensus on the precise role of the sections. Some argued that as specialists the section members should produce literary and cultural works for the association and complained that they neglected these duties. Others, like Diaconovich, asserted that the sections should serve as administrative bodies designed to give direction to the cultural and literary work Astra needed to undertake. Ultimately the sections assumed both responsibilities. Astra members continued to debate the matter over the next decade, but few questioned the importance of the sections after 1904.

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31 Transilvania, 1904, 54-59.
32 Section members considered that their limited numbers caused many of the problems they encountered in the first three years. Using the same rationale Diaconovich did in the late 1890s to argue for expanding Astra’s organizational network, they made several requests to add to each section consultants who would share the workload. Transilvania, 1901, partea oficială, 30, 39, 47, 120-30, 146, 149-50; 1902, partea oficială, 152. In 1901 section members agreed to modify the rules governing their organization and in 1902 they elected consulting members (membri corespondenți) to each section. Those consultants (membri corespondenți) included: Nicolau Sulică, Dr. Sextil Pușcaru, Enea Hodoș, and Dr. Valeriu Brănică in the literary section; Dr. Ioan Mihăiyă, Dr. Silvestru Moldovan, and Nicolae Togan in the history section; Dr. Ioan Radu and Victor Borlan in the science section; Dumitru Lăpădat and Dumitru Mosora in the school section; and Nicolau Petru-Petrescu, Ioan Preda, and Dr. Nicolau Vecerdea in the economics section. The sections rejected further calls for adding more consulting members in 1907. Transilvania, 1907, Analele, 143, 149, 160, 178.
34 For information on these debates see “Secțiunile științifice-literare ale Asociațiunii,” Transilvania, 1906, 57-64. In 1906 Astra secretary Octavian Goga suggested a complete reorganization of the sections based on professional affiliation (for priests, teachers, lawyers, professors, doctors, and bankers). Transilvania, 1910, 295-96. His suggestion was not adopted but discussions continued over proper sectional organization until 1914.
Funding and material limitations continuously posed problems for Astra and its sections. When the central committee requested bibliographies and book reviews from section members, the members replied that they could not begin the work without copies of the materials to be examined and appealed to the central committee to procure the necessary copies. They promised to deposit them at the central Astra library in Sibiu after they finished their reviews.\textsuperscript{35} Budget restrictions prevented the central committee from obtaining all the materials the sections requested and consequently the bibliographies, indices, and other resource books Astra planned to create were much more limited in scope than originally intended.\textsuperscript{36}

In fact, all Astra activity was circumscribed by available funds. Because there was almost no limit to the kinds of activities Astra members considered, leaders of the association could not match the ever-expanding nature of Astra activities with corresponding funds. Astra leaders, however, gradually established endowments, and as those sums grew, so did money available for regular use. Mass individual contributions created some of the endowments, like the Gheorghe Barițiu collection, conceived in 1893 after the death of the man who served as Astra’s central committee secretary and editor of \textit{Transilvania}, history section president, and central committee president. By 1904 the income from the endowment was significant enough to fund some section activities. Other endowments depended on contributions from wealthy individuals. Doctor Ioan Russu from Brad, for example, left the association more than 40,000 crowns in his will in order to provide school stipends.\textsuperscript{37} Romanian banks also donated money to the

\textsuperscript{35} \textit{Transilvania}, 1904, 55-56, 64.
\textsuperscript{36} See for example the early bibliography school section members drew up and published in \textit{Transilvania}, 1904, 201-02.
\textsuperscript{37} “Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociațiunii.” \textit{Transilvania}, 1904, 87.
“Romanian bank cultural fund” for general Astra use. Moreover, the Romanian government and independent Romanian organizations outside the dual monarchy contributed unspecified sums of money. Astra’s general fund depended on individual and group memberships, and as the association gained new members before the outbreak of the Great War it also gained more resources for general use. With greater resources, the activities the sections directed took on new life with a flourishing of activities for rural members.

**Education for Illiterate Rural Masses**

Illiteracy was one of the biggest obstacles Astra leaders faced in their campaign to combat rural ignorance and give villagers the skills to become self-educated men who would work for the national cause. Blaj despărțământ director, Ioan German, mentioned this obstacle when he measured Romanians against a European other in his report to the 1900 regional conference. He opened his remarks with a defense of the lagging literacy campaign undertaken in the Blaj regional chapter. Contrasting the literacy rates in Denmark, where all the inhabitants supposedly knew how to read and write, with those in Transylvania, for which he confessed he didn’t have exact figures, he argued that the Romanians were far behind the Danes, with many Romanians unable even to write their own names. He declared that basic literacy skills were a principle concern for the association and that all Astra members had a primary duty to work together so that the shameful situation would not last forever.

A comprehensive literacy campaign was slow to form. Regional leaders in the Brad despărțământ took up German’s call only in 1907. They held literacy classes during

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38 Ibid., 87-88.
39 ANS, 536-1900.
the winter months. After the central committee read about the classes in the regional chapter’s annual report, it declared that the courses were of the highest importance for the cultural progress of the peasantry and urged all the regional chapters to follow suit during the following winter.\textsuperscript{40} In 1908 Astra leaders turned the Brad initiative into a literacy campaign. It sent out appeals to local leaders to hold courses, established fifty crown prizes for those who taught the most people how to read and write, and called for regional chapters to establish their own prizes. It also received the backing of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches, which published circulars in Astra’s journal Transilvania instructing their representatives to support the campaign with winter courses.

The ability to read and write was not a simple nicety for Astra leaders and church officials. They looked at basic literacy in the same way as they did the cooperative economic organization of the countryside: it was part of the Romanian’s struggle to survive in a competition among nations. Illiteracy was, according to Astra’s central committee and the Orthodox church, a main reason Romanians had fallen so far behind the other peoples in Hungary. It made them culturally inferior and endangered their future existence. If peasants could learn how to read (and write), the association’s central committee and the Greek Catholic church argued, they would earn useful knowledge in the fight for life. Primary schools were not enough. The priesthood and church-affiliated educators needed to do more. The heads of the churches advised their clergy to join Romanian cultural societies like Astra, organize educational programs, and offer literacy courses for adults. According to the Orthodox Metropolitan, the clergy should consider teaching adults how to read and write their most holy duty \textit{(cea mai sfântă datorinţă)}.\textsuperscript{41}

\textsuperscript{40} "Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociaţiunii." Transilvania, 1908. 23, 203.
\textsuperscript{41} See the circulars published in Transilvania, 1908, 218-19, 226-28.
The appeals had some early success. In 1908-09 thirty-three village leaders taught 682 students how to read.\textsuperscript{42} Their ages ranged from seventeen to seventy.\textsuperscript{43} During the 1909-10 winter months, however, the number of successful students declined to 555. The following year the numbers decreased even further to 236 literate students.\textsuperscript{44} The central committee complained in 1911 that prize money went unclaimed because rural leaders could not hold the courses or because no one sought them. Judging that lack of materials contributed to the decline, the association officers helped publish and distribute readers to local leaders. Astra leaders also stepped up their campaign with more public appeals, church support, and prize money. During the 1911-12 winter, rural leaders taught basic literacy skills to 890 adults. In 1913, the central committee reported that with the assistance of 2642 free readers local leaders had 1089 successful students.\textsuperscript{45}

Despite these successes, the sheer magnitude of the illiteracy problem, the time-consuming task of making adult villagers literate, and the painstakingly slow progress in the literacy campaign convinced most Astra members that additional educational mediums were needed. In the early 1900s leading members of the association had begun to discuss the importance of popular lectures because villagers did not need basic literacy skills to comprehend the message. One of the most significant early initiatives came from the science section in 1903.

The science section, like the others, experienced difficulties with personnel in the early 1900s. The section was originally established in Rodna, where the section president Florian Porcius resided. When Porcius resigned on account of his advanced years in 1902

\textsuperscript{42} "Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociațiunii," \textit{Transilvania}, 1909, 211.

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Transilvania}, 1909, 264.

\textsuperscript{44} "Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociațiunii," \textit{Transilvania}, 1910, 199-200.
the section relocated to Brașov.\textsuperscript{46} Simeon Stoica, a doctor in Bran, became president and, that same year, the section added to its numbers Dr. Ambrosiu Chetian, a professor in Blaj, and Dr. Aurel Ciortea, a professor in Brașov.\textsuperscript{47} These new members, especially Ciortea, made immediate contributions to the work of the section with plans for hosting popular lectures.

Astra members had discussed the importance of raising national consciousness and popularizing science and literature since 1861. The dilemma they faced, however, was how to do this with limited budgets and without requiring that they spend extended periods of time in the countryside. Ciortea took seriously the call to popularize science and culture. He began work on a proposal, which Astra published in 1903, for a series of popular lectures illustrated with an overhead projector in rural communities. The lectures, he wrote, would make scientific thought accessible to everyday people and thus create more intimate contact between Romanian intellectuals and villagers. Ciortea criticized the haphazard manner in which Astra planned popular lectures, which were often held at annual assemblies where lectures competed with other activities for audiences. He maintained that the lectures needed to be established according to the model of popular universities he understood to be in place in the west (apus). He explained that university and secondary school professors in Belgium and Holland organized lecture series in the countryside over the course of a year for the benefit of rural citizens and argued that professors in Astra needed to do the same. In order to make the lectures more attractive to

\textsuperscript{45} "Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociaționii,"\textit{ Transilvania}, 1913, 200-201. "Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociaționii,"\textit{ Transilvania}, 1914, 244.

\textsuperscript{46} Proclus may have also resigned because the section refused to recommend his work for publication when members deemed it too scientific for popular audiences.\textit{ Transilvania}, 1901, partea oficială, 40, 43; 1902, 131.

\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Transilvania}, 1902, 149.
Romanian villagers he stressed the importance of using an overhead projector (schiopticon) which, he mentioned, cultural societies in Berlin and Budapest used regularly.\textsuperscript{48} Technology-driven pedagogy, however, drew on Astra budgets. The central committee agreed to allocate seven hundred twenty crowns for three projectors to be used by science section members in Brașov, Blaj, and Brad and asked the section members to make the necessary arrangements.\textsuperscript{49}

The section took a more cautious approach and bought only one projector to test its worth. With limited resources, the section did not want to risk failure. After some practice using the machine, Ciortea reported that it was well constructed, easy to manipulate, and easy to transport. He and his colleagues from the Brașov regional chapter began to offer presentations to both urban and rural audiences in the late winter and spring of 1904. They used texts sent from the Budapest firm “Urania” that they translated into Romanian. But because these texts were considered appropriate only for intellectual audiences, lecturers for rural audiences had to come up with their own scripts. Consistent with their top-down approach to building the nation, science section members hoped that in the future specialists from all the sections would develop lectures using transparencies that would be suitable for rural audiences.\textsuperscript{50}

The lectures given from February until May 1904 in the Brașov despărțământ clearly divided the Romanian community into two separate groups: urban, educated Romanians and villagers in outlying communes. Ciortea worked alongside professors and Brașov regional chapter leaders George Vătășan (chapter librarian) and Andrei Bârseanu

\textsuperscript{48} Transilvania, 1903, 136-38.
\textsuperscript{49} Transilvania, 1903, Anale, 66; 1904, Anale, 59-66.
\textsuperscript{50} Transilvania, 1904, Anale, 61-63.
(chapter director) to offer illustrated presentations on eighteen different occasions. They hosted fourteen of these events in Brașov. Six they designed for students, six for intellectuals, and one for a society of craftsmen. A popular audience gathered for only one Brașov lecture given by professor Vătășan. Ciortea and Vătășan also gave presentations in four communes. Themes for educated audiences included: the lower Danube, towns in southern Germany, towns in Central Europe, a practical demonstration on the uses of the projector (for a teacher’s conference), scenes from the 1877/78 war in Romania, Babylon and the Bible, and Shakespeare. The presenters offered to rural audiences illustrated lectures on the 1877/78 war in Romania, the lower Danube, and Great European cities. They did not consider the other presentations appropriate for Romanian villagers, and they prepared the texts for the popular lectures with village audiences in mind.

In his report for the 1904 plenary session, Ciortea complained about the content of prepared scripts designed for western-educated audiences which were not suited for Romanian nationals, especially at the village level. Romanians, he argued, had to develop their own lectures in light of the needs of rural communities. Among these needs, Ciortea considered morality a high priority. He expected that systematically organized presentations prepared specifically for villagers and given on Sundays and holidays

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51 Most of the lectures were free but when they did take up collections or sell programs to intellectuals or students in Brașov, they earned over sixty-four crowns. The Brașov chapter and a school board donated approximately twenty-two additional crowns to cover the remaining costs of these lectures. Ciortea hoped that future lectures could bring in enough money to purchase more transparencies and projectors. That would only leave unresolved problems finding qualified lecturers in more remote villages.

52 Ciortea composed the text on the 1877/78 war using passages from the work of Romanian author George Coșbuc in order to eliminate the militaristic focus of the prepared lecture and highlight the history of the newly independent state of Romania. He also translated the text for the lower Danube lecture from Hungarian. Vătășan wrote the script for the scenes from European cities. “Raport despre prelegerile poporale împreună cu proiecțiuni șirute în lunile Faur-Maiu 1904 în despărtămentul ‘Brașov’,” Transilvania, 1904, Analele, 195-201.
throughout the winter months would promote a strong moral foundation in the villages. Ciortea hoped these presentations would promote Romanian culture — meaning greater general awareness of Romanian and European life and adherence to certain moral values, like sobriety, household hygiene, and religious devotion.\textsuperscript{53} He proposed that future popular lectures focus on the following themes: the life of Christ, Bucharest, Budapest, and the destructive effects of alcoholism. He intended these lectures to serve as models so that rural leaders could study them and offer them in their own villages. In addition to preserving the intellectuals’ central role in the association, model lectures solved two other problems: the lack of qualified lecturers and the resistance of many Romanian elites to associate with members of rural communities. All of the lectures he proposed, except for the one on Bucharest, had been prepared and could be given in the regional chapters of Brașov, Blaj, and Brad, where science section members taught. He argued that if all section members would develop model lectures in their areas of specialty with funds from the central committee, the systematic work of the association would be greatly advanced.\textsuperscript{54}

Astra leaders took Ciortea’s recommendations seriously. At the 1904 plenary session economic section member Nicolau Petra-Petrescu discussed the need for practical agricultural demonstrations in the countryside. He argued that systematic and uninterrupted agronomic propaganda in all regions where Romanians lived would help build an economic base to secure the Romanian existence in Hungary. Topics of educational demonstrations included cultivation of crops, vineyards, fodder for animals,

\textsuperscript{53} “Susțin însă în același timp, că paralel cu nisuițele economiștilor de a infiltra în poporul nostru iubirea de muncă și priceperea pentru valorarea munceii, trebuie să îngrijim ca să sa accelereze odată și progresarea lui în cultură. De aceea insist așa de mult pentru întruderea prelegerilor poporale, făcute ce sistem....”
Transilvania, 1904, Analele, 198.
fruit and nut trees; vegetable gardening; agricultural tools and machinery; breeding and raising cattle; preparation of dairy products; bee keeping; crafts; insurance; and agricultural cooperatives. Every demonstration or lecture, Petra-Petrescu stressed, had to be suited to local conditions. Clearly the responsibilities exceeded the capabilities of the association's central leaders. He suggested that the central committee begin to require the regional chapters to hold such educational forums at the despărtământ annual assembly and throughout the year at the local chapters (agenturi). If local specialists were not available, Petra-Petrescu stipulated that regional chapters had the responsibility to send a competent lecturer to Astra’s rural chapters. In the event that regional chapter leaders could not locate qualified personnel, they could appeal to the central committee to recommend a competent individual. But Petra-Petrescu did not require significant personal sacrifice from these men. The individuals the central committee recommended were not required to travel to the villages. Petra-Petrescu specified that they were only required to address the despărtământ annual assembly and the despărtământ had to pay his expenses. Petra-Petrescu anticipated that model lectures developed by experts and sent to the villages for local presentation would eventually compensate for the lack of qualified personnel. For now, he too, like Ciortea, urged the central committee to support the education of more Romanian specialists in agriculture.  

Astra’s central committee and general assembly recognized the need for more Romanian specialists. At the proposal of the central committee, the 1905 general assembly approved spending two thousand crowns to organize popular lectures and pay the expenses of itinerant lecturers. The subjects of all presentations were left to the

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54 Transilvania, 1904, Analele, 195-201.
55 Transilvania, 1904, Analele, 203-05.
discretion of the sections. In December the economic section met and drew up a proposal for the systematic use of the budgeted moneys. Section members suggested that the central committee fund twenty series of lectures at one hundred crowns each. Each series would consist of at least ten lectures, and presenters would receive a maximum of ten crowns per lecture. The section tried to assign more responsibility to the regional chapters by requiring their committees to designate the location and the subject of the presentations. Section members wanted the themes to suit local conditions, and they wanted to host lectures in villages Astra organizers had previously neglected. In order to ensure the quality of agronomic presentations, the section specified that lecturers had to be specialists in agriculture, approved by the central committee, and capable of delivering a talk in colloquial Romanian with demonstrations that captured villagers’ attention. The central committee had to approve the theme of each lecture and reserved the right to reproduce the lecture in Transilvania or the popular book series, Biblioteca poporală a asociațiunii, organized in 1901. Despărțământ leaders had further obligations to ensure the success of the lecture and of future Astra organization in the villages hosting the presentations. Each regional chapter had to send a representative to the lecture to oversee the free distribution of Astra booklets; the founding of a local Astra chapter, an agentură; and the establishment of a local Astra library, which despărțământ leaders were asked to augment with their own resources.

The central committee endorsed this proposal and sent a circular to all regional chapter leaders at the end of 1905, offering them funds to organize popular lectures. By late March 1906, thirteen of forty-six regional directors replied favorably to the circular. Nine of the interested despărțământ committees hired lecturers and chose delegates to

oversee the presentations and the founding of local chapters and local libraries.\textsuperscript{57} Four other regional committees requested that the central committee send a qualified lecturer.\textsuperscript{58} Economic section members regretted that the majority of regional chapter leaders did not respond to the circular but hoped that the example of a few chapters that did host lectures in 1906 would inspire the less active ones to request money and organize educational presentations in the future.

The central committee maintained its support for public presentations after 1905 with regular funding, more insistent propaganda, and official recognition for lecturers. From 1906 until 1914 Astra officials budgeted annually two thousand crowns to cover the costs incurred by lecturers. The central committee sent numerous appeals to regional officials and requested that the churches encourage priests and teachers to participate as organizers and speakers. Both the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches complied with circulars published in Transilvania that urged, and even demanded, their representatives to support these lectures.\textsuperscript{59} Those speakers and organizers who distinguished themselves with particular success received the reward of official mention at Astra annual meetings and in the association’s publication. All of these measures contributed to the success of public presentations after 1905.

The continual increase in the number of lectures offered and the number of participants in attendance demonstrates how successful popular presentations became. In 1904 the regional chapters and the science section only hosted forty lectures, thirty-three

\textsuperscript{57} Those regional chapters included: Abrud-Câmpeni, Agnita, Bistrița, Brad, Brașov, Caransebeș, Dobra, Orăștie, and Șimleu. Transilvania, 106, Analele, 43. For examples of the circulars see ANS, 1499-1905, 1353-1906, and 1252-1907. They were also published in Transilvania.

\textsuperscript{58} Namely Buiș, Deva, Oravița, and Sebeș. Regional chapter leaders in Zâmești declined the money in favor of Astra’s other regional chapter because they had already organized lectures that year with local money. Two other chapters indicated that they would begin to host lectures the following year after they had made all the necessary preparations. Transilvania, 106, Analele, 43.
of which were given to popular audiences. In 1905 the regional chapters offered forty-four lectures and the science section gave seventy-eight presentations, for a total of one hundred twenty-two lectures (although many presentations by the science section catered to the interests of more urban, educated audiences). After the central committee made funding available in 1906 Astra organizations sponsored one hundred sixty-five presentations. A year later Astra representatives offered three hundred forty-one talks. There was a slight increase in 1908 with three hundred fifty-five lectures and by the end of 1909 the association had hosted three hundred eighty-nine presentations. When Astra officials began to tabulate the numbers of villagers who attended these events after 1907, they determined that audiences totaled twenty thousand persons in 1908 and thirty thousand in 1909. The following year central, regional, and local leaders offered four hundred ninety-seven presentations to one hundred thousand villagers. The number of lectures increased in 1911 to seven hundred fourteen. The numbers rose again in 1912 and 1913 to well over one thousand presentations before audiences that totaled one

59 See, for example, the circulars published in Transilvania, 1908, 224-228.
60 Transilvania, 1904, 76-77.
61 For information on the themes of these lectures see Transilvania, 1905, 83-85.
62 Transilvania, 1907, 105-08. This number was revised in 1908 at one hundred sixty-five. Transilvania, 1908, 25.
63 Transilvania, 1908, 25.
64 Transilvania, 1909, 214, 271-76; 1910, 197.
65 Transilvania, 1911, 488-90.
hundred twenty-five thousand villagers.⁶⁷ The following graph illustrates these reported increases:

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⁶⁷ Transilvania, 1913, 199; Transilvania, 1914, 243. The number of villagers attending Astra lectures may be inflated. Astra's central committee secretary compiled these figures from regional chapter reports which in many cases estimated the attendance (almost always reported in round numbers). Nevertheless Astra messages did reach tens of thousands of rural Romanians just before the outbreak of the war. In 1914 Astra offered just under five hundred public talks before concerns for the future took precedence.
Regional and local leaders made the most significant contributions to the success of Astra's popular lectures. Although members of the science section took the first initiative to offer popular lectures outside of Astra annual meetings (they gave 78 of 122 talks in 1905 to audiences in the Brașov, Brad, and Blaj regional chapters), they could not have done this without the help of regional and local leaders whose work became even more important as the contributions of science section members declined after 1905. In 1906 regional and local leaders organized and presented most of the 165 educational and nationalistic lectures held in 83 different towns and villages throughout 29 regional Astra chapters.\textsuperscript{68} The central committee tracked the professions of Astra lecturers from 1907 until 1912, and the data indicate that priests and teachers (almost all of whom would have taught at confessional schools) gave most of the popular presentations. They comprised approximately sixty percent of the lecturing force from 1907 until 1911, and they gave fifty percent or more of all popular presentations during those same years.\textsuperscript{69}

In a move that reflects the inability of Astra's central leadership to direct the construction of the nation as association activities increased, the central committee no longer tried to approve each presentation, but decided to leave the topics of popular lectures to the discretion of regional and local leaders. Astra officials began categorizing and counting the lectures in 1907. The data demonstrate that agricultural themes dominated public presentations during 1907 and 1908. After 1908, however, lecturers gave more talks on social, religious, cultural, and moral topics than on any other subjects.

\textsuperscript{68} Transilvania, 1907, 105-08.

\textsuperscript{69} These percentages apply to all known lectures (approximately eighty-six percent of all lectures). Transilvania, 1908, 64; 1909, 255; 1910, 198; 1911, 489; 1912, 302. Only three women are recorded as lecturers during these years. A 1911 the central committee did not collect uniform information. In 1912, the last year for which data is available before the war, Astra lumped teachers and professors together, making a comparison with earlier years more difficult to analyze. In 1912 priests accounted for thirty-seven
The graph above shows the fluctuations in five of the main lecture categories Astra devised and suggests the increased attention paid to social, religious, cultural, and moral topics that local leaders highlighted.\textsuperscript{70}

A typical popular lecture was held in the school or church building, often following a religious service. A local official who generally opened the meeting welcomed those gathered and introduced a representative of the regional chapter who was required to attend many of the lectures. The regional representative then spoke for a few percent of Astra popular lecturers, teachers and professors for twenty-seven percent, lawyers for thirteen percent, bank and state employees for ten percent. \textit{Transilvania}, 1913, 273-74.
minutes to explain the importance of Astra and its cultural and educational message for the Romanians in Hungary and to encourage everyone present to support the association. Their support for Astra, and consequently for the nation, could only benefit them as integral members of the national community. Collectively, the villagers learned, their individual contributions would make the difference between national advancement and national stagnation. After this short talk, the speaker delivered his presentation. When he was finished, the organizers closed the meeting, and the audience turned its attention to any other activities that may have been scheduled.71

A complete scope of the varied topics Astra lecturers presented across the countryside is unavailable because few written texts of the lectures remain, but one lecture described in the prominent Romanian newspaper Telegraful român provides a good idea of the kinds of information Astra made available to the peasantry.

Nationalists across the globe have used history to legitimize their goals, and Romanians in Astra were no exception.72 In some cases Astra representatives dedicated entire lectures to raising the national consciousness of Romanian villagers with history lessons. One such lecture took place in mid January 1907, when teacher Nicolae Bembea spoke on the origins of the Romanian people before villagers gathered in Mag, a commune of the Săliște regional chapter. He explained that they were the descendants of the Romans and the Dacians, an indigenous people who fought against the Romans at the

70 Transilvania, 1908, 63; 1909, 254; 1910, 197; 1911, 489; 1912, 301-05, 1913, 273-74.
71 Numerous documents in Astra archives reveal this pattern. For examples, see ANS, 119-1904, 263-1904, 189-1906, 983-1909.
end of the first century of the common era. Although the Romans conquered Dacian territory, the subsequent years of peaceful administration over the region led to the assimilation of the two peoples who became the ancestors of modern Romanians. From the Romans the villagers got their language. Romanian customs and traditions came from the Dacians. Bembea also recounted the brief reigns of the ancient Dacian king Burebista and of the medieval ruler Michael the Brave. Both rulers, the teacher explained, established viable, if short-lived, states that temporarily unified their Romanian forebears. If the rulers had been able to maintain this unity, Bembea argued, Romanians today would be a much stronger people. He reviewed the arrival of the Hungarians and then surveyed the contemporary status of the Romanian people, including the population count of Romanians inside and outside Hungary. In closing, the speaker claimed that Romanians could be in the position to rival any cultured people if they would just end their disputes and legal battles against one another. Look to the church, support teachers, and send their children to school. If the Romanians did these things, Bembea explained, they would earn the love of God, the respect of foreigners, and recognition as the honorable descendants of the Dacians and the Romans.73 In short, they would realize the glory of their past and join the ranks of cultured peoples in European nations.

Bembea’s examination of the nation’s birth, maturation, and destiny in terms of linear progression followed the patterns of modern historians who used historical knowledge as a form of collective self-knowledge. Projections of the national community and its present concerns into the past as an object of historical becoming linked a distant

73 “Din despărtăminte ‘Asociațiunii’,” Telegraful român, 11/24 January 1907, 10.
past to the present and to a necessary future. By inserting present-day circumstances into the temporal continuum, modern historians used narration to bridge the temporal divide and to re-create a connection to the past. Their work gave a sense of plural unity to time so that events in the past, present, and future could take place in a continuum that provided explanatory content. Bembea sought to give the villagers an understanding of historical causality that not only ascribed social significance to specific events, people, and places in the past, but also, and even more important, ascribed social significance to them and projected a brighter national future that they all would share. Romanian villagers were not merely Romanian-speaking Orthodox or Greek Catholic Christians. They were an integral part of a national community that had a noble past, which they could reclaim if they were willing to organize and live together as a nation.

Regional and local leaders like Bembea who gave popular lectures enjoyed high success rates for several reasons. In the first place they knew most of the residents in the respective communities and encouraged them to attend the presentations. Priests and teachers had particular influence because they announced Astra events to captive audiences from the pulpit or the desk. Villagers also came to Astra lectures to see the new technology at work. The overhead projectors were a huge hit among rural Romanians. When science section member Aurel Ciortea urged Astra to buy the projectors he argued that they would hold the attention of listeners almost as if by magic.

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74 For more detailed descriptions of how groups form and regenerate through narration see Homi Bhabha. “DissemiNation: time, narrative, and the margins of the modern nation” in Nation and Narration (New York: Routledge, 1990), 291-322.
75 This is what Hayden White describes as revealing the “plot-like” nature of temporality itself. White, The Content of the Form (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 51.
76 Transilvania, 1903, 136-38.
accounts and Astra reports confirm his prediction.\textsuperscript{77} In one newspaper article the author described how the eighty-six members of the audience, mostly villagers, listened to the presentation with tears of emotion in their eyes ("\textit{prelegerе...a fost ascultatа cu lacrimи de emoтиве}").\textsuperscript{78} Originally only the regional chapters where certain section members resided had access to these machines, but gradually, over the years directors of twelve other chapters around the countryside purchased projectors and transported them to outlying areas.\textsuperscript{79} Villagers also came to Astra lectures because regional and local leaders occasionally gave away free stuff. Astra brochures were the most common items distributed gratuitously. The central committee sent these materials liberally to regional chapter committees for this express purpose. In some cases, however, the \textit{despărtământ}, like the one in Blaj, published its own works and gave them away. A few regional and local leaders organized agricultural lectures and handed out free seed or fruit tree grafts. For this initiative the central committee praised them and urged others to follow their example.\textsuperscript{80} To be sure villagers also attended Astra lectures because they were bored. Astra representatives scheduled lectures during the long winter months, on Sundays, and on religious holidays. In addition to a prepared talk the organizers often held other events, like exhibits or parties (to be discussed in chapter six) that attracted rural audiences.

\textsuperscript{77} See, for example, two 1905 articles written anonymously in the newspaper published by the Orthodox Church. "\textit{Din Zarand. Prelegeri cu skipticonul.}" \textit{Telegraful român}, 5/18 February 1905, 52. "\textit{De la sate}," \textit{Telegraful român}, 17/30 May 1905, 229. See also the scientific section's reports on the illustrated lectures, "Raportul secțiunii științifice despre prelegerile cu aparatul de proiecție,\textquotedblright \textit{Transilvania}, 1905, 242-49; and the central committee's 1907 report in \textit{Transilvania}, 1907, 69.

\textsuperscript{78} "\textit{Din Zarand. Prelegeri cu skipticonul.}" \textit{Telegraful român}, 5/18 February 1905, 52.

\textsuperscript{79} In order to do this the lecturer had to have an acetylene lamp to power the projections as electricity and other fuels were scarce commodities in Romanian villages. \textit{Transilvania}, 1904, 62. In 1909 Blaj, Brad, Dobra, Hateg, Orăștie, Reghin, Sebeș and Sibiu had their own projectors. Projectors were also available in Brașov, Cluj, Bistrița, and Năsăud. \textit{Transilvania}, 1909, 255.

\textsuperscript{80} "Raportul general al comitetului central," \textit{Transilvania}, 1907, 69.
Regardless of why villagers came to Astra lectures, their attendance in the tens of thousands just before the outbreak of the war indicates a heightened sense of national consciousness and a greater awareness of the importance of national affiliation among rural Romanians. Romanian-speaking Orthodox and Greek Catholic villagers in Transylvania and Hungary understood that they were Romanian long before 1900, but Astra gave them a new sense of the importance of their national status once the association began to focus on rural needs and interests at the end of the nineteenth century.

In addition to high attendance records at Astra popular lectures and the agricultural cooperatives discussed in chapter four, the establishment of Romanian societies in regional and local chapters provides evidence that many ordinary villagers espoused Astra’s message of national unity and collective organization. In 1908, a year after the central committee began requiring reports from regional chapter directors, the committee took notice of the societies ranging from temperance societies to choirs groups to reading circles founded as a result of Astra lectures. The central committee did not calculate how many associations Astra lecturers helped establish over the years, but despărtământ reports for 1908 indicate that villagers organized societies following Astra lectures in villages in the Năsăud, Cluj, and Beius regional chapters. The following year Romanians in primarily rural areas founded at least ten more such associations, and in

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82 See the regional chapter reports for 1908 and lists of the popular lectures in *Transilvania*, 1909, 215, 258-59, 262, 266, 271, 274.
1910 the central committee tracked the development of over thirty more such associations founded by Astra speakers and regional leaders.

These results were modest in scope, but it is important to emphasize that as a result of attending Astra lectures, villagers acted on a perceived need of mutual aid and social exchange. Whether they got together to combat alcoholism or to hear the latest news read to them, they got together as Romanians, and their willingness to change their habits or spend their time together suggests that some sense of national affiliation promoted by Astra representatives motivated them.

**Demands from the Intellectuals and Separate Educational Programs**

The rural focus Astra successfully honed in the early 1900s created controversies about the association's goals. Many intellectual and professional members who were less concerned than the populists about the disparities between the urban and rural Romanian communities felt that Astra neglected their needs and interests, and they began to demand their own activities and programs. They specifically wanted Astra to host more academic conferences, gatherings at which educated Romanians could meet and exchange ideas. Arguments that the advanced education of Romanian scholars was as important as basic instruction for Romanian villagers persuaded central committee members to renew support for scholarly talks at the 1907 general assembly. The committee announced in its general report that the movement of popular lectures begun for the benefit of Romanian villagers had created a solid national base that would be completed with the continued education of Romanian scholars.

The refusal of most urban Romanian intellectuals and professionals to attend rural presentations and their demands for their own conferences dictated that the two different
groups of Romanian nationals rarely associated in Astra’s educational programs. A policy of separation put forth in 1908 reinforced Astra’s practice of dividing presentations into scholarly conferences and popular lectures. The central committee’s 1908 general report began with arguments defending programs for Romanian intellectuals. Although the committee members acknowledged Astra’s duty to popularize education and Romanian culture among the masses, the association, committee officials explained, also had a responsibility to Romanian scholars who, they understood, expected Astra to address their needs since they were the primary supporters of the association’s work. The intellectuals and professionals wanted to develop "their own national culture" and could not do so outside of Astra because Romanians lacked other available scholarly forums. Astra was their only choice, and the committee officials declared they could not let the learned classes down. The central committee confronted this problem by creating two separate educational programs for Romanian nationals. For intellectuals and professionals Astra offered scholarly conferences, an academic journal (Transilvania), other academic works, and a central library. Programs for rural communities included popular lectures, a provincial newspaper, a popular book series, literacy courses, and local libraries. Over the years the practices and themes of these programs solidified the divisions in the Romanian national community, opposing nationalists' visions of an organic national wholeness.

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83 If intellectuals attended popular lectures, directors specifically noted it in their reports, indicating that such participation was exceptional. Transilvania, 1907, 174.
Conferences

As their first act instituting a separate intellectual program, the central committee made section members responsible for coordinating talks on their area specialties. The best conferences Astra planned to publish in *Transilvania*. The central committee sent out a circular promoting the conferences to all regional chapter leaders in 1908 but received positive responses from fewer than half. Committee members expected to help chapters hold scholarly talks from November 1908 until March 1909 in twenty-one regional centers and to facilitate an exchange of scholars among these different centers of Romanian culture, but in the face of limited support, the committee decided in October 1908 to instruct all regional chapter leaders to arrange as many conferences as they could on their own. Eight regional chapters complied and hosted fifty-one conferences in 1908 (forty-six of those conferences were held in five chapters; namely in Beiuș, Bistrița, Blaj, Brașov and Sibiu). The central committee kept up the pressure on Romanian scholars and in 1909 began to invite specific individuals to give academic talks. Approximately twenty percent of the men (12 of 58) responded favorably but only ten percent followed through. In 1910 Astra leaders increased central support with funding for scholarly exchanges. They hoped for systematic and uniform organization, but once

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85 *Transilvania*, 1907, 70.
86 ANS, 830-1908. The committee expected the chapter leaders to agree to the conferences and also to submit a detailed list of subjects, dates, times, and names of lecturers, but most of the chapter directors ignored the request. *Transilvania*, 1908, 219.
87 According to an announcement published in *Transilvania*, the central committee hoped to arrange conferences in Abrud, Brad, Beiuș, Bistrița, Blaj, Brad, Brașov, Caransebeș, Cluj, Deva, Făgăraș, Gherla, Hateg, Lugoj, Năsăud, Oradea, Orăștie, Oravița, Săliște, Sibiu, and Timișoara. A small admission fee would provide for the expenses of the lecturers. Extra income was designated to support Astra’s journal. *Transilvania*, 1908, 191-92.
more, a dismal response halted these efforts, which were not addressed again until mid-1914, when they had, of course, limited effect.⁸⁸

The number of chapters sponsoring scholarly talks increased after 1908, but total presentations did not rise significantly until 1912 when sixteen chapters held one hundred one conferences. The following year nineteen chapters sponsored one hundred fifty-four scholarly lectures. The graph above indicates the gradual increase in activity for learned men and women from 1908 until 1914.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ Lists with information on the lectures, subjects, host sites, and number of listeners can be found in Transilvania, 1909, 277; 1910, 245-46; 1911, 549-50; 1912, 371-72; 1913, 278-79.
Subjects of conferences, which almost always focused on Romanian history, literature, and philology, were generally left to the discretion of the speakers and organizers. Central committee members, however, wished to transform scholarly conferences into well-organized educational forums to serve as a kind of public university. Previously noted lack of enthusiasm on the part of the educated classes thwarted their early efforts, but committee members did not give up. Experiments to implement regular academic lectures in Sibiu during the winter months of 1912-13 also failed; however, in 1914 Astra leaders successfully hosted a series of ten scholarly presentations pertaining to the second half of the nineteenth century. Half of these concentrated on historical themes. Other subjects included Transylvanian culture, Romanian literature, and Romanian philology. Committee members hoped to replicate this success in other Romanian cultural centers. But in the meantime, they published the texts of some of these conferences in *Transilvania*.

Clearly the themes selected for urban, learned audiences differed from subjects selected for the popular instruction of rural audiences. The variation of moral questions in scholarly conferences was the most notable difference between Astra’s intellectual and peasant programs. Learned audiences rarely heard about the ill effects of alcoholism, the necessity of basic hygiene, or the life of Christ. Instead, talks for the educated public focused on the moral dimensions of the elites’ commitment to the national cause. The measure of an intellectual was determined by his devotion to the people, his willingness to fulfill his duties and to sacrifice his time and energy for the benefit of others. Astra

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90 In one noted case in Brașov, the church tried to assert its authority to approve all presentations given in the school building it maintained, but at the insistence of the regional director, the consistory retracted its demand. ANS, 528-1910.
91 Tăslăuanu, "Cursurile Asociațiunii," *Transilvania*, 1914, 204-06.
expected Romanian elites to lead the national community through dedicated service and
assigned to them a clear role that differentiated them from their rural co-nationals. The
association tried to gloss over these differences with proclamations of national unity, but,
in fact, Astra leaders unwittingly strengthened the divisions between Romanian villagers
and educated elites with descriptions of national unity that differed between the two
audiences. While lectures for rural listeners focused on the historic contributions of
Romanian villagers and implied that the future of the nation depended on the collective
work of present-day villagers, presentations to intellectuals and professionals
concentrated on the historic contributions of great Romanian men, some of whom had
been the contemporaries of Astra members. These latter programs reinforced the idea that
the future of the nation remained in the hands of individual Romanian men.

A conference given in 1912 on the prominent Romanian historian, newspaper
editor, and Astra leader Gheorghe Barițiu illustrates this point. Citing the influential
theorist of progress and science Auguste Comte, Dr. Ioan Lupaș explained that
knowledge of the past offered both a moral guide from which Romanians could learn and
a base upon which Romanians could build. The historical example of a great Romanian
leader like Barițiu who, Lupaș affirmed, dedicated his life to the advancement of the
Romanian people by raising mass national consciousness provided a useful model for
other elites to follow. Focusing on Barițiu’s work as a historian, Lupaș described how
the Romanian leader worked to establish a connection between the past and all

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92 As previous noted the subjects of conferences almost always focused on Romanian history, literature,
and philology. Biographies of distinguished Romanian men were part of this trilogy, constituting between
twelve and eighteen percent of all conference topics between 1908 and 1912. Transilvania, 1909, 277;
1910, 245-46; 1911, 549-50; 1912, 371-72; 1913, 278-79.
93 Dr. I. Lupaș, “Vieța și activitatea lui Gheorghe Barițiu,” conference held on 30 September 1912 in
Sibiu. Transilvania, 1913, 2, 22.

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contemporary Romanians who shared the same blood, language, and laws.\textsuperscript{94} Lupaș engaged in a similar exercise with this conference, trying to create an association between his contemporaries and Barțiu, who had died in 1893. He wanted the members of his audience to identify with Barțiu and emulate him. His conference thus concentrated on four main themes of Barțiu's life that Lupaș deemed significant for Romanian elites who wanted to serve the national cause: education, history, organized religion, and hard work.

Outlining Barțiu's educational experiences from childhood until adulthood, Lupaș stressed that the Romanian leader never stopped learning himself and devoted his energies to teaching others.\textsuperscript{95} After completing his formal education, he spent nine years as a professor in Brașov before taking up work as a journalist and newspaper editor, a position, Lupaș argued, that allowed him to educate the masses. The author stressed that newsprint provided the best forum for Barțiu to arouse the national sentiments of Romanian readers everywhere and to promote national unity and greater understanding of national culture for all Romanians, regardless of their religious or political affiliations. His nonpartisan work, Lupaș indicated, exemplified how one individual could bring together Romanian factions under the banner of Romanian culture, history, and education.

History, particularly the history of an autonomous Transylvania, preoccupied Barțiu the journalist and editor. He urged his readers to fulfill their duties to family, church, the Romanian people, and the country, by which, Lupaș explained, he meant Transylvania. Because Barțiu believed that history was an essential condition of life, the

\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 2.
\textsuperscript{95} The son of a priestly family, Barțiu received his early training from his grandfather. He attended school in a nearby village to learn Hungarian and Latin before moving to Blaj for three years of schooling and to
diploma of legitimacy with which a people presented itself to each other and the world at large, he worked hard to demonstrate the Romanians' organic connection to the province of Transylvania so as to bolster his modern political aspirations of an autonomous Transylvania ruled by Romanians. Although Lupaș did not necessarily agree with Barițiu's politics or all his historical studies, the lecturer valued Barițiu's work. Under the influence of European trends to professionalize history, Barițiu as editor and author published numerous articles and historical records, and Lupaș argued that he transformed the newspapers he served, especially Astra's journal Transilvania, into magazines for historical documentation. These venues gave Romanians a sense of their history, commonalities, and future purpose as a nation. Barițiu's work, Lupaș continued, demonstrated how Romanians could best serve the national cause with the arms of newsprint, history, and education.

Barițiu was an especially good example for Lupaș who was an archpriest because, typical of many Romanian nationalists, Barițiu honored the role of the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches in preserving the Romanian nation and especially its language. Barițiu maintained and Lupaș affirmed that the two churches had historically united religion with the Romanian language and thereby safeguarded the language, the medium through which the national soul (sufletul național) lived. To point out the enduring national role the religious institutions played, Lupaș quoted at length an 1848 article by Barițiu in favor of Romanian-language education, in which Barițiu emphasized that priests and teachers needed to retain the historic unity of religion and language in their churches and schools. Using scriptures to support his thesis, Barițiu argued against the

Cluj for five years of instruction at the gymnasium there. He returned to Blaj to study at the Greek Catholic seminary before accepting a teaching position in Brașov.
sacredness of a language like Latin and recounted the importance of spreading the gospel in a people’s native tongue. God did not create a variety of peoples, Barițiu wrote, for them to spend their lives learning the languages of others, but so that each people could cultivate its own maternal language. He urged the clergy to abandon superfluous school subjects, present all lessons in Romanian, and embed Christian morals in their pupils so that when young Romanians concluded their education, their passions would not lead them astray, but instead their convictions would enable them to lead and defend their people.  

Although Barițiu’s comments were published sixty years earlier, they were still relevant for Lupaș and his audience in 1912 because Romanian lay and clerical leaders continued to struggle against the Magyarization policies of the Hungarian state.  

Repeating Barițiu’s admonitions, Lupaș indicated that Romanian priests and teachers needed to stand firm in their devotion to the Romanian national cause, which they alone, as local Romanian leaders, upheld in their parishes and schools.

Lupaș warned his audience with more examples from Barițiu’s work that laziness on the part of the national leaders, like the clergy, would lead to the downfall of the Romanian nation. Concern for national diligence was a perpetual theme in all Astra messages. But unlike popular lectures stressing the significant contributions Romanian villagers made to the nation, Lupaș’s talk focused on the role of better educated Romanian elites. He emphasized how tenaciously and energetically Barițiu had worked

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97 These policies included obligatory civil marriage, direct allocation of state funds to priests, attempts to unite the Greek Catholic Church with the Hungarian Catholic Church, establishment of a Magyar Greek Catholic Church, Magyar language requirements for Romanian teachers and schools, and efforts to transform Romanian confessional schools into state schools. See chapter two. For further details of these and other policies, see Hitchins, A Nation Affirmed, 169-220.
throughout his life. “After his intensive and lengthy journalistic, cultural, economic, and political activity,” wrote Lupaş, “Bariţiu would have had the right to permit himself a few years of quiet and rest in his old age. He, however, was not the kind of man who could rest in such a world, where the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.” In closing Lupaş suggested to his educated audience that they, the few sincere workers, needed to persevere until the end of their days and reap the harvest of national consciousness and progress among the Romanian masses. Although Astra leaders tried to consider Romanian villagers genuine members of the national community, rural membership did not carry equal weight with their own. The rural masses still needed enlightened men whose devoted leadership would gradually transform villagers into responsible Romanian nationals.

**Scholarly works published in Transilvania**

Relatively few Romanians attended Lupaş’s conference, but Astra endorsed its contents and increased its visibility by publishing the text in the association’s journal, *Transilvania*. The journal was an integral part of the intellectual program. From its earliest publication in 1868 *Transilvania* provided Astra members an important avenue to circulate academic ideas and studies, news about other Romanian civil societies in and outside of Hungary, as well as information about Astra functions and daily operations. In the 1890s, debates on the purpose of the journal created some controversy. Vocal opponents of Astra’s previously elitist orientation argued to alter the journal’s focus to popular concerns, but in the end, Astra retained the journal for the educated classes. All

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99 The central committee asked the members of the literary section in 1900 to take up debate begun at the 1895 general assembly on the purpose of the association’s journal *Transilvania* and make recommendations for future publications. “Astra,” *Transilvania*, 1896, 247-48. Section members met in late January 1901.
regular, lifetime, and founding Astra members received the journal for the price of their membership dues.\textsuperscript{100}

The title of the journal represented more than a connection to the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People. It reflected the on-going dispute between Magyars and Romanians over the union of Transylvania with Hungary completed in 1867. \textit{Transilvania} recalled an era when local notables ruled the virtually independent Principality of Transylvania under nominal Ottoman tutelage or an autonomous province under Austrian rule. Founded in the midst of the political movement for greater Romanian autonomy just after the union, the journal's name \textit{Transilvania} reminded readers of a hope for greater Romanian autonomy in nineteenth-century Hungary. The lasting political significance of the term became apparent in the 1890s when Astra submitted revised statutes to the Hungarian government. In order to get the statutes approved, the association was forced to drop the adjective Transylvanian from its title, bearing the truncated name the Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People. Although it retained the acronym Astra for colloquial usage, in the press it was merely referred to as "the Association." Astra did not have to alter the title of its journal.\textsuperscript{101}

Analysis of scholarly journal articles circulated offers insights into the ways educated Romanians thought about and fashioned images of the nation. In addition to the

\textsuperscript{100} They advised the central committee to maintain \textit{Transilvania} as a quality scholarly periodical which educated Romanians could continue to count on for up-to-date information in literature and the sciences. They also advocated that Astra publish all meeting minutes, reports, and plans in an appended segment, \textit{Analele}, so that association members could keep up with decisions made and ideas exchanged in Astra. \textit{Transilvania}. 1901, \textit{partea oficială}, 15-16. Further discussion continued, and despite minor changes in layout and distribution the journal retained its academic content. \textsuperscript{106} \textit{Transilvania}, 1901, \textit{partea oficială}, 142.
historic, linguistic, and literary articles prominently featured in the pages of *Transilvania*, ethnographic studies also took center stage. Ethnography was an important new field for Romanian scholars because it promised to provide social scientific methods that revealed truths about the national community. In an article on a version of *turca*, a celebration anticipating the arrival of springtime that was held in the Hunedoara county, the author sought to uncover an authentic Romanian culture that would enable Romanians to understand themselves. Like many nationalists, this author viewed culture as the means by which Romanians mastered nature and demonstrated their individuality. As previously mentioned, many European nationalists, Romanians included, thought of nations as individuals, as collective selves. They envisioned people who shared the same language, history, traditions, and in the Romanian case similar religions, as a homogenous group that needed more knowledge of itself in order to know how to organize its members and to gain or preserve a separate autonomous status that would secure collective prosperity. Although Romanian scholars denied the purity of any culture, they contended that foreign influences on a specific culture transformed that culture into a new, original creation. The task for Astra members was to uncover and preserve the new creation. Once Romanians became familiar with their national self, once they understood who they were, Astrarists hoped they could free themselves from foreign influences. Politics, some nationalists argued, only produced temporary gains. Culture, however, promised more permanent

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autonomy. Ethnographic studies thus offered more than mere academics, they provided a way to gain independence that had eluded Romanians through the political process.

The ethnographer of the turca article feared losing Romanian traditions and expressed hope for preserving those traditions in print so that Romanians would not cut their ties to their past, to the origins of the celebration which provided information about their very essence. The study of national origins demonstrates Pierre Nora’s notion of a cult of continuity. Nora explains that the confident assumption of knowing to whom and to what a people owes its existence gives meaning and a sense of the sacred to a society engaged in a process of secularization. No longer linked to ancestors through common material conditions, the author tried to create a link between his audience of educated and more urban Romanians and their forebears through his studies. His concern for preserving a celebration reflects concern for remembering it. The recorded memory of an event, like the celebration of springtime, provides a specific social group with material for conscious reflection, creating some commonalities that may or may not have previously been shared between members of the group.

The search for national origins in studies of popular celebrations, costumes, homes, furnishings, household and farming implements, and architecture was part and parcel of the professionalization of scholarship popular among Europeans, including Romanians in Hungary, at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Folklorists, whose work was just beginning to be recognized as a specialized

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104 Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 16.
field, touted skills of analytic description as they examined national origins to explain and record a “purer” form of the community. Their analyses, however, often created a more standardized form of the object of their study, purifying it for historical memory. When events were recorded in print they got solidified in ways that defied oral traditions. An oral past containing many variables was made more stable and certain through a textual analysis. Texts also preserved the new stability. The author of the *turca* article recognized variations of the celebration, but he also recorded specifics for posterity. Anyone who wanted to replicate the celebration according to the article had on hand details of the event: its participants, timetable, food, costumes, and housing arrangements. The variations of previously unrecorded celebrations were forgotten in the explicit descriptions of the author’s article. The author did not so much invent a new tradition as create a more standard version of an actual performance.107 Designed to communicate information to audiences across time and space, the document supplemented or replaced knowledge in a uniform manner, which would have otherwise been lost or shaped differently over time.

The published studies of ethnographic subjects brought the subjects and their historical roots to life, enabling ethnographers to give the subjects new national meaning. Another article on the architecture and popular art of Romanian villagers in Râşinari did not simply describe peasant housing and décor, it attributed to them the power to know the innermost being of the peasant builder and occupant. “Not only the house and style of construction offer us instructive moments,” the author wrote, “but the household objects.

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107 This becomes an important point if discussing the ways various audiences receive the author’s text. In order for the information to have some legitimate base, it had to bear some resemblance to the living experiences of the audiences. Contrast this to the arguments put forth in E.J. Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
economic tools and other peasant products... give us a measure of the ethnic individuality of this people. They... mirror the concept of the peasant who invented them. The popular style and art even reflect a good part of his (the peasant’s) soul... Concerned that the peasant lifestyle, and thus the ethnic individuality of Romanians themselves, needed protection from urban influences, the author presumed that if he captured the details of peasant life, he could safeguard those qualities that defined ethnic Romanians. His reasoning reveals confidence that the real essence of the Romanian community resided in the peasantry who, he implied, had retained similar lifestyles over the centuries. Their past offered a sense of continuity for all Romanians, and the author hoped to document those unchanging characteristics in order to provide the basis for a collective self-consciousness for literate Romanian nationals. In the process, however, the author also undermined the sense of continuity because he distinguished himself and his readers, those who were more urban and had access to this knowledge, from the object known, the real Romanian. Thus, just as the practice of hosting conferences and lectures for varied audiences reinforced the cleavage between Romanian elites and villagers in spite of Astra intentions to use them to promote a greater sense of Romanian unity, the practices of ethnography also, unintentionally, fortified divisions within the national community.

Other Published Works

In addition to the articles Astra members published in Transilvania, members also planned individual volumes of scholarly work for public reference. Included in the

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108. „Nu numai locuinţa şi stilul de construcţiune ne oferă momente instructive, ci şi obiectele din casă, unelele economice şi celelalte produse țărănești, cu miile lor de forme, ne dau măsură individualităţii etnice a acestui popor. În ele... se reoglindeste concepţia țăranului care le-a născocit. În technica şi arta
agendas of Astra’s sections were tasks to gather statistics and compile dictionaries. The science section, for instance, planned to publish a dictionary of popular Romanian nomenclature regarding natural history (i.e. agricultural production, animal husbandry, household industry, etc.), but like many of Astra’s plans, the task proved too large for a few authors to accomplish in a short time period.\textsuperscript{109} Other works, however, did materialize. Under the editorial leadership of Cornel Diaconovich, Astra’s central committee secretary from 1896 until 1906, the association published an encyclopedia in 1904 concluding eight years of intense work. The 37,622 entries in the encyclopedia were modeled after the German dictionary “Meyer’s conversationslexicon” and the French “Larousse” and supplemented with topics deemed interesting for Romanian readers, including articles on Romanian history and geography, the Orthodox and Greek Catholic churches and their social and legal institutions, popular Romanian occupational terminology, and medical expressions.\textsuperscript{110} Over one hundred seventy people contributed articles to the encyclopedia without remuneration, roughly half of whom were specialists from the Regat.\textsuperscript{111} Diaconovich admitted that the edition had several weaknesses, but he argued that for a first try it was a substantial accomplishment, comparable to early works of French and German encyclopedists, and would remain a useful Romanian resource for many years to come.\textsuperscript{112}

\textsuperscript{109} Transilvania, 1904, 63; 1906, 59.

\textsuperscript{110} Transilvania, 1904, 54-55.

\textsuperscript{111} Diaconovich, “O dare de samă,” Transilvania, 1903, 217; see also his report “Enciclopedia Română.” Transilvania, 1904, 51-67. Among the weaknesses of the work he includes: lack of uniformity for language usage and article length, and a shortage of Romanian specialists in the sciences leading to poorly researched contributions. Complicating these problems was a scarcity of resource materials to glean more detailed information. Ibid., 60-64.
Astra history section members Silvestru Moldovan and Nicolae Togan also published a reference work listing all the localities where Romanians resided in Hungary. With data taken from the 1900 census, the authors provided the Romanian, Hungarian, and, when appropriate, German name of individual communes or towns, the county of the location, the number of Romanians, Hungarians, and Germans residing there, information on church administrative districts and the postal area. Originally Astra members envisioned that this reference work would provide more cultural and material information on the various populations in order to serve as a guide for ethnologists and folklorists.\(^\text{113}\) The authors, abandoning that project because it was too enormous a task, produced their work of narrower scope in 1909. A second edition appeared in 1919. It remains a valuable resource today for researchers studying rural life in late-nineteenth-century Transylvania.\(^\text{114}\)

The production of standardized knowledge served two main purposes. In the first place Romanians needed a base of information to give more concrete boundaries to their conceptions of the national community. Moldovan and Togan's work, for example, provided detailed information on the physical location of Romanians in Hungary. Nation builders needed to know such information in order to make appropriate plans and in order to judge the success of those plans. Standardized knowledge that the encyclopedists, for example, compiled served a different purpose. In this case the information provided readers an authoritative, predetermined matrix of knowledge. It fit right in with the elites

\(^{113}\) Under the original guidelines the dictionary was supposed to include all the information it did plus: legends and traditions surrounding the name of the place; short geographic descriptions of each locale; the names of rivers, springs, mountains, hills, meadows, forests, etc. in each location; descriptions of the boundaries of the location; historic places and any traditions or legends associated with the region; the number of Romanians in the commune or town, their confession, and occupations; and the amount of land owned by Romanians in each location. *Transilvania*, 1902, 144-45.
concept of the centralized construction of the nation under their direction. Should anyone
need to know how Romanians first settled Transylvania, for example, he or she just
needed to consult the reference work. This created a common pool of information that
would help foster a sense of sameness among Romanians and hence national unity.

The Central Library

Astra stored the materials it published, as well as numerous other scholarly books
and newspapers, in its central library in Sibiu. The library provided the institutional
framework necessary for educational advancement. The size of its collection remained
modest, but it is important to remember Astra’s limited funding and lack of state
support. Most of the works were donated by private individuals from prominent
Romanian families, especially upon the death of a professional or scholar. Many of the
brochures the library stored for future sale or free distribution, numbering over eighty
thousand in 1913, were donated by the authors. In one case, however, Astra did receive
the support of V. Stroescu, a wealthy Romanian patron living in Paris, who purchased
thousands of booklets to be distributed freely to village libraries and to villagers
themselves.\textsuperscript{116}

\textsuperscript{114} Silvestru Moldovan and Nicolae Togan, eds., \textit{Dicționarul numirilor de localități cu popoarătune română
din Transilvania, Banat, Crișana, și Maramureș} (Sibiu: Editura “Asociaționii,” 1919).
\textsuperscript{115} Established in 1861, the institution had a modest start. In 1862, all of its one hundred ninety-five works
fit into a single cabinet located in the association’s chancellery. Nevertheless, over the years the library’s
acquisitions increased as prominent Romanians and Academic societies donated books, brochures, and
journals. Astra also exchanged \textit{Transilvania} for other works with the Hungarian Academy of Science, the
Romanian Academy, the Saxon (German) University in Sibiu, the Saxon cultural and educational
association Verein für siebenbürgische Landeskunde, the national library in Florence, the Geographic
Institute of Buenos Aires, and numerous Romanian publishing houses in Hungary. \textit{Transilvania}, 1898, 85.
By 1900 Astra’s library had acquired 3944 works, and in 1914 it housed 7439 works contained in 9345
volumes. By the first decade of the twentieth century, Astra library received thirty different journals, and in
1915 the central committee reported that the library had 1672 volumes of 227 different periodicals, 1360 of
which were bound. See “Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociaționii pentru literatură și cultural
poporului român despre lucrările înconjurate și despre situația Asociaționii în anul 1914,” \textit{Transilvania},
1915, 107.
The library's content reflects Romanian intellectuals' approach to nation building as a cultural and educational enterprise. More than half of the collection consisted of books on language, literature, art, history, and geography. According to the thematic breakdown of the collection provided by Astra’s librarian Nicolae Togan during the 1890s and early 1900s, the language, literature, and art category consistently had the most books.\textsuperscript{117} Twenty-nine percent of all books in 1897 and thirty-two percent of all books in 1907 fell into this category. History and geography was the next largest grouping, roughly fifteen percent of the total collection. A special section of Romanian history applied to an additional ten percent of all books. Other topics included: theology with six percent of the books, juridical science and politics fell from ten percent in 1897 to five percent in 1907, medicine and hygiene accounted for five percent of all books, natural sciences for four percent, pedagogy for two percent, philosophy for one percent, and mathematics and geometry for one percent. Approximately fifteen percent of all works fell into the miscellaneous category, and the periodical section contained one percent of all works from 1897 until 1907. This breakdown reflects the small number of Romanian scientists and economists contributing original works to the educated Romanian community and indicates that Romanian elites considered studies like philology or history as the most important scholarly contributions to the construction of a unified nation.

\textbf{Transporting the Didactic Environment to the Village}

The importance Astra’s elites placed on libraries as centers for continual education convinced many at the end of the nineteenth century that village libraries needed to be a part of Astra’s popular program. Although Astra made the library in Sibiu

\textsuperscript{117} Togan served as Astra librarian from 1889 to 1908. Sofronie, \textit{Aspecte}, 108.
a public institution in 1869, the central library was not expected to serve the entire public, only the educated, urban population.\(^{118}\) Many Astra leaders believed that if literate villagers had ready access to books, they would have the resources necessary to better themselves and their community. Astra's central library was too far away for most villagers to take the time or spend the money to visit. It was also unsuitable for rural readers because it housed primarily academic books, and most Romanian intellectuals understood that such works bored villagers. Astra, thus, tried to create suitable libraries for all rural communities.

During his address to the 1900 annual assembly Astra president Ioan Micu Moldovan explained that rural libraries would help the association reach its goals. Once villagers gained experienced with varied readings, they could, he declared, develop the potential hidden in their hearts. If the reading was chosen well, it had the power to improve the character of rural Romanians, making them more virtuous and more moral.\(^{119}\) Many Romanians agreed with him. At a teachers' conference in 1905, the men who had gathered to discuss the problems of alcoholism in their communities proposed founding more libraries as a pedagogical solution to counter drunkenness. If their pupils could read about the disastrous effects of insobriety, the teachers hoped that they would refrain from excessive drinking.\(^{120}\) The key was to make the right materials available.

\(^{118}\) According to the rules for the operation of the library (Regulament de funcionare al bibliotecii) that librarian Nicolae Togan (1889–1908) drew up in the early 1890s, the institution was open to the public two days a week and to researchers on other days. "Raportul general." Transilvania, 1912, 310.


\(^{120}\) "De la conferențele învățătoarești. Cercul Alba Iulia-Sebeș," Telegraful român, 12 Mai 1905, 220-21.
The initiative to set up Astra’s provincial libraries came from heads of the regional chapters in the 1890s. The Brașov despărțământ took the lead. In 1891, directors of the despărțământ decided to establish local chapters and local libraries in every commune within their region. They started their work in Turcheș where they set up a local chapter and a foundation for the chapter’s library with forty-four booklets and a six-month subscription for the Sunday edition of the highly esteemed Brașov newspaper, Gazeta Transilvaniei. Grigore Maior, the editor of Gazeta Transilvaniei, led an organized drive to increase the number of Brașov’s local chapters and libraries in the mid-1890s. With his help the Brașov despărțământ set up twenty agenturi, three of which had libraries and two of which were gaining them by the end of 1895. Brașov was initially successful because the region was relatively prosperous and boasted higher literacy rates than other Romanian areas of Hungary. Moreover, Brașov was a bustling commercial center that attracted many Romanian intellectuals like Maior who worked with enthusiasm and devotion to achieve Astra’s goals. With all of these advantages, however, the chapter leaders could not set up enough libraries fast enough to satisfy

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121 The local directors of the Făgăraș despărțământ founded the first regional library in 1872 in order “to develop and cultivate the taste for reading,” to expand the knowledge base of the Romanian community, and to preserve any important historical documents that might be drafted or donated. Over the course of the next decade regional leaders founded similar institutions in Sibiu, Șimleu, Dej, Sebeș, Cluj, Abrud, Blaj, and Alba Iulia. Eugenia Glodariu, “Despărțământul Brașov - inițiatorul bibliotecilor populare ambulante ale ‘Astreii’.” Cumidava, IV 1973: 134. Rural libraries did not get a lot of attention until the 1880s, and then only among certain active Astra circles, like the regional chapter in Sibiu, where in 1881 despărțământ leaders budgeted monies to establish libraries and local chapters in seven nearby communes belonging to the despărțământ. By the end of the decade the regional chapter had set up ten rural libraries. Glodariu, “Bibliotecile populare ambulante ale ‘Astreii’ (Partea I).” Acta Musei Napocensis VI (1969): 351.

122 Fifteen of these agenturi were located in rural areas, namely: Bod, Sânpetru, Feldioara, Preșmer, Herman, Zizini, Târlungeni, Măeruș, Râșnov, Codlea, Dârste, Turcheș, Bacălău, Cernat and Satulung. Local chapters in Turcheș, Dârste and Preșmer had libraries. Feldioara and Codlea were in the process of setting them up. ANS, 177-1896. After waiting two years for the authorities to approve the new statutes, regional chapter leaders decided to reorganize the system of local chapters. In 1898 they had successfully reorganized seven of them in Brașov-vechii, Codlea, Ghimbav, Feldioara, Rotbav, Măeruș, and Herman. “Din despărțământul,” Transilvania, 1898, 59-60.
themselves. Maior took the matter up with the central committee at the 1894 Astra assembly, urging committee members to provide more guidelines for creating and funding rural libraries.\textsuperscript{124}

The central committee supported the efforts of regional chapter leaders to expand Astra’s influence in the countryside. Shortly after the annual assembly, committee members sent out a circular to all despărțământ leaders calling for them to take every possible measure to increase rural interest in the association, to increase the number of Astra members, and to establish agenturi and popular libraries in every commune. According to the circular and Astra’s newly revised statutes, the regional chapters had the responsibility for creating village book collections and the local chapters had the obligation to staff and maintain the libraries. The central committee tried to ease the burdens on all parties by making appropriate reading materials available for rural readers at no cost.\textsuperscript{125} The new emphasis Astra placed on rural programs paid off. Once again, innovative leadership came from the Brașov despărțământ.

In order to sustain rural interest in Astra’s libraries and make as many materials available to as many readers as possible, Maior and other regional leaders established itinerant libraries that circulated among the despărțământ communes. A stable library generally attracted larger numbers of readers during the first year of its establishment. After that first year, however, borrowing dropped off precipitously as readers became bored with the same books. Ambulant libraries had two major advantages. They offered readers fresh collections and reduced costs. Although many itinerant collections contained some duplicates of books due to a general deficit of materials written for

\textsuperscript{124} Transilvania, 1894, 390.
\textsuperscript{125} ANS, 430-1894. Statutele Asociațiunei, 13-14.
popular consumption, the despărtământ did not have to supply copies of the same books to all of its communes. The despărtământ merely had to pay the costs to circulate the collections of books it organized in wooden cabinets according to book size.\textsuperscript{126} They transported the collections in conjunction with the needs and wishes of local leaders, giving priority use to villages with more readers.\textsuperscript{127} After they had established almost as many libraries as they had agenturi, the leaders delivered libraries to those villages with newly founded local chapters. In this way, the growth of libraries in Braşov paralleled the growth of agenturi.

The ambulant book collections looked promising but by 1905 most regional chapters had abandoned the mobile book system in favor of permanent collections because stable libraries enticed villagers to join the association and contribute more money. A letter dated 17 June 1905 from Năsăud despărtământ directors to Valeriu Mureșan, a priest in Telciu, chastized the priest for not having an ambulant library transported to Telciu after an agentură was recently organized there.\textsuperscript{128} The regional leaders urged him to remind the thirteen members of the local chapter that they still needed to pay their annual dues, and as incentive for the payments, the regional heads promised that the money collected in dues would return to the village in the form of their

\textsuperscript{126} They placed the first library, I-a, in Feldioara in January 1896. It contained eighty-one works, the majority of which pertained to history and literature. Readers reportedly preferred books of legends, ballads, and history. Villagers could borrow one book at a time and keep it for up to a month. If the reader did not return it, he lost his library privileges and was responsible to replace it. The local librarian, generally the village school teacher, was required to keep a register of books borrowed and with this information submit an annual report to the despărtământ committee when the library was transferred to another village. Unfortunately few of these reports survive today. “Prima biblioteca ambulantă a Asociaționii transilvane,” Transilvania, 1896, 82-83.

\textsuperscript{127} ANS, 874-1900.

\textsuperscript{128} In 1910 Telciu had over three thousand residents, of which approximately twenty-nine hundred were Romanian. Moldovan and Togan, Dicționarul numirilor de localități, 180.
own popular library, not an itinerant one.\textsuperscript{129} A month later the despârţământ followed this letter with an appeal to communal leaders in the region requesting that they set up local Astra chapters, sign up more members, and collect their dues. Once the locals collected sixty to eighty crowns in dues, the regional directors pledged that all of the money would be used for a library in the respective commune.\textsuperscript{130} The appeal convinced some local leaders in the Năsăud despârţământ to collect more money. By 1908, five communes had set up permanent libraries.\textsuperscript{131}

The directors of the Năsăud despârţământ were not the only ones to use libraries to entice Romanians to found rural Astra chapters or to encourage associate members to pay their dues. Throughout Hungary local leaders organized agenturi in order to get books from the association for their own local libraries. The central committee received numerous letters from rural priests requesting free books for their village collections. The committee initially sent materials unconditionally. but by 1909 it demanded that the priests organize a local chapter with a minimum of four members before sending any materials.\textsuperscript{132} In some cases, when locals did not make their annual dues payments in time, regional leaders used the libraries as leverage, threatening to remove the collections of books and newspapers unless the dues were paid.\textsuperscript{133}

Considering the resources and restrictions of the association, Astra established an impressive number of popular libraries between 1900 and 1914. At the turn of the century there were fifty-four rural libraries, mostly itinerant collections, for ninety-seven

\textsuperscript{129} ANBN. Fond Astra despârţământ Năsăud anii extremiti 1861-1939, file 3-4.
\textsuperscript{130} Ibid., file 9. Priests and teachers were the primary recipients of the appeal but Astra leaders also sent it to local notaries, lawyers, doctors, professors, mayors, and landowners in twenty-three different communes. Ibid., file 10-11.
\textsuperscript{131} Transilvania, 1909, 265. These libraries were set up in Rebra-mare, Parva, epos, Feldru, and Maier.
\textsuperscript{132} The minutes of central committee meetings are full of such requests. See for example Procese Verbale, 1909, entry numbers 67 (254-1909), 74 (259-1908), 101 (371-1909), and 363 (1245-1909).
By 1907 Astra had established two hundred three village libraries, although one hundred fifty-four of these were located in ten regional chapters. The remaining thirty-nine despărtământe had done little to offer villagers access to reading materials. There was a thirty percent increase in the number of libraries the following year, and by 1914 Astra had established six hundred twenty-six popular libraries. The above graph illustrates this growth.

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133 ANS, 494-1902.
134 Transilvania, 1901, 60.
135 These despărtământe included Agnita with seven libraries, Bistrița with eleven, Blaj with eleven, Brașov with nineteen, Cluj with twenty-one, Oradea with twenty, Săliște with twenty-two, Sebeș with ten, Șimleu with thirteen, and Timișoara with twenty. Transilvania, 1908, 24, 66-79.
136 Transilvania, 1915, 105.
The successful increase in rural libraries did not satisfy association leaders. They had set as their goal a village library for each of the three thousand four hundred twelve villages lying within Astra despărțământe boundaries. In 1915 eighteen percent of all villages met this goal. It also troubled Astra leaders that many of the libraries were quite small. In 1912 Astra published a detailed report on the state of Romanian popular libraries, including those it did not administer itself (generally school or church libraries). The data is incomplete because many regional leaders did not submit careful reports, but it still reveals the problems the association faced. Of four hundred twenty-nine reported libraries, the association knew how many volumes existed in three hundred seventy-five libraries. Sixty-one percent of all known collections had fifty works or fewer. Twenty percent had one hundred volumes or fewer. Eleven percent contained between one hundred one and one hundred fifty works. Three percent had up to two hundred works, and only five percent had over two hundred works. The pie chart on the following page illustrates this breakdown.

The number of rural readers recorded by a third of Romanian librarians in 1911 also qualifies the successful increase in the number of libraries. According to the reports, seventy percent of all libraries with the known number of readers had fewer than fifty people check out books. Up to one hundred readers borrowed books in fourteen percent of the libraries. Eight percent of the libraries had between one hundred one and one hundred fifty readers. Four percent of the libraries had up to two hundred borrowers, and four percent had more than two hundred borrowers. Most of these readers were young.

137 The data for this graph comes from Astra central committee reports published annually in Transilvania. See volumes 1901, 60; 1902, 56; 1903, 64; 1904, 76-78; 1905, 86; 1906, 80; 1907, 70-71; 1908, 24; 1909, 254; 1910, 201; 1911, 492; 1912, 306; 1913, 204; 1914, 245; and 1915, 105.
138 Transilvania, 1915, 105.
Romanians, often of school age. The libraries with the largest number of readers were generally situated in towns and cities.\footnote{\textit{Transilvania}, 1912, 375-86.}

Rural readership, thus, remained statistically low; however, the report does not take into account the numbers of villagers attending weekly reading groups at which literate individuals of Astra local chapters read library books aloud to those gathered.\footnote{Ibid.} In this light, Astra was more successful at making written materials available to rural Romanians.

Astra leaders had hoped to make books and newspapers available to rural readers so that Romanian villagers would develop a love of reading that the elites shared. In this

\footnote{"Raport despre biblioteca poporală a Astrei agentura Bazma," dated 20 January 1911, Muzeul Național de Istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca. Fond Iuliu Boiță, M538. See also ANS. 1624-1911.}
sense they wanted villagers to become more like them, educated adults interested in continual learning that they could put to work in the service of the national community as they bettered themselves. But in another sense, the elite never considered the villagers quite capable of achieving equal status with them. They differences and interests of the groups were too great. Elites designed the collections of popular lectures to address village needs but their works separated them from the very people they had hoped to be able to shape into the image of themselves.

The rules Astra published in 1899 for establishing and administrating popular libraries set clear guidelines for the kinds of materials appropriate for rural readers. First the books had to be written in a popular style, in colloquial, not academic Romanian. Materials submitted for review that did not meet this standard were routinely rejected by Astra reviewers. Thus, the language that nationalists proclaimed as a unifying force was in fact a divisive factor that distinguished educated Romanians from their unlettered Romanian others. Subjects of popular works also had to meet certain requirements. Without rejecting the importance of histories, ethnographies, religious treatises, or materials that provided entertaining moral content. Astra leaders wanted the works in popular libraries to address the daily needs of rural Romanians. These included such themes as agriculture, viniculture, gardening, the cultivation of fruit and nut trees, bee keeping, craftsmanship, commerce, law, and hygiene. The central committee announced that it would soon commission experts to publish a list of the most appropriate works. but, until then, it stipulated that the regional chapters in charge of rural library acquisitions observe one last regulation: There was no place in Astra’s popular libraries
for irreligious, immoral, socialist, antidynastic, or anticonstitutional literature. Astra’s program was profoundly conservative and the literature it made available would not undermine the current social order.

The twelve-page single-spaced list of books that the association commission recommended for popular village libraries confirms this observation. History books offered the sole source of possible socio-political content, and most of these gave priority to Romanian nationalist views. The list was divided into seven broad themes: folklore (folktales, anecdotes, proverbs, riddles, and poetry), popular stories, belles-lettres, history and geography, natural sciences, medicine and hygiene, and agriculture literature. All books were assumed appropriate for general readers except those noted with an asterisk designating them for mature readers only. Despite the central committee’s emphasis on the need for works pertaining to the daily life of rural Romanians, the list focused heavily on reading that provided moral entertainment. Of the four hundred thirty-three works on the list, only sixty-five, or fifteen percent of the materials, dealt with the natural sciences, medicine and hygiene, or agriculture. Works discussed in previous committee sessions on law, public finance, and administration did not even appear in the final list. The general shortage of such works partially accounted for their absence in this list.

When Astra’s elites found appropriate books lacking, they coordinated paid competitions to encourage authors to produce the required works. In this respect Astra’s elites established a double standard. They expected rural leaders and villagers to perform

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142 “N’au loc în bibliotecile poporale scrieri, cari propagă idei ireligioase ori imorale, socialiste, antidinastice și anticonstituționale.” “Regulament pentru înființarea și administrarea bibliotecilor poporale ale Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român,” Transilvania, 1899, partea oficială, 22-23, paragraph 6.
143 “Repertoriu de cărți pentru Bibliotecile poporale ale Asociațiunii,” Transilvania, 1900, partea oficială, 20-32. For a list of the categories under initial discussion see Transilvania, 1899, partea oficială, 5-6.
many tasks without compensation, but their own work, especially the publication of academic or popular literature, deserved monetary awards. Sometimes authors received lump sum payments for works submitted to Astra competitions. At other times the association published the work and gave the author a specific number of copies to sell or disburse as he saw fit.\textsuperscript{144} In the case of popular works, Astra sold or distributed the copies at its disposal without charge among Romanian libraries, villagers, or other civil associations.

The free distribution of Astra booklets was vital to the growth of rural libraries. In general the book list the association provided only offered guidelines, as the books themselves were too expensive to purchase and ship for all but the wealthiest of Astra chapters. Thus, Astra popular libraries depended heavily on what was available at little or no cost. Astra leaders tried to fulfill the requests of rural leaders who, from time to time, asked for specific types of books. In 1903, for example, the local Astra representatives in the commune of Râşnov expressed a desire for more religious books. The regional leaders noted their desire and delivered the requested books two months later.\textsuperscript{145} Astra despărțământ directors also tried to provide newspapers for village readers. In addition to Transilvania, they ordered subscriptions to Familia, Foaia Poporului, Gazeta Transilvaniei, Gazeta de Duminică, and other local publications.\textsuperscript{146} By and large, though, the popular libraries contained the works Astra published specifically for rural audiences.

\textsuperscript{144} Transilvania, 1899, partea oficială, 35, 138-39.
\textsuperscript{145} ANS, 607-1903.
\textsuperscript{146} ANS, 177-1896, 246-1900.
Popular Book Publications

Most of the works for Astra's rural libraries came from the popular book series Astra began publishing in 1901, entitled Biblioteca poporală a asociațiunii. The series had had a slow start, but by late 1904 it consisted of sixteen booklets with a modest increase of approximately four brochures a year. At the end of 1910 the series contained thirty-seven works, each with a two-thousand to five-thousand copy run. Astra leaders recognized the importance of these booklets, but they were not satisfied with their production. The populists, in particular, complained that the language and the style of the materials did not correspond to the reading proficiency of Romanian villagers. Neither were there enough publications for rural readers. In 1908, at the time the association began to create separate programs for the educated elite and Romanian villagers, populist Astra leader Octavian Goga proposed that the association plan a monthly series of popular readings. He argued that Astra had an obligation to serve not only Romanian intellectuals but also the masses. The association could best meet villagers' cultural and educational needs, he explained, with works suited to their mentality. Villagers would never develop a love of reading with an economic treatise, he contended. They needed works that stirred their souls, that helped them rediscover themselves and conserve their ancestral mentality, the marker of their social and national being. This would have two beneficial effects in Goga's eyes. First, it would protect rural Romanians from the dangers of foreign influences. And second, it would help sustain Romanian traditions and historic values that Goga believed were beginning to languish. Because he identified the essence of Romanianness, the genuine character of the nation, in the mentality and
lifestyles of rural Romanians, Goga urged Astra to cultivate these important factors in its educational and cultural programs, and ultimately in its campaign to assert Romanian autonomy in Hungary. To support his proposal, Goga offered a more detailed plan to produce original works and translate others. He also solicited the help of other populists to help realize his plan.¹⁴⁸

Astra leaders intent on giving the peasantry a national education agreed to Goga’s plans and revised the earlier series, which they began to publish in 1911. During the first three months they printed approximate three thousand copies of each monthly work, but soon discovered that the demand far exceeded the supplies they had planned. The fourth and remaining works had copy runs of fifteen thousand issues. During the next four years (1911-1914) Astra annually published ten booklets plus a calendar. The topics of the booklets varied widely. The series featured historical works; collections of poetry, stories, and legends; pamphlets on agricultural methods; legal and administrative instructions; medical guidelines; literature translated from German and Czech; and moral tales among other topics.¹⁴⁹ Every paid Astra associate member and each Astra popular library received the works for free. As a result, thousands of villagers became associate members and the booklets were distributed in the hundred of thousands over the next four years.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Literary section member, professor Andrei Bârseanu, drew up the plan for the popular book series, which was published in Transilvania, and approved by the central committee and general assembly. Transilvania, 1901, 181-90. partea oficială, 39, 143.
¹⁴⁹ Some of the materials—like Dr. Ioan Lupaș “Despre șeicul neamul românesc.” (Sibiu: 1906 and 1911); Ioan Pop Reteganul’s “Poveștiri din vieța țăranilor.” vol. II (Sibiu: 1900 and 1913); Romul Simu’s “Comuna viitorul” (Sibiu: 1907 and 1912); or Dr. Aurel R. Dobrescu’s “Cum sa train?” (Sibiu: 1908 and 1912) — were re-editions from the previous popular book collection. See chapter four for an analysis of Simu’s work.
¹⁵⁰ Upon request the works were also sent to village priests and teachers who had to agree to establish and maintain a rural library on behalf of Astra. See chapter three for details.
Leaders of the literary section who were responsible for the new series of books designed the topics to help transform rural readers into hard-working autodidacts looking to improve their lives. They wanted to attract villagers to the association, raise the national consciousness of villagers, and mold them into responsible Romanian nationals. In order to do this they had to incorporate the lived experiences of Romanian villagers into the larger national narrative. As explained in chapter two, eighteenth-century Romanian aristocrats and clergy and nineteenth century Romanian intellectuals had already adopted the modern concept of the Romanian nation as a unique, organically homogeneous, and potentially autonomous community. Astra's popular books were part of the on-going effort to translate the modern idea of the Romanian nation for the broader national community. Nineteenth-century villagers throughout Hungary realized at some level that they were Romanian and that their Latin language differentiated them from other Slavic Orthodox peoples, but popular consciousness of the modern national had to be raised. It was not a natural sensibility. Before Romanian villagers in Hungary could think of themselves as part of a modern national community, they had to be able to integrate the idea of the nation into their everyday lives.

Romanian authors of Astra's popular books tried to make connections between the national ideal and the lived experiences of Romanian villagers with books on, for example, the historical development of the nation. Ioan Lupaș authored the first book Astra issued in its the newly revised popular book series. Lupaș explained that he wrote his popular historical work because the historical account of the origins and evolution of the Romanian people would give readers a better idea of what was, in order

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to know what will be. He confidently assumed that the past would provide clear guidance for the future. In this case, he tried to show his provincial readers that they were an integral part of a unified Romanian nation that needed to reclaim its past autonomy. Lupaș built on the historical works made available by nineteenth-century historians. He described the ethnogenesis of the contemporary Romanian community with stories of Roman conquerors who defeated the native Dacians and settled among them, eventually establishing friendships and then intermarrying to bring forth a new people, Romanians. From the Romans, the Romanians received a Latin language. Their customs and ways of life were inherited from the Dacians. Early Romanians, Lupaș argued, lived autonomously in the very region inhabited by present-day Romanians whose common residency, language, customs, and history, he concluded, united them. Lupaș’s story ascribed social significance to the rural lifestyles of his village readers in many of the same ways the works of the Transylvanian School influenced Romanian intellectuals. Not only did the readers speak Romanian, but they also valued the customs and traditions believed to have been inherited from the Dacians and incorporated into their religious practices. The historical narratives gave national meaning to the customs and traditions that provided the framework of village life. But the narratives also distinguished the rural population from urban elites. For unlike the professional and intellectual urban residents, Romanian peasants still lived according to village customs and traditions. They were also believed more likely than Romanian intellectuals and professionals to speak Romanian rather than Hungarian, German, or French in their everyday social and commercial exchanges. Moreover, unlike their urban counterparts, rural readers lived off the same
land and worked the same mines as the early Romanians depicted in the narrative.

According to Lupaș’ book, they, the peasants, embodied the authentic nation.

Lupaș' focus on the origins of the Romanian people offers a striking illustration of the different ways Astra elites used the past to popularize different images of the Romanian nation. Instead of the historic contributions the learned Romanian man made to the national community, which Lupaș described in his scholarly conference on Barițiu discussed above, in this book Lupaș described the central place of the peasantry in the Romanian national community. There is no great, modern Romanian man to lead the national community here. Lupaș personified the peasants as the real Romanian nationals in their historic and present forms. Astra published Lupaș' work in order to help increase peasant awareness of their nationality and to further their politicization, but the work did not encourage change as much as it confirmed Romanian villagers as the authentic representatives of the Romanian nation with their traditional ways of life as the genuine basis of the Romanian nation. The two different images of the nation that Lupaș offered Astra members in his scholarly conferences and popular writings — the enlightened Romanian man energetically serving the nation and the villagers farming the land and living according to ancient Romanian customs — were not confined either to Lupaș or to Astra's educational programs. The differences in the two dominant images are more apparent in the cultural activities Astra organized. These images and the consequences of their incompatibility are discussed in chapter six.

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152 One of the few great Romanian men Lupaș quotes, Mihai Kogălniceanu, underscored the importance of the rural community who had according to Lupaș preserved uncorrupted Romanian customs, language, and ways of life. "Let us hold on especially to the past," Lupaș excerpts, and "let us preserve the customs of our ancestors and cling to our language and history." "să ne ţinem mai ales de cele trecute, să ne ţinem de obiceiurile strămoşesti, să ne ţinem de limba şi de istoria noastră..." Kogălniceanu quoted in Ibid., 5.

153 See chapter six for more details.
Conclusions

Astra's focus on rural educational programs demonstrate the elites' conviction that the future of the Romanian nation ultimately depended on an enlightened and awakened peasantry. Association leaders were convinced that if they could build a unified national community with educational programs, the peasants would have the skills necessary to transform their lives, and the national community would have the ability to compete with other, more advanced nation. With the backing of a nationally conscious and prosperous peasantry, association leaders expected to realize their aspirations for greater autonomy over their own lives.

In addition to education, Astra also focused on the culture of the Romanian people. Cultural programs, Astra leaders calculated, would also help awaken peasant national consciousness, protecting Romanians from the dangers of assimilating into the more prosperous and powerful Magyar nation-state. Cultural programs would have the additional benefit, Astra leaders thought, of creating common bonds among Romanians and thus uniting Astra's intellectual and professional elites with the rural masses. Astra leaders accepted that basic commonalities among Romanian nationals differentiated them from other peoples, but they also recognized consistent and significant divisions in the national community and sought to reduce them. Unfortunately for Astra leaders seeking closer national unity, Astra members did not mean the same thing when they talked about unity. Many intellectual and professional members of the association expected the Romanian nation to provide equal treatment and opportunity for all Romanians, but they also accepted a more hierarchical social structure based on inequalities of talent or personal ambition and on economic diversity more characteristic of market capitalism.
The populists among other leaders in Astra like Lupaș, on the other hand, idealized the "Romaianness" of the peasantry without romanticizing its impoverishment or its ignorance. These men were willing to work to change rural conditions as long as change did not destroy the mystical purity and individuality of traditional Romanian life that they believed smallholders had preserved.

The two different visions of a unified national community led to the two different programs within the association, which unintentionally emphasized the divisions in the national community. The differences did not interrupt Astra's cultural and educational work because Astra successfully used the concept of the nation to mask differences and disagreements. Although association members actually meant different things when they evoked the concept of the nation, they all claimed to be talking about the same thing. It was thus possible for Astra members to uphold the ideal of the nation and its unity, to believe in the ideal, and simultaneously and unknowingly to undermine it.
Chapter Six
The Organization of National Enthusiasm and Cultural Unity

In 1898 when Astra leaders were intensifying their efforts to raise the national consciousness of Romanian villagers and build a mass national movement, a newspaper editorialist reminded them that the peasantry had taken a direct interest in the association whenever it had set up itinerant libraries, organized exhibits displaying the wares of Romanian village women, or offered awards to villagers for the best kept gardens. The author encouraged the association to offer more venues like this if it wanted the peasantry to embrace its national cause and participate in its programs, not out of curiosity, but out of a genuine interest in the association's work. If Astra wanted to create a secure bond between the people and the intellectuals, the author concluded, the association needed to offer more festive activities for villagers.¹

Many Astra leaders agreed with the editorial, but they did not just want to attract villagers to the association. They wanted the villagers to accept them as national leaders. In 1908 Astra's central committee sent a letter to the directors of Astra regional chapters explaining that peasants would welcome them with brotherly love and gain confidence in them as leaders if they would show sincere interest in the plight of the peasantry by physically going to rural communities and offering solutions to ease the burdens of village life.² But the gap between the intellectuals and the peasants was not so easily overcome. Astra's educated leaders had hoped to make villagers prosperous, autodidactic farmers, but they quickly learned that villagers only participated in events that resonated with their rural experiences. The activities Astra sponsored had to relate to the everyday

¹ "Asociațiunea pe sate," Foaia Poporului 33, 9/21 August 1898, 388.
² "Circulară," Transilvania, 1908, 220.
lives of villagers and invest those lives with national meaning. Astra had the most success integrating villagers into its organization with festive cultural activities that portrayed rural life as a national heritage. Association leaders hoped that villagers attracted to their rural images of the national communities would accept their leadership and begin to make changes in their life that would not only help them advance individually, but also ensure the prosperity of the national community.

Yet Astra leaders overlooked the fundamental tension in their plans between innovation and preservation. Astra designed its educational programs and publications to promote the unity and progress of the nation by encouraging villagers to become more educated and change the way they farmed, but at the same Astra designed its cultural programs to promote the unity and preservation of the nation by encouraging Romanian villagers to assert and thus retain their traditional rural characteristics and ways of life. The representation of the Romanian national character in rural life contradicted the embodiment of the nation's future in educated men. As a result, Astra's cultural activities worked against the elite's educational goals to transform the Romanian peasantry into informed and economically productive nationals who recognized elite leadership.

The biggest problem for Astra elites was that the cultural programs were successful. With the help of local leaders, the association attracted thousands of peasants to its annual festivals with performances and parties commemorating the peasant-based nation, to its museum and exhibits displaying peasant contributions to the national community, and to its competitions offering contestants awards for fulfilling their role in the national community. The successful programs encouraged many villagers to act as if they constituted the genuine Romanian national community. Rural leaders began to use
the national authority Astra conferred on village life to contest the professional elites' leadership of the association. Because Astra depended on rural priests and teachers to expand its campaign throughout the countryside, Astra's more urban and often secular leaders had to concede some control over the nation-building process to those local leaders. The concessions allowed rural notables to challenge the elites' idea of a learned, progressive nation and to argue for a community over which they had more influence and in which their interests were addressed.

Challenges from rural leaders did not conform to the plans of Astra leaders. Romanian elites initiated the cultural movement to enhance their own authority, but the transformation from a feudal state of privileged natiós to an autonomous nation of enfranchised citizens forced the elites to defend their own power. Their defense illustrated the tension between progress and preservation in their construction of the nation: they represented themselves as enlightened, progressive men married to women who helped preserve the peasant characteristics of the Romanian nation. Elite women had long considered themselves an important core of the Romanian nation, but before the end of the nineteenth century their relationship to the rural base had not been clearly defined. The connection between elite women and traditional village life made before the Great War helped secure leadership of Romanian elites over the hierarchical social order in Astra.

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3 See chapters three and five for more on the importance of clerical support for the association.
5 The connection likely helped elite women retain their leadership in their own circles, but my study concerning Astra offers no direct evidence of this.
Villagers and their leaders were not, however, discouraged by the intact social order. Nation building in Astra was a contentious process out of which emerged a modern, factious, and heterogeneous national community, rather than the culturally homogeneous "people" of whom some nationalists dreamt. Nevertheless, the contestation made it possible to believe in the national ideal, because it perpetuated the ideal in multiple forms. Even when promises of the national ideal failed to materialize as expected—when, for example, rural leaders discovered that their membership in the nation carried less weight than that of urban professionals—villagers continued to adhere to the national ideal. And they did so because by acting on their vision of the Romanian peasant nation, the villagers helped construct their nation and their own sense of self: they represented themselves as Romanian nationals and increased the autonomy they had over their own lives.

**On Culture**

Astra leaders' vision of a national community capable of gaining political recognition and leading an autonomous national life in Hungary did not require social homogeneity. As explained in chapters four and five, Romanian elites wanted to coordinate the diverse activities of all Romanian individuals so that their national community would advance collectively. Yet Romanian nationalists did need something to unite the members of the Romanian nation and to distinguish Romanians from other nationalities. Culture presumably fulfilled both functions, but ultimately culture did not provide a uniform bond because it served as a placeholder for a unity that did not exist. Although culture supposedly signified unity, when nationalists gave examples of Romanian culture, they referred to varied and sometimes contradictory, or seemingly
unrelated, things. The discrepancies of the references are due not to indecision or uncertainty, but to the multifaceted character and diversity of a society imaging itself to be a coherent, assessable whole. Romanian nationalists believed that culture unified their nation, but they also paradoxically believed that they were in a fight to realize their cultural unity. Thus, they employed different conceptions of culture that could apply to the different class and gendered dimensions of Romanian society in order to integrate all Romanians into one national community that was presumably culturally homogeneous. This was especially important in Astra, the society dedicated to the culture of the Romanian people.

Astra leaders believed that cultured people were first and foremost educated. When prominent Romanians talked about education, they often used the word "lumina," which means light, learning or culture. Sometimes, however, they claimed that Romanians needed "lumina culturei," the light or learning of culture. In either case, the correlation between culture and education was so strong that for Romanian elites one automatically implied the other.⁶

In their attempts to further Romanian culture, Astra leaders promoted scholarship, readership of newspapers, libraries, basic literacy, and all the other educational activities discussed in chapter five, but they also promoted practical life skills. According to many Romanian elites, cultured people enjoyed good health. They lived in clean, comfortable homes. They ate nutritious food. And they took care of their children properly to secure the future of the nation. Astra therefore developed educational programs that not only

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⁶ The implication is clear in an article published in the association’s journal Transilvania that is entitled "Statistica culturală" but only offers statistical evidence of Romanian literacy rates, numbers of students enrolled in universities and professional studies as well as secondary and elementary schools. Transilvania, 1899, 1-13.
gave practical hygiene instruction, but also emphasized the connection between peasant mothers and the national community. In the name of the nation, Astra sponsored baby competitions and other exhibits discussed below, designed to bring villagers, and especially village women, into its national organization of society.7

Yet culture encompassed more than education. It was also a way of life represented in material things and performative acts. Dance, woven cloth, songs, ballads, poetry, clothing, language, housing styles, and household furnishings, among other things, constituted Romanian culture. Astrists explained that these cultural representations captured the thought, feeling, will, and internal expression of a people.8 To preserve and strengthen the essence of the people (made visible in their possessions and behavior), Astra organized competitive exhibits and performances that rewarded villagers for being model Romanians. The association acknowledged villagers as genuine Romanian nationals to try to create a bond between all Romanians who presumably shared peasant descent and a collective memory of peasant life.

Culture in Astra had religious or moral dimensions as well. In a 1911 popular lecture given in the commune of Bachnea, the director of Astra's Dicio-Sânt-Mărtin chapter Dr. Romul Boiâ explained that there was no cause holier for the Romanian people than the cultural cause.9 And what did the culture of a people mean, he asked? It meant the material and intellectual well-being of a people. That well-being could only come about, Boiâ confirmed, if a people worked hard, remained faithful Christians. built

7 Efforts to turn peasant women into responsible Romanian mothers were quite different from the kinds of biological controls Romanian elites attempted in the interwar period. For a good history of Romanian eugenicists, see Maria Bucur, Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002).
up property, preserved moral strength, were literate and understood the value of books, kept their ancestors' traditions, and encouraged themselves with the ideal of its nation. If the Romanians had all of these things, Boiă explained, they would be considered a cultured people. Because Romanians did not have these elements working in their favor, Boiă prescribed sacrifice as the means to achieve them.10

Sacrifice was a moral duty not only for Boiă's popular audience at Bachnea, but also for Romanian intellectuals. In an 1894 article by Liviu Lemény published in Transilvania, the director of the Șâlășe despărtământ argued that true culture concerned moral character. "Many of our people," he wrote, "believe that culture—that is the knowledge of books—is nothing more than a means to obtain wealth and a good life, to become a gentleman. Because of this belief, they disregarded that one does not gain a fortune through education." With their knowledge, they set themselves apart to strive for material gain. "True culture," Lemény asserted, "is altogether different from stuffing oneself full of knowledge; true culture is culture of the heart, culture of character. It is a question of life or death for our people." Lemény continued. Romanians needed "true culture, the culture of character, which rejects the inferior desire for material well-being and rises above narcissism to deny oneself for the benefit of one's people and country (neamă și patriă). We have enough intellectuals," Lemény complained, "but we have painfully few with true culture of character."11

Lemény's criticism of selfish Romanian intellectuals and their erroneous concept of culture paralleled expectations other Romanian nationalists held about culture as a

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9 Many Astrists described their cultural cause as holy. See for example the article "Înainte de adunarea generală dela Sebeș," Transilvania, 1894, 225.
10 Muzeul național de istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca, Fond Iuliu Boiă, nr. inv. M523.
unifying force among Romanians. In a 1910 conference at Astra's Sâlăște chapter meeting entitled "Our Cultural Unity" ("Unitatea noastră culturală"), Blaj professor Gavril Precup argued that nations and peoples were affirmed through their culture. Although he focused most of his talk on Romanian language and literature, he also explained that the unity of the Romanian people over the centuries stemmed from a cultural tradition.\footnote{Gavril Precup, "Unitatea noastră culturală," \textit{Transilvania}, 1910, 326-27.} The conference speaker for Astra's 1909 annual assembly Dr. Valeriu Brânscăe echoed this sentiment when he declared that through the association, Romanians opened an arena in which they could remove all particularisms, all confessional, political, local or provincial differences, and meet together, united in thought and sentiment.\footnote{Dr. Valeriu Brânscăe, "Alesandru de Mocsonyi," \textit{Transilvania}, 1909, 416-17.}

Cultural unity was important to Romanian nationalists because they believed that it would empower Romanians, enabling them to rise above their circumstances and take their place among the other peoples of Hungary. Brânscăe asserted at that same conference that "the fight for Romanian culture is nothing less than the fight for national existence. Culture not only develops national consciousness, religious sentiment, the basis of morality, patriotism, civic virtues, an economic spirit, the foundation of material prosperity, and an aesthetic sense...." but it also, he proclaimed, "removes the powerful shackles of the hardships of our times and awakens all the latent powers of the people, and thus assures the national existence of the Romanian people in Hungary."\footnote{Ibid.} A newspaper editorial in 1913 by a church official insisted that Romanians needed to develop a modern, superior culture to help them confront the threats from foreign competitors. Culture is the only means, the author explained, through which our people
can regain their lost rights and property.\textsuperscript{15} Astra leaders rarely risked mentioning specific goals like recovering rights or property for fear that Hungarian leaders would judge their cultural activity as political organization and shut down the association. But they did regularly express the idea that the cultural work of the association empowered Romanians and assured their future among the other peoples in Hungary.\textsuperscript{16} Orthodox Archbishop and Metropolitan Ioan Mețianu told those gathered at the 1911 Astra assembly in the Greek Catholic cathedral in Blaj that although they were divided into two confessions, because they shared the same origin, the same descent, and the same ancestral language, they all had the same holy duty to work together on the culture and prosperity of their people in order to assure themselves a future as favorable and happy as their non-Romanian compatriots in Hungary.\textsuperscript{17}

These assurances that a shared culture guaranteed a brighter future for the Romanian nation in Hungary acknowledged the threats Romanians felt from Hungarian state policies of Magyarization discussed in chapter two. Cultural unity, nationalists believed, differentiated Romanians from Hungarians and provided a strategy to resist the pressure to assimilate into the Hungarian nation-state. Cultural unity also offered a means to promote economic development and catch up with the Hungarians. The moral aspects of cultural development—e.g. hard work and sacrifice leading to an accumulation of wealth—would give Romanians more control over their own lives. Hence the fight for Romanian culture was a fight to be equal to, but different from, other nations.

\textsuperscript{15} de Arhipresbiter, "O vocea serioasă în ora supreme," Telegraful roman, 25 December 1913, 21-22.  
\textsuperscript{16} See for example Andrei Bârsanu, "Discursul d-lui Andrei Bârsanu," Transilvania, 1907, 193; idem, "Discursul de deschidere," Transilvania, 1908, 169-76; and Banisica, "Alesandru de Mocsonyi."  
\textsuperscript{17} "Serbările jubilare ale 'Asociațiunii'," Transilvania, 1911, 744-45.
In this fight, popular culture took on new significance because only it and language differentiated Romanians from other groups. Education and material wealth would set Romanians on equal terms with the enfranchised national communities, but they did not set Romanians apart as a national community that, in nationalists' eyes, deserved autonomy. This was not an immediate problem for nationalist leaders because they believed that they shared aspects of popular culture in common with rural communities. Most nineteenth-century Romanian elites were only one or two generations removed from peasant families. They just had to determine what aspects of popular culture they shared with their rural co-nationals. Leaders in Astra emphasized the material and performative aspects of traditional peasant life that they assumed had been passed down from their own ancestors, including styles of clothing, household linens, items of household industry, as well as dances, poetry, songs, and stories. This emphasis had two important advantages: villagers could identify with the national community elites wanted to build and the elites could continue to call for rural change. In theory it preserved the differences among Romanians and unified them at the same time. In reality it did not quite work out that way.

Although the cultural programs created the appearance of Romanian cultural unity, unity ultimately eluded Astra leaders because they based national unity on fundamental cultural similarities among Romanians that contradicted social differences among Romanians. Like all nationalists, Romanian elites assumed that the nation was both a collection of individuals and a collective individual. They expected all individual members to work for the economic prosperity and political autonomy of the collective,
national individual. But once they identified the national collective in the material and performative aspects of peasant culture, the collective national individual became a peasant. Consequently the construction of the nation became a same-but-different conundrum that Astra leaders could only escape by adopting some aspects of peasant life as their own.

**Cultural Programs**

"The annual meetings of our cultural society are true national celebrations."

asserted Astra vice-president Andrei Bărsanu in his speech opening Astra's 1907 general assembly. The festivities at Astra's annual meetings had always attracted Romanians to the association, but outside of two exceptional years, Astra did not organize mass celebrations for popular audiences until the turn of the twentieth century. Only after Romanian leaders failed to gain political recognition in the early 1890s did Astra's elites try to incorporate villagers into a unified, mass, national movement. Although not all Romanian leaders favored Astra's new direction, as explained in chapter three, the rising influence of Romanian populists in Astra in the early twentieth century gave Astra's rural activities new impetus. The turn toward the masses required continuous planning. In 1906 Bărsanu was still encouraging Astra members to give all of their attention to "their" peasants, who, he explained, formed then as now the foundation of our people. The

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19 The association organized large-scale exhibits of popular wares and household items in 1862 and 1881. Both events had significant results, but the excitement they stirred waned, and Astra did not return to the popular venues until the 1890s. Another large-scale exhibit was not held until 1905 when its display became a permanent part of the association's museum. See below for more on the museum. For more information on the earlier exhibits, see Vasile Dobrescu, *Elita românească în lumea satului transilvan* (Târgu Mureș: Editura Universității "Petru Maior," 1996); idem, "Expoziția economică-națională a "ASTREI" din 1881," in *Sub semnul lui Clio. Omagiu Academicianului Profesor Ștefan Pascu* (Cluj: 1974): 550-56; and *Transilvania*, 1911, 413-15.
constant reminders and organization efforts paid off.\textsuperscript{20} By 1911, the year Astra celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in Blaj, the historic center of the Greek Catholic Church and the site of the revolutionary gathering in May 1848, the association had developed regular and successful popular venues that endorsed Romanian villagers as the heart of the Romanian national community.

Even before the push for a mass national movement, Astra's annual meetings involved much fanfare. The central committee tried to organize the meetings in different cities throughout Hungary.\textsuperscript{21} In 1893 Astra leaders met in the Greek Catholic center of Năsăud. When the leaders of the central committee and other regional chapters arrived at the train station in the nearby town of Bistrița, a local leader officially welcomed the visitors, and a crowd received them with a loud, welcoming shout ["Se trăiasca!" (sic)]. Astra's vice president Ilarion Pușcariu gave his own greeting, followed by numerous handshakes, and the assembled spectators proceeded to the local hotel for lunch. After lunch the visitors and their hosts headed off to Năsăud. On the outskirts of the town a delegation of locals accompanied by young men in traditional folk costumes on horseback met the visitors. The vicar heading the local delegation and Astra vice president exchanged public greetings, and the group entered Năsăud under a welcome banner for yet another round of public salutations, this time with the town mayor. Those gathered, including school children grouped with their teachers, applauded the meeting, and the visitors walked through the streets of Năsăud "in triumph" as a choir of volunteer

\textsuperscript{20} The entertainment they planned not only brought in new, rural members and admirers, who showed up for the celebrations but who did not pay regular dues, it also brought in needed income. The committee in charge of festivities for the 1901 gathering in Sibiu turned in over two thousand crowns of net profit to the central committee; slightly more than the amount the 1905 general assembly approved for spending on popular lectures for an entire year. Transilvania. 1901. Partea oficială, 183.
firemen sang. The author who described this event wrote that it was a moment that warmed the hearts of everyone there.22

The visitors were taken to their lodgings, and later they attended a welcoming party organized in a room at a local hotel. Another local choir provided musical entertainment for the meal served to the esteemed guests and their hosts, which reportedly lasted long into the night. The next morning before the eight o’clock church service, a local school choir sang requested prayers. During the service, a village choir performed, and after the service, the Năsăud vicar and head of the Astra chapter in Năsăud explained the significance of the association to those gathered, summarized its history and development, and eulogized its presidents.

The first meeting opened at eleven o’clock in the school assembly hall. The vice president gave a short speech, and then association leaders attended to official business: registering students with Astra stipends and delegates from Astra’s regional chapters in attendance, reviewing educational programs, examining and setting new budgets, registering new and deceased Astra members, reading and approving the general report, and welcoming nineteen new members. The meeting concluded at two p.m.23

A banquet followed the business meeting. Astra banquets were moneymaking events, and only those who could afford the two-florins-sixty-crown cost of this meal could attend. All Astra banquets began with toasts. Toasting was serious business that could last an hour or more. The toasts could be impromptu decla:ations or they could be

21 Delegates assembled for an annual meeting waited for representatives of a regional chapter to volunteer to host the next meeting and then voted on the proposal. Upon occasion the central committee had to request volunteers. If none proved willing, Sibiu was the most popular choice for the default location.
poetic orations. Official toasts were circulated in advance. The highest-ranking Astra representative offered the first toast to the Habsburg monarch. A series of toasts congratulating local, central, and regional leaders ensued, followed by generic toasts to the association, the Romanian nation, the Romanian woman, the Romanian peasant, the Romanian youth, etc.... At the conclusion of the toasts and the meal, the Romanian leaders exited into the streets to shake the hands of local villagers and townsmen as they proceeded to their lodgings.

After a second and final business meeting conducted the following morning, which highlighted a lecture on the Roman victory over the Dacians, the annual assembly closed with a ball held in the local school. Balls, too, were moneymaking venues. This one cost two florins or, if a family came together, one-florin-fifty-crowns per family member. It featured sixteen dances of European and Romanian origin. Several villagers showed up in local folk costumes and competed for the 2 galbini (gold coin) prize for the nicest handwork in a national costume. At midnight a group of twelve students performed two Romanian folk dances. "Călușerulă" and "Bătuta." The ball and its folk-dancing performance crowned the events of the 1893 assembly. The next morning the visitors shook hands with their hosts and boarded their trains to go home.

The scope of the events Astra organizers planned in 1893 is typical of most Astra annual meetings before the push for a mass national movement. After the association revised its statutes in 1897 and began to focus on regional and local chapter activity, the

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24 Z. Boiu, "După adunarea," Transilvania, 1893, 365-66; "Programul general al adunării generale a Asociației transilvane pentru literatura română și cultural poporului român convocate pe duminică 22 Octombrie n. 1893 și dîilele următoare la Năsăud," Direcția Generală Arhivei Naționale Bistrița-Năsăud (ANBN), Fond Colectia Iuliu Moisil 28 (IV) 66. For an example of a particularly lengthy toast filling more than a newspaper column, see Telegraful român, 13 July 1903, 349-50.
yearly assemblies became bigger events with more differentiated activities. Association leaders had learned from attempts to attract villagers to regional and local Astra chapters that Romanian villagers quickly tired of business meetings and scholarly presentations. Their experience establishing popular lectures at the turn of the twentieth century taught them the value of public speaking skills and practical demonstrations. They discovered that new technology (such as overhead projectors and photographs) attracted village attention, as did exhibits and competitions honoring locals for their contributions to the nation. And after 1897 Astra leaders incorporated all of these attractions into their annual meetings.

The increase in activities required more organization than earlier meetings. Astra's regional chapter in Blaj had spent the previous year preparing for the 1911 meeting that marked the association's fiftieth anniversary. In addition to the despărțământ commissions, which divided up responsibilities for the events, organizers relied on other Romanian civil societies to help with the arrangements. Although descriptions of the events in the association's journal Transilvania credited the Blaj chapter for the cultural exhibit, the local women's society (Reuniunea femeilor române greco-catolice) did a large portion of the work, collecting rural items and organizing displays. The local Romanian Craftmen's Society (Reuniunea meseriașilor români) contributed a separate

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26 The regional chapter leaders in Săliște, for example, were preoccupied with discovering a means to attract villagers to their annual assembly and they were pleasantly surprised in 1906 that the exhibit they organized attracted so much attention. "Din despărțămintele 'Asociațiunii'," Telegraful român, 31 October/13 November 1906, 502. See also chapter five for more details. Năsăud leaders also commented on increased village participation after introducing parties, competitions, and musical performances. ANS, 1494-1911.

27 "Serbările Jubilare ale 'Asociațiunii'," Transilvania, 1911, 749; Serbările de la Blaj 1911. O pagină din istoria noastră culturală (Blaj: Tipografia Seminarului Teologic Greco-Catholic, 1911), 10.
section to the exhibit as well.28 Astra's assembly also benefited from the decision of the
Romanian theater society (Sociații pentru fond de teatru român) to hold its annual
meeting in Blaj at the same time. Numerous other local, civil associations, like village
choirs, also collaborated with Astra. All groups used the local church buildings to host
their events and took advantage of the seven thousand crown pavilion equipped with
electric lights, which the regional chapter had built for the assemblies' entertainment.29

The coordinated efforts of all parties made the celebration in 1911 one of the most
memorable annual meetings Astra sponsored. Like all Astra annual assemblies, it began
with a reception at the train station to welcome prominent guests. But unlike the 1893
reception described above, the welcoming rituals in 1911 were repeated several times
because so many more Romanians came for this meeting on trains from across
Transylvania. The newly arrived guests settled into their local lodgings and looked
forward to the evening party, where local and regional leaders would make new
acquaintances and greet old friends. Like the meeting in 1893, the first official day of the
assembly started with an early morning worship service in the Greek Catholic Church.
but in 1911 the church was a cathedral and the Greek Catholic Metropolitan officiated the
service. He was not the only hierarch present. After the service the heads of the Orthodox
and Greek Catholic Churches gathered with leaders of Astra's central committee at a table
in the front of the cathedral to open the first session of the general assembly.30 Assembly
president Andrei Bărseanu, Greek Catholic Metropolitan Dr. Victor Mihályi, and
Orthodox Metropolitan Ioan Mețianu, among others, gave opening speeches in which

28 V. Curticăpeanu, Mișcarea culturală românească pentru unirea din 1918 (București: Editura Științifică,
1963), 102-03. For more information on such a society see Traian Chirilă, Reuniunea culturală națională a
meseriașilor români din Sibiu (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1946).
29 Serbărlile dela Blaj 1911, 10.
they acknowledged the importance of the ties between the association and the churches
and of the cultural work all three institutions performed to assure a better, happier future
for all Romanians. A contributor to Transilvania explained that the panel of distinguished
Romanian leaders exhibited a rare grandeur that made a deep impression on the public.\textsuperscript{31}

Although the attendance of so many prominent religious leaders was not
necessarily characteristic of all Astra assemblies in the two decades before the Great War,
the events to attract audiences were typical.\textsuperscript{32} On the first day of the annual meeting in
1911, the organizers opened a cultural exhibit, held a banquet, presided over a parade of
an estimated two thousand villagers, and enjoyed a concert. Official business meetings
for Astra leaders filled the second day, but the half-hour flight of Aurel Vlaicu, a second
concert, and nighttime parties attracted everyone. These events were highly successful.
Astra members estimated that twenty thousand Romanians came out for the parade, that
thirty thousand people showed up for Vlaicu's flight, and that forty-five thousand
attended the concerts. The theatrical performance that concluded Astra's cultural
programs on the third night was also a noted success.\textsuperscript{33}

Newspaper reports indicated that the size of the crowds and the events moved the
Romanians who attended. The journalist for the Blaj paper Unirea described how tears
welled up in spectators' eyes as the Romanian aviator Aurel Vlaicu took off in his
airplane on the 1848 Field of Liberty with thousands of on-lookers throwing their hats in
the air and cheering. Vlaicu climbed to eight hundred meters and then descended to wave

\textsuperscript{30} For a list of those present, see "Serbăritele dela Blaj ale Astrei," Unirea, 29 August 1911, 2.
\textsuperscript{31} "Serbăritele jubilare ale 'Asociaționii'." Transilvania, 1911, 743. Texts of the Metropolitan's remarks are
including in the same article, 743-45.
\textsuperscript{32} The flying exhibits of aviator Aurel Vlaicu captured the attention of thousands of Romanians at Astra's
1911 and 1912 assemblies. He was scheduled to perform for the 1913 assembly, but crashed shortly before
the event and died.
\textsuperscript{33} Serbăritele dela Blaj 1911, 73, 76, 78, 94, 97.
to the crowds. His interaction with the bystanders stirred the Romanian journalist who noted that the descent was much too sublime to be fully comprehended.34 After Vlaicu landed, the crowds broke through the cordons, raised their hero on their shoulders, and embraced one another while cheering, shouting, and crying. There was an outburst of emotion, the author wrote, that could not be suppressed; the intoxication of triumph: the national pride in front of a manifestation of genius.35

Astra's ability to attract large, cheering crowds to its national celebrations did not mean that villagers and elites entered into a new kind of solidarity. They often maintained separate company during these mass gatherings. Astra planners designed some events that segregated the elite from the common villager. Some Astra assemblies, for example, featured two parties. One was reserved for the intellectual elite and the other was open to everyone.36 The dances at these parties also distinguished those who had learned how to waltz from those who knew traditional dance steps performed locally. Events that required cash excluded many villagers. Only one thousand people attended the banquet in 1911; a large number for an annual assembly, but a relatively small number compared to the tens of thousands who turned out for other events. But even those other events were not free. Astra offered progressive ticket prices that grouped people together according to their ability to pay. The flying exhibit, for example, offered tickets at one, five, and ten crown increments.37 Those who paid for the most expensive tickets had the best seats. Among the three to four thousand with paid seating for the concert, the front seats,

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34 "aspectul eră mult prea sublim, decât să-l putem cuprinde în toată măreția lui." "Vlaicu," Unirea, 30 August 1911, 1.
35 Ibid.
according to a newspaper article, were reserved for the recognized leaders of the nation: the church officials, Astra central committee members with a few notable regional leaders, and the most prominent Romanian intellectuals. These men showed up fashionably late to a warm welcome from the audience.38 Even the church services separated Romanian elites from the average townsmen and villagers. The first service held during the 1911 assembly required tickets to enter (though it is not clear if one paid for a ticket or requested it).39 Few locals made it into the cathedral.40

Solidarity between Romanian elites and villagers was also frustrated at the organization of specific events. Gatherings for elites, like the banquet, gave Romanian leaders opportunities to differentiate themselves from average Romanians with toasts commemorating themselves as the heads of the national community. The toasts honored social equals as fellow leaders and recognized social inferiors as the base of the national community. Although the toasts seemingly acknowledged the importance of all Romanian nationals, in reality they underscored the authority of the toast makers. Only someone with the authority to represent the nation in front of an elite audience standing at attention could salute a national archetype, like the Romanian peasant, for his contribution to the nation. Only someone with national authority who understood the pathway to progress could raise a glass to the Romanian youth as the hope of the Romanian people if they followed instructions to dedicate themselves to their education and their family.41 Such toasts gave the speakers public recognition for their national credentials and for their leadership of the nation. They also acknowledged the efforts of

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39 "Zile mari în Blaj," Unirea, 28 August 1911, 2.
prominent Romanian men as significant individuals in contrast to the toasts for generic
groups of Romanian nationals like the peasants. By proposing a toast to congratulate an
individual for his work in Astra and for the nation, the speaker publicly acknowledged
the individual as a leading member in Astra and in the Romanian nation. The great
Romanian man who presided over the banquet imagined himself at the head of the nation.

Other events commemorated Romanian villagers for their specific part in the
national community. The parade, for example, honored Romanian villagers for
preserving the character of the Romanian national community in their dress and
traditional dance. In this case, the attraction itself differentiated the elites from the
villagers. The ethnographic parade featured thousands of Romanian peasants from the
communes around Blaj in traditional costume, grouped together behind their local priest
and teacher with a banner identifying their village. Occasionally the procession would
pause so that teams of villagers could demonstrate their local folk dances. The parade
concluded in the central square with dance performances and a huge party.

The only Romanians recognized for their leadership of the nation who
participated in the parade were the village priests and teachers. Romanian gentlemen and
their wives (dame or ladies) could not participate in the parade. With the exception of
their brief fascination with peasant dress in the early 1860s, Romanian townsmen across
Transylvania had abandoned traditional peasant dress early in the nineteenth century,
signaling their adoption of European norms and lifestyles as well as their rejection of
rural backwardness. Romanian professionals and intellectuals who sought the autonomy
of European nations for their own national community needed to resemble autonomous

41 Author of the toast to Romanian youth is unknown. "De la Baia-mare," Telegraful român, 2/15 August 1903, 354.
Europeans. Their dress was a sign of their authority, of their equality with European nationals. And as the photographs taken during the 1911 assembly show, clothing clearly distinguished the traditionally garbed villagers from the elite, decked out in European fashions.\textsuperscript{42}

Villagers who participated in the parade, or who attended events like the parade in their traditional dress, did so as the guardians of Romanian national attributes. As one Romanian nationalist explained, national dress had to be a precious treasure for each person because it is the marker (\textit{semnul de deosebire}) that distinguishes one people, or nation, from another.\textsuperscript{43} "If you take the folk costume from a people, with all of its artistic richness, as well as its ancestral traditions," the author claimed, "you take away their right to be, and to be called, a nation among the other nations."\textsuperscript{44} Romanian nationalists considered folk costumes important because they believed that the handiwork the costumes preserved had been passed down from generation to generation. The costumes attested to the historic existence of the Romanian national community and thus justified claims that Romanians comprised a nation and deserved autonomy fitting their national status. Although many villagers had abandoned homespun peasant dress for more practical workday clothing by the end of the nineteenth century, they kept their handmade costumes and could display them on holidays or at special events. The mere possession of traditional dress indicated that villagers had preserved the national treasure, the emblems defining the Romanian national community. The nation could not exist without the peasants, without their clothing, traditions and ways of life.

\textsuperscript{42} \textit{Serbarele dela Blaj 1911. O pagină din istoria noastră culturală}, passim.

\textsuperscript{43} The author used the word \textit{neam} here, which indicates a people with a common origin or lineage; a nation.

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Other Astra events reinforced this impression. By 1911 ethnographic exhibits had become a regular feature of the annual meetings. Blaj professor Gavril Precup explained their importance to the crowd gathered in the Greek Catholic school for the opening of the exhibit on the first full day of the 1911 assembly. "The century in which we live." Precup began, "is a century of competition among peoples. Exhibits are the field of battle and the arms of war: the result of intellectual work accompanied by physical energy in its various forms. The Romanian people began rather late to affirm their God-given aptitudes." Precup continued. "Awakened to life over one hundred fifty years ago by the spark of education within these holy walls (of the Greek Catholic high school)," the Romanians "are growing and strengthening themselves." Precup confirmed. "just as a tree plants roots into good, fertile soil. Now they are conscious." he exclaimed. "and reclaim their right to life. creating their own institutions, which help educate them alongside the other peoples of Hungary who have been favored by fate....The exhibit that you are about to view." Precup instructed, "gives evidence of the highest artistic qualities endowed in the Romanian peasant woman. You will be convinced of the step our Romanian ladies (damelor noastre) in Blaj have made toward culture; you will witness from the richness of the earth the work of the peasants in this regional chapter and our hopes for economic emancipation. And afterward, you will have the opportunity to acknowledge the foundation of a middle class, which is called to preserve the character from now on of this precious and revered site."^45

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^45 Precup's address was included in "Serbările jubilare ale 'Asociaţiunii,'" Transilvania, 1911, 749-750.
The middle class that Precup believed visitors could affirm was made up of well-off peasants, craftsmen, church officials, and leading intellectuals. These social divisions in the Romanian national community were reproduced in the separate displays of the objects representing each group's contribution to the nation. Because the exhibit represented local contributions to the nation and because Blaj was a historic center of the Greek Catholic Church, the Orthodox Church did not have equal representation in the 1911 exposition. Greek Catholic Church officials organized the display of their own items in order to demonstrate the Church's wealth and sovereignty. A cabinet made in Paris, a gold plaque from the Habsburg Emperor, a gold ring, crosses, icons, photographs of prominent individuals, historic manuscripts, and holy books, among other items, testified to the Church's authority within the national community. In the presentation of intellectuals' contributions to the Romanian nation, documents and books from notable Romanian individuals, plus portraits of great Romanian men dominated the display, affirming the individual elites' role in the nation as educated leaders. The Blaj women's society put together the exhibit representing peasant women as Romanian nationals. Like the parade described above, this display featured the handiwork of village women in folk costumes as well as woven cloth and decorative household items. Craftsmen from Blaj and the surrounding villages donated items to represent Romanian agriculture, forestry, and commerce.

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46 Precup's vision of a Romanian middle class resembled that of other Astra members. See the discussion on the formation of a Romanian middle class in chapter four.
47 The exhibit was held on the second floor of the Greek Catholic high school (gymnasium). Organizers divided the exhibit into the following sections: school, history, household industry, agriculture, forestry, industry and commerce. Items from the Church and intellectuals dominated the school and history sections. Objects representing peasants and craftsmen comprised the bulk of the remaining displays. A group of craftsmen from Oraștie organized a separate exhibit on the ground floor of the school.
48 Serbările dela Blaj 1911, 335-86. For list of items donated by the Greek Catholic Church see Direcția Generală a Arhivelor Naționale Alba, dosar 1625/1911 MRUB cabinet, file 77-91.
These groups were all supposed to share some basic features in common that made them Romanians. It was possible to imagine the commonalities despite the reproduction of differences because the representation of life in and around Blaj did not so much exalt the local aspects of life as it did the local contributions to the nation's life. It provided an example of the diversity of national life and resituated the local communities in the larger national community. According to the exhibit, residents in and around Blaj were first and foremost Romanians, but they were also townsmen, craftsmen, villagers, women, and Greek Catholics. Thus the national dimension of Astra's exhibit both maintained and subsumed their local, social, and religious affiliations. Astra did not require villagers to abandon an identity, but to reinterpret it. This made it possible for locals to participate in Astra activities both as locals and as constitutive members of the larger Romanian national community.

The organization of the Blaj exhibit was typical of most Astra ethnographic displays. The largest exhibition of Romanian national life took place in September 1905 when Astra opened its permanent ethnographic museum in Sibiu. The idea for the museum had been mentioned repeatedly in Astra circles, but it was only taken into serious consideration in 1896 at the annual meeting in Lugoj. Not everyone favored the idea, but enough leaders were concerned that only foreigners had collected items representing Romanian national life that they pushed the idea of a museum through to its completion in 1905.\footnote{When it was put to a vote in 1897, supporters of the museum won by eleven votes (45-34).} If Romanians wanted recognition as an autonomous nation, they needed to be able to display it autonomously. From 1897 until 1905, they raised more than one hundred thousand crowns and built a "national house" that would hold a historic
and ethnographic museum, the association's library, offices for Astra leaders, and a large hall for lectures, performances, and social gatherings.\textsuperscript{50}

When Astra inaugurated the museum at the 1905 annual assembly, it featured over nine thousand objects collected from 1327 people that museum organizers divided into two parts: an ethnographic display of popular culture and a historical-cultural display of educated elite life. Like Blaj's 1911 exhibit described above, this exhibit highlighted the different contributions of different Romanian social groups, but the two main subcategories of the 1905 collection separated rural contributions from those of great Romanian men more clearly than the local Blaj exhibit had done. Items representing the diversity of rural life and agricultural production dominated the ethnographic exhibit, while the main sections of the historical-cultural display, which featured a portrait gallery of great Romanian men who had distinguished themselves in politics or culture and examples of their written works, were, in the words of one observer, icons to intellectual work.\textsuperscript{51}

The intentional organization of items representing Romanian national life in Astra's museum reveal the partition many Astra leaders acknowledged between two fundamentally different halves of the national community. Peasants comprised the nation and gave it its unique character, but the great Romanian men and the civil associations they organized governed the nation's past and presumably its future. The deliberate

\textsuperscript{50} "Muzeul Asociațiunii," \textit{Transilvania}, 1911, 457-71. Fund raisers for the museum varied greatly. Wealthy individuals made contributions. Astra held a lottery. Regional and local Astra chapters and other societies organized balls, parties, and concerts and donated the proceeds for the museum.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. The ethnographic display was divided into five sections: geography and communal life that featured many photographs; ethnography that offered traditional folk costumes, decorative household linens as well as examples of peasant homes; household industry; agriculture and mining; and hunting. The historical and cultural half of the museum had seven sections. In addition to the historical and to the literary and scientific sections, the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches. Romanian cultural societies, bankers, artists, and
appropriation of peasant culture as national culture and the purposeful commemoration of prominent Romanian men as the nation's leaders enabled the planners of the museum to assert their authority over the nation as they sought to change it. According to this display, enlightened leaders would guide uneducated peasants who made up the nation toward a brighter national future. Astra's president said as much when he described the ethnographic display of traditional folk costumes during his speech inaugurating the museum. Romanian intellectuals, he complained, did not do enough to prevent villagers from abandoning traditional dress for more modern clothing. Although the folk costume that allegedly contained the essence of the nation originated in the village, it could not be trusted to villagers. It was up to the elite to preserve it, to remember it, to protect its national meaning.

In the process of offering protection, the museum also played a creative role naturalizing and institutionalizing both differences and similarities among members of the national community. When Astra president Sterca-Șuluțiu opened the museum, he claimed that it was the most powerful weapon to defend the originality and individuality of a people and everything the people had inherited from its ancestors. Inheritance needed to be defended because it was the key component that united all Romanians into one nation. Their originality and individuality were found in their historical legacies, which all Romanians shared since all presumably descended from the peasantry. When Astra leaders commemorated the peasants, they were trying to pay homage to their own ancestors, not to the underdevelopment of contemporary peasant life. Having demonstrated a common ancestral base, Astra could portray social differences

educators organized five other smaller sections of this display. Rule governing entries can be found in "Regulamentul expozițiunii," ANBN, Fond colecția Iuliu Moisil 28 (IV), 119.
distinguishing Romanians as natural differences. They could portray themselves as the natural leaders of the national community. They could not, however, control the interpretations of the portrayal. One indication that Astra's messages of national unity fell on sterile soil is that prominent Romanians who visited the museum during its twenty-five inaugural days spent most of their time and showed most interest in "their half" of the museum.

Despite the differentiation of Romanian groups in Astra exhibits and the difficulties uniting those groups, the representation of all the groups as Romanians gave each one an important status in Astra and in the Romanian national community. This was a new development in the Romanian national movement. Church officials, urban professionals, and intellectuals had become increasingly conscious of the political importance of their national status since the end of the eighteenth century, but the peasantry did not manifest similar consciousness. Attempts to raise the national consciousness of semi-literate or illiterate villagers and to convince them to act on their consciousness by taking part in a mass national movement only took off at the end of the nineteenth century. The degree to which villagers accepted Astra's national message depended in large part on how well the symbols of Astra's cultural programs resonated with them. The association's selection of symbols to define the Romanian nation - the material and performative aspects of rural life - related to the everyday lives of villagers.

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52 Iosif Sterca-Șuluțu, "Deschiderea expoziții," Telegraful roman, 6/19 August 1905, 257.
54 Muzeul Asociațiunii," Transilvania, 1911, 467.
55 Although an important minority of Romanian villagers (priests and teachers who drew up petitions on behalf of their parishioners) demonstrated a political awareness of their nationality during the revolution of 1848-49, most Romanian villagers were more concerned about immediate social conditions than about
and villagers participated en masse in Astra assemblies. The symbols were effective not only because villagers could understand them, but also because they gave villagers a new social visibility that increased their status in the national community. By recasting aspects of rural life as authentic expressions of national life. Astra propagated a powerful peasant image of the nation. Villagers became the material base of the Romanian nation in Astra. They constituted, in effect, the nation. And according to nationalist ideology, they were equal to all other Romanians and to all other European nationals.

If Astra's annual assemblies offered the only opportunities for peasants to affirm their role in the national community, then the association's influence might not have been so significant, but the annual general assembly was not a singular opportunity. It was just the biggest. All across Transylvania and Hungary regional chapters held annual assemblies, and many local chapters conducted regular meetings throughout the year that honored villagers as Romanian nationals. Although the scope and frequency of these gatherings varied across the region and through the years, the events could attract a lot of villagers. In one Astra regional meeting held just a few years before the Great War, villagers not only comprised the audience, but they also provided the entertainment. They participated in two ethnographic exhibits, four village choirs, a comic drama (performed by village youth), and a poetry recital. Local Astra chapters offered Astra's regular educational programs as well as reading circles (local notables read aloud to those


\[\text{56 In 1911 Astra had 67 regional chapters, of which 49 demonstrated activity that satisfied the central committee, and 274 local chapters. Transilvania, 1912, 300. 306.}\]
assembled), musical productions, poetry recitals, plays, exhibits and parties. Villagers put
on all of these events, and some drew audiences of four hundred people.\textsuperscript{57}

The success of these events followed years of organizational work. When the
association wanted to attract rural attention to its educational programs in the 1890s, they
started with exhibits of household industry and agricultural production at the general and
regional (\textit{despărțăminte}) annual assemblies. In the 1891 general report, the central
committee suggested that these venues should not be organized for mere village
amusement. They should encourage villagers to be more active in the association.\textsuperscript{58} Astra
did not just want villagers to recognize that they were an integral part of the Romanian
national community: it wanted villagers to join its ranks and help realize the nation's
collective potential.

Regional and local leaders were supposed to consult Romanian villagers about the
display of items that would portray their way of life. Generally speaking, however,
average Romanian villagers did not provide much organizational support for the exhibits.
The local Romanian women's society (\textit{Reuniunea femeilor române}) or a small committee
of local notables assumed the responsibility of going from house to house to inspect and
request items deemed representative of rural Romanian life.\textsuperscript{59} Beginning in the early
1900s when Astra began its push to expand its infrastructure into the countryside, leaders
of local Astra chapters set up exhibits to stir up village interest in the association's
educational programs. The regional and local exhibits could display almost anything.
Most often they featured peasant women's handiwork (including clothing, decorative

\textsuperscript{57} The report of the Năsăud regional chapter for 1911 is an excellent example of the cultural activities at the
regional and local levels. ANS, 1432-1912. See also the 1913 report for the Dicio-Sân-Martin chapter.
\textit{Muzeul național de istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca, Fond Iuliu Boila, nr. inv. 811}.
\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Transilvania}, 1892, 302.
pillows, towels, tablecloths, etc.), but they also included items of household or agricultural industry, agriculture produce such as grapes or cheese. New technologies such as photographs, and even children.

To encourage participation, prize committees often examined exhibition entries and presented monetary prizes. Men entered some of the competitions, but most awards went to the women whose handiwork the prize committees considered the most beautiful or original examples of Romanian tradition, or whose garden produce best represented their expectations of agricultural prosperity. Local notables, usually the priest, teacher, notary or other prominent citizen and their wives, made up the juries distributing prizes. Prizes varied considerably. At one Astra exhibit, the jury awarded a first-place prize of thirty crowns, two second-place prizes of seventeen crowns, and forty-seven remaining crowns divided up among twelve women. At another exhibit, thirteen women each received four crowns and two other women got honorable mentions. The sums of prizes depended on donations from wealthy Romanians, from regional chapter budgets, or from the total entry fees charged to view the exhibit. In addition to prizes, some chapters tried to recognize every participant with a diploma for his or her individual contribution to the nation.

Recognition of the national importance of the exhibit and of the contestants sometimes came at public awards ceremonies. At the 1908 meeting of Astra's regional chapter in Blaj, the despărțământ secretary Dr. Ioan Belan handed out the monetary prizes to the contestants who had gathered in front of the local school facing a large crowd. According to the despărțământ report, Belan publicly praised the women for their

59 Muzeul național de istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca. Fond Iuliu Boila. nr. inv. M749.
60 ANS, 685-1908; Transilvania, 1897. Partea oficială. 5.
entries as he held up their work and described the "pure" (curat) Romanian characteristics of each entry. He also urged the women and the assembled crowd to continue wearing only pure Romanian clothing. The ceremonies, like the one described above, could generate a lot of interest among the contestants and the audience. A journalist described the joy and impatience of the public as they waited for the jury's decisions at the Săliște despărtământ assembly in November 1906. Seeing their work appreciated, he wrote, indescribable satisfaction shone from the eyes of those awarded.

Romanian villagers also received attention and prizes at parties exhibiting popular dances, songs, and dress. These festivals were largest at the general and regional annual assemblies, but local communities often hosted smaller scale parties in order to raise money for specific projects. At these events, Romanian villagers gathered to display their traditional costumes, sing popular songs, and perform local dances as examples of the national culture. Like the exhibits described above, the local Romanian women's society or village leaders and their wives organized the performances. Monetary prizes for the most beautiful and original costumes could be large, up to forty crowns for first place. Similar competitions were held for the best choir. At the larger events, formal presentations of prizes to the winners, who were sometimes photographed, were often followed by a popular party for which many villagers donned traditional dress in order to

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61 Muzeul național de istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca, Fond Iuliu Boila, nr. inv. M642.
62 ANS, 685-1908.
63 "Din despărtămintele 'Asociațiunii,'" Telegraful român, 31 October/13 November 1906, 502.
64 Juries selecting winners could be quite large and varied, but in all cases peasant women received the awards. At the 1900 annual assembly in Baile-Herculane, all notable Romanian women present received five votes. Any peasant woman who received at least ten votes received a prize. Twenty-eight women took home awards that night. "Asociațiune la Baile-Herculane," Tribuna, 3/16 September 1900, 681-82. In 1901 each person with paid admission to the assembly party received the right of one vote. There is no record of how many villagers attended in costume, but nine hundred sixty-eight votes were distributed to fifteen winners who shared the three hundred fifty crowns in prizes. "Asociațiunea la Sibiu," Tribuna, 27 May/9 June 1901, 390.
receive free admission. If, however, party organizers noted a foreign influence in the traditional costume, entry could be refused.\textsuperscript{65}

Regardless of how or why Romanian villagers participated in the exhibits and festivals, they actively participated as authentic members of the national community and were publicly recognized and honored as such. The participation and recognition were important. In order to build a nation there must be identifiable members who understand themselves as subjects of the national community. Romanian villagers' identification with the nation was a process of subjectification, in which a villager turned him- or herself into a subject, tied to a national identity by a conscience or self-knowledge.\textsuperscript{66} In this case a national identity can empower an individual because it leads to self-formation, enabling the individual to say who he or she is. Self representation gives the individual a measure of personal autonomy. By submitting woven material, garden produce or agricultural implements to Astra exhibits, or by entering costume competitions and dance performances, or even by showing up to an event in traditional costume. Romanian villagers expressed the "Romanianness" of their selves. They actively communicated that they were subjects of the Romanian nation.

This does not mean, of course, that they could only conceive of themselves as Romanian nationals. Human identity is multifarious and contingent. It would be more accurate to say that based on the circumstances of a person's life, a person may have several different identities, some of which may conflict. National identity is relatively easy to incorporate into a person's conception of self because it often forms an overarching framework within which previous and future identities can co-exist. In the

\textsuperscript{65} "Asociațiunea la Sibiu," \textit{Tribuna}, 27 May/9 June 1901, 390.
case of the Transylvanian Romanians, the principal exclusive feature of Romanian
national identity was that a person could not be a member of another national group.67
Although this exclusiveness posed significant problems after the creation of a greater
Romanian state, especially with Jewish citizens of the state: before the First World War it
did not stir up great controversy. It made it possible, in fact, to subordinate previously
significant social distinctions to a sense of national purpose and importance, without
discarding those distinctions. The formerly divisive controversies in Romanian society
between Greek Catholicism and Orthodoxy, for example, did not cause serious problems
in Astra.68 Instead of being a Greek Catholic or an Orthodox Christian, Romanians could
be either and still be Romanians.

The flexibility of Romanian national identity also made it possible to elevate a
social distinction without altering it much. This helped maintain social order during the
construction of the nation. The association's cultural programs carved out a unique
national space for Romanian villagers, and especially for peasant women, attributing to
them a new social importance. But it did not challenge their status as villagers, or more
specifically as peasant women. It did, however, complicate the villagers' relationship with
Romanian elites because it made them "more equal" to their social superiors. In Astra
these complications played out in relations between peasant and elite women. Because

67 This was, in fact, more exclusive than Hungarian state nationalism which provided for national
assimilation if a person adopted the Hungarian language and submitted to Hungarian laws.
68 Some tension still existed between the two churches in Astra, but it caused only minor problems. Greek
Catholics expressed concern about an Orthodox bias among Astra leaders. They complained, for example,
about a teacher the association employed. Greek Catholics accused Astra leaders of favoring the teacher
over another Greek Catholic candidate because the woman they hired was Orthodox. "Declarație de rébou
comitetului Asociaționei," Telegraful român, 23 September/5 October 1895, 422-24. On another occasion
Orthodox leaders complained that Greek Catholics leveled unfair confessional arguments against Astra.
"Argumentele Blășeniilor," Telegraful român, 28 August/7 September, 1897, 374.
the association recognized peasant women for maintaining the material and performative aspects of Romanian life (the folk costumes, decorative household embroidery, items of household industry, dance, folk stories, etc.), they became new guardians of Romanian cultural traits. Elite women needed to redefine their relationships with their rural sisters to avoid being displaced.

On Women and Romanian Culture

Elite women had established their place in the national community as early as 1850 with the founding of the Romanian Women's Society (Reuniunea femeilor române) in Brașov. Although the society had a stated social and philanthropic purpose - namely to raise and educate girls orphaned during the revolution of 1848-49 - it also had nationalistic goals. Documents from 1853 show that the leaders of the society hoped to organize as women in order to preserve the precious objects (odoarele) and memories (suvenirile) of their ancestors. The rationale for this role relied on their maternity. As mothers, the document stated, we conserve our Romanian ancestors' memories.69 But more than the preservation of memory was at stake.

Within national movements, concerns about preserving memories often coexist with efforts to revive the memories and make them a unifying element among members of the national community.70 In this case the memories concerned historical experiences, not the experiences of an immediate event. Nevertheless, they are closely related to contemporary circumstances. As Patrick Wright explains, the stories we tell about ourselves, which form our everyday historical consciousness, are shaped and judged by

69 Mircea Bâltescu, "Contriubuţii la istoricul 'Reuniunii femeilor române,' din Brașov," in Culegere de studii și cercetări a Muzeului regional Brașov (1967): 196. ft. nt. 11.
their relevance to what is happening now, to their allegiance to the present. They must be plausible, not necessarily true, and they must help us make sense of our world. Thus memory is flexible: it entails a degree of interpretation that constitutes an active search for meaning. Groups and individuals who are socially powerful enough to articulate publicly an interpretation of memory, make it social. Once memory is articulated—once it becomes social—it can help unify members of a community if it gains widespread acceptance. The members of any given community are more likely to accept a social memory if it relates to their own lived experiences and provides meaning for their own lives. When it does provide meaning and gains widespread acceptance, social memory becomes a source of social knowledge that offers people a coherency to underpin their sense of self. This enables social memory to secure the identity, for example, of the members of a national community who have not yet assumed the identity of the nation for themselves.

In the process of securing a national identity, memory also often legitimizes a particular social order. In the case of the Romanian women’s society, the memories normalized national gender roles within the existing social hierarchy. Romanian women became important for their potential to be Romanian mothers. Motherhood took on

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73 In John R Gillis’ critique of memory and identity, he claims that “the notion of identity depends on the idea of memory, and vice versa. The core meaning of any individual or group identity namely, a sense of sameness over time and space, is sustained by remembering; and what is remembered is defined by the assumed identity.” *Commemorations. The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3. Despite their reciprocal relationship, during the early formation of a national identity (led by individuals who have already accepted the national identity and have articulated national memories), the social memories of the nation help build the identity for those who have not yet assumed it.
74 The literature on the relations between memory, identity, and power is quite large. See for example: Fentress and Wickham; Gillis; Wright; Patrick Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory* (Hanover: University
national importance for several reasons. In the first place, the traditions and characteristic features of the Romanian nation which women supposedly preserved in popular material culture got passed down to future generations within the family from mothers to children. Elite women reasoned that mothers were the primary influence in a young child's life and as such determined what language he would speak, what songs or stories she would hear; in short, what nationality the child would become. Furthermore mothers ensured the vitality of the nation by raising healthy children.

With this reasoning, the Romanian women's society pursued the educational needs of orphaned girls. The women's social and national goals coincided nicely in the three girls' schools the society set up after the revolution. Students in Brașov, Blaj, and Sibiu studied Romanian language and literature among other academic subjects so that they would learn to love their national language and preserve it. The girls also learned to keep alive the customs and memories of their Romanian ancestors in their sewing and housekeeping lessons and later in their dance classes. The school work overlapped with the cultural activities of other Romanian organizations. Students at the Brașov school, for example, entered their handiwork into Astra's 1862 exhibit as examples of their pure Romanian heritage. Astra contributed books and money to the schools. Later in the century, the school in Brașov hosted balls at which the girls performed their dances, as well as folk songs, poetry, and plays. The girls also performed at Astra events.

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76 Schools were later added in Câmpeni and Abrud. Each school educated about forty girls. The students also studied Romanian, German, history, geography, popular physics, and mathematics. Măruica Radu, "File din activitatea Reuniunii femeilor române din Brașov (1850-1918)," Cumidava, XV-XIX (1990-94): 165.

77 The money raised from the events was used to support girls graduating from the boarding schools.
Over the course of the nineteenth century, the women's society expanded into most major Romanian centers and continued to establish schools and to collaborate with Astra, the Orthodox and Greek Catholic Churches, and other Romanian civil societies. Although the local women's societies lacked Astra's infrastructure with a central committee and regional chapters connecting the local chapters, like Astra the attention of the women's societies shifted from their primary educational goals after the Memorandum movement in the early 1890s to raising the national consciousness of Romanian women, especially peasant women, through cultural forums. The cooperation mentioned above between Astra and the women's society in Blaj on the 1911 Astra exhibit typifies such activity. The women's societies also raised money for Astra, and prominent members of the society, like the Brașov society's president Maria Baiulescu, gave lectures at Astra events and authored plays performed at Astra's regional gatherings.

As a result of the societies' educational and cultural work, prominent Romanian women had staked their place firmly in the national community. They were first and foremost mothers of the nation, but they were also national leaders obligated to transform peasant women into responsible Romanian nationals. Whether they tried to turn poor orphaned girls into accomplished Romanians capable of running productive households or whether they cooperated in cultural events to exalt Romanian traditions and the

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79 Such an overarching organization was established in 1913 with the "Union of Romanian Women in Hungary," a federation of all the local Romanian women's societies throughout Hungary.
villagers who kept them, their concerns for motherhood and the nation were intimately intertwined in their own aspirations for national leadership.

Elite women trusted the nation's future to Romanian mothers, but only Romanian mothers under elite guidance were trustworthy. As Maria Cioban explained at an 1898 Astra conference in Zlatna (a village near Alba Iulia), simple Romanian women "had always piously kept the language, dress, and customs of their ancestors: and with proper devotion they instilled them in their children's hearts." They did not do these things. Cioban added, out of a sense of duty. Tradition demanded it. But in 1898 Cioban feared that Romanian traditions might die out. With needed educational opportunities opening up for girls across Hungary, Cioban warned the audience to be careful where Romanian girls studied so that as their minds opened up to the outside world, they would not be tempted to forget to pass on the national treasure (language, dress, and customs) as their mothers and grandmothers had done. "I am convinced," she exclaimed, "that the Romania people can exist and progress on all fronts only through wise and hardworking women with noble sentiments." That could only happen, Cioban indicated, if simple Romanian women became conscious of their important national duty and received reminders to carry it out as their foremothers had done. Elites, like the speaker, would provide the necessary advice to help village women learn to retain their traditions.

Many Astra members agreed on the important contributions village women made to the nation and the need to continue those contributions. Retired Astra regional leader in Brașov, Bartolomeu Baiulescu, explained in an article in the association's journal Transilvania that the Romanian peasant woman had served as "the shield of the nation

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81 ANS, 434-1909, 921-1911.
and its customs throughout the entire sad history of the Romanian nation." Because of her, Romanians did not assimilate with the conquering Goths, the Huns, or the Magyars. "She was and will continue to be. Baiulescu stated, the deposit of the Romanian nationality, of ancestral religion, and of cherished customs." As mothers, Romanian women educated men and through men shaped society. Baiulescu argued that girls needed instruction in raising healthy Romanian children. The habits and manners of Romanian women, Baiulescu concluded, contained the guarantee of national life. Advancements for women advanced their sons, their families, and the nation. 83

Astra leaders had grown more concerned about the advancement of Romanian women throughout the second half of the nineteenth century as Hungarian officials tried to implement Magyarization policies in Romanian schools. 84 In order to counteract Hungarian policies and to ensure that Romanian girls did not assimilate with dominant neighbors, Astra founded a civil girls school in Sibiu. The association had given significant financial assistance to the Romanian women's society in Sibiu to establish a primary school for girls in 1883. But that same year Astra central committee members announced that Romanian girls needed more than primary education. Again, women's roles as mothers fueled their concerns. "It is high time," an Astra report confirmed in 1883, "that we think seriously about a more intensive culture for the feminine sex, so that

83 Maria Cioban, "Ţărancile noastre în susţinerea portului și datînilor strămoşesci," Transilvania, 1898, 152-55.
83 B. Baiulescu, "Femee română din Transilvania," Transilvania, 1895, 2-12. Baiulescu also talks about the importance of teaching children respect for religion as a means to retain nationality, of suitable marriages, and of profitable household industry.
84 The 1879 Trefort Law, for example, required Hungarian language proficiency for all teachers and Hungarian language instruction for all students in Hungary. For more on education debates in Hungary see the discussion in chapter two: Keith Hitchins, A Nation Affirmed: the Romanian National Movement in Transylvania 1860/1914 (Bucharest: The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999), 197-220; and Simion Retegan, Sate și școli românești din Transilvania la mijlocul secolului al XIX-lea 1867-1875 (Cluj-Napoca: 1994).
the girls today, mothers tomorrow, perceiving the importance of the high mission which they fulfill as citizens of the state and as Romanians, become true priestesses of the sanctuary entrusted to them and have the desire and intellectual means to be able to fulfill their sacred mission (as mothers).\textsuperscript{85}

It took three years to raise the money and the building for the school, and in 1886 the civil girls' school opened its doors to forty-three students. From 1886 until 1911, 2308 girls studied at the school, although only 526 actually graduated after completing all four years. They studied Romanian, Hungarian, (French and German were elective courses), natural history, geography, universal history, the history of the country, arithmetic, accounting, chemistry, physics, as well as the catechism of the Orthodox or Greek Catholic church, vocal and instrumental music, drawing, oration, gymnastics, sewing, gardening, and household economics. Astra leaders expected these subjects to prepare students and graduates of the school to become suitable spouses for young educated men, whose children they would have and whose household they would run.\textsuperscript{86}

Because relatively few girls could attend this school. Astra also tried to popularize its message about the importance of women to the nation. The association sponsored lectures and published literature on the proper care of a household and a family for popular audiences.\textsuperscript{87} It also helped organize cultural events like baby competitions. The

\textsuperscript{85} Report to general assembly in 1883 reproduced in Vasile Bologa, \textit{Monografia școalii civile de fete cu internat și drept de publicitate} (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Archidiecezane, 1911), 13.

\textsuperscript{86} See the speech Astra secretary and future president of the association Gheorghe Barăițiu gave to the Astra general assembly in 1887 responding to criticisms of Astra commitment to girls' education in Ibid., 101-09. Remarks about compatible marital partnerships are on page 104.

\textsuperscript{87} ANS, 1539-1912. Examples of the publications include Dr. Simeonă Stoica, \textit{Higenia copilului dela nascere până alăt 7-lea ană alăt etății} (Sibiu: Tiparului tipografiei archidiecezane, 1895); Dr. Aurel Dobrescu, \textit{Cum să trăim?} (Sibiu: Tiparului tipografiei archidiecezane, 1908); and Dr. I. Beu, \textit{Caricica sanatății} (Sibiu: Tiparului tipografiei archidiecezane, 1905). These booklets contained information on proper nutrition, clothing, hygiene; child development; and body parts and remedies for illnesses among
first such competition took place in 1906. As described by the organizers, this living exhibit had one main purposes: to provide doctors opportunities to determine what defects in peasant life contributed to the high mortality rate among Romanian children as well as the remedies necessary to prevent illnesses. In the service of the nation's future, the doctors examined and judged not only the entries (the mothers and their children), but also the village lifestyle, the food villagers ate, and the cleanliness of their homes.88

Although the Romanian Agricultural Society (Reuniunea română de agricultură) in Sibiu initially set up the baby competitions in villages around Sibiu. Astra members helped plan the events and contributed books on proper hygiene for the competitors.89 During the initial planning stage, the agricultural society asked medics to give their expert opinion on the importance of the exhibit and its organization.90 More than half of these men were Astra members and at least three of the physicians had experience organizing Astra events in villages.91 The society wanted recommendations on the age of children to examine, the number and names of communes to target, the composition of juries, the procedure for awarding prizes, and the kinds of education to offer participants and audiences alike. Based on this expert advice, the society held its first child exhibit on 14/27 October 1906 in Apoldul-român where approximately three thousand Romanian

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other subjects. Other books discussed in chapter five offered information such as gardening, bee keeping, and fertilizer to encourage productivity in household economies.
88 "Expoziție de copii." Telegraful român, 25 February/10 March 1906, 93.
89 They gave away in 1911, for example, copies of Dr. Aurel Dobrescu's "How Should We Live?" ANS, 1598-1911, 1581-1912.
90 "Expoziția de copii din Apoldul-românesc." Telegraful român, 16/29 May 1906, 231.
91 The Astra members included Dr. Ion Popp, Dr. Gheorghe Sândean, Dr. Ilie Iancu, Dr. Ioan Bucur, Dr. Nicolae Comșa, Dr. Nicolae Calefăr, and Dr. Ilie Beu. The later two had given popular lectures. Comșa was very active in Astra's Săliste despărțământ and served on awards panels for its regional assemblies. Beu was a member of Astra's central committee during the period when Astra was trying to extend its infrastructure and message throughout the countryside. Lecture information is located in Astra's annual reports on activites for 1904 and 1906 in Transilvania, 1905, 84; and 1907, 107. Comșa's activity is mentioned in "Din despărțămintele 'Asociaționii'," Telegraful român, 31 October/13 November 1906, 502.
villagers lived. The exhibit was supposed to take place in the local school, but because more than four hundred children between the ages of six months and six years and their mothers entered the competition, it was held in the school courtyard where there was more room. It took the jury composed of doctors, many of whom were prominent Astra members, some of their wives, and a few other notables five hours to examine the entries and make their decisions. Jury members were looking for children who appeared intelligent and cheerful, who looked healthy and without physical defect, who were well fed and clean, and who were polite and friendly. Perhaps the most difficult part of the event for the adult contestants was keeping their four hundred plus young children and their siblings polite and cheerful during the popular lectures held before the exhibit opened and again before the juries awarded the prizes.

Concerned that there would not be enough model children to award prizes to the mothers, the organizers planned to reserve some of the two hundred four crowns in prize money for future events. They did not blame mothers for their low expectations, but poverty, ignorance and adherence to religious fasts that, for example, prohibited infants and toddlers from drinking cows milk. As it turned out, the juries found sixty children and their mothers worthy of a monetary prize and thirty worth an honorable mention.

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92 For two of the responses to the agricultural society's solicitation see Dr. Ilie Iancu, "Expoziția de copii din Apoldul românesc," Telegraful român, 27 July/ 9 August 1906, 354-44; an 29 July/ 11 August 1906, 359; and Dr. N. Calefariu, "Expoziția de copii din Apoldul-român," Telegraful român 26 August/8 September 1906, 398-99.
93 The rules of the exhibit, including criteria for prizes, can be found in "Prima expoziție de copii," Telegraful român, 21 September/4 October 1906, 435.
94 Prizes were awarded based on age categories in two separate divisions. Although the published rules of the competition do not explicitly state that the two divisions were designed for wealthier mothers and impoverished families and orphans, one doctor recommended this division and there is no evidence of an alternative rationalization. For the rules see "Prima expoziție de copii," Telegraful român, 21 September/4 October 1906, 435. For the medic's opinion see Dr. Nicolae Calefariu, "Expoziție de copii din Apoldul-român," Telegraful român 26 August/8 September 1906, 399.
Many of these winners also received booklets Astra provided. The money and booklets were not the only incentive for Romanian mothers to present healthy children in clean clothing before their community. The journalist for Telegraful român covering the living exhibit reported that the noble rivalry among the mothers was indescribable. Recognition alone could motivate the maternal contestants.

The agricultural society organized a child exhibit every year for the next several years in a different village in Sibiu county, and the success convinced the heads of Astra's regional chapters to follow suit. It is difficult to estimate exactly how many such exhibits Astra leaders sponsored across Transylvania because the records are incomplete; but from 1912 to 1913 in the regional chapters of Zarnesti, Brasov, Jibou, Salcia, and Nasaud, local and regional Astra leaders held child exhibits and awarded monetary prizes to village women for the excellent care they were considered to have given to their children.

With these exhibits, Astra tried to raise the national consciousness of peasant women—to make national affiliation a part of their everyday lives—and to get the women to act on their awareness of the nation and their responsibility to it by taking part in the exhibit and changing their child-rearing habits. Yet the exhibits also served the interests of the elites who wanted the women to follow expert advice. Outward appearances suggest that the elites undertook all of this activity in the name of the nation, but the exhibits had hierarchical social dimension as well. In the case of child exhibits where family life and raising children took on national importance, peasant women became the builders of the nation at the ground level. They not only contributed to the

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95 “Expoziția de copii din Apolodul român.” Telegraful român. 19 Octombrie/ 1 November 1906. 482-83.
96 Ibid., 482.
physical growth of the national community, they also protected its cultural heritage. Elite women seemingly made the same contributions as their rural sisters, but they also worked alongside their male counterparts to help organize the events, judge the living entries, and award the prizes; thus playing a supervisory role in the construction of the nation. The contributions of the different social groups were therefore significantly different.

The social differentiation in the child exhibits typified all Astra cultural events. Inasmuch as Astra's cultural programs created a sense of a common purpose—namely perpetuating the nation and improving its future—they also retained the gendered and class distinctions of Astra's national social order. Education, the touted pathway to progress, remained the specialty of Romanian professionals and intellectuals who commonly resided in towns and led the association and, to a lesser extent, of their wives. These elites shared authority over the moral dimensions of Romanian culture with the rural priesthood and confessional schoolteachers. Villagers not only had the task of managing productive and efficient farms and households, but they also had obligations to preserve the cultural aspects that made Romanians unique. Peasant men contributed to the conservation of Romanian culture in their choirs, dance, poetry and ballads, but the true cultural conservationists in Astra were peasant women. The different national roles Astra's cultural activities assigned to the different social groups were part of the balancing act Astra leaders had to pull off in order to maintain their authority over the association and the national community. The activities illustrated the sameness of all the members of the national community as well as their presumably natural differences.

But the successful involvement of so many villagers in Astra's cultural activities tipped the balance Astra was working so hard to achieve and disrupted the social order in

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the association. While Astra organized the popular cultural program to incorporate villagers into the association and unify the nation, it endorsed the Romanian peasant as the legitimate representative of the nation. At the opening speech of Astra's 1905 annual assembly, the speaker claimed that the Romanian peasant conserved the Romanian language, customary laws, dress, folk songs, traditions and everything that constitutes the Romanian character. If peasant culture alone defined the Romanian national character, then Romanian villagers were as, or even more, important than the Romanian elite. Without the villagers, there was no Romanian nation; and without the nation, Romanian leaders could not justify their demands for national autonomy in Hungary. The heads of village communities understood these implications and began to demand more authority in the association. In order to retain their own leadership, the elite had to prove their ties to the peasantry. Astra's cultural activities gave them an opportunity to do this.

**Challenges from Rural Leaders**

At the turn of the twentieth century, the educational and cultural activities Astra sponsored initiated a dual program within the association. The scholarly agenda which the association had always valued remained intact. As chapter five explains, the association offered intellectuals and professionals a scholastic vision of the nation through contacts with other academic societies, a relatively large library, a forum for highbrow conferences, and support for academic publications. For the villagers, Astra's alternative popular programs and publications projected a strong rural image of the national community. As this chapter demonstrates, Astra's cultural events reinforced these differences. Association leaders designed all the activities to serve the same goal, to promote a unified culture of the Romanian people, but their dual emphases effectively

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differentiated Romanian high, or academic, literature and culture, from its low, or popular, variant. Because Astra used two different representations of the national community to appeal to the intellectuals on the one hand and the peasantry on the other, and because both appeals saw the nation as a homogeneous cultural group, disputes about the nation's "true" character arose.

At the crux of the disputes lie the idea of the nation, national representations, and a community's lived experiences and social memories. A national subject does not exist per se, but a collective self gets embodied in acts of conceptualization and representation. The acts however function in a circular pattern. First the collective self is conceived and represented through images, commemorative practices, or historical descriptions of national becoming. Then, in light of its representation, the national self is re-conceived either by rejecting the representation or working it into the lived experiences and social memories of the national community. Additional representations require further reconceptualization in such a way that the cycle continuously updates the ways the members of the national collective views themselves. The entire process is complicated by the fact that different members of the national community have different lived experiences and interpret social memories in different ways. A paradox thus emerges. One may conceive of the nation as a coherent and free-standing entity, but the very existence of the nation is, in fact, continually fashioned by the subjects representing or conceptualizing it.\textsuperscript{99} Hence nationalists can simultaneously assert the coherence of the nation and contest it. Even though different representations of the nation may be

\textsuperscript{99} Virginia R. Dominguez, People as Subject, People as Object. Selfhood and Peoplehood in Contemporary Israel (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press. 1989), 21-41.
incompatible, the common assumption of cultural homogeneity makes it possible to assume that the nation has a true nature and to dispute exactly what it is.

In Astra, the two different representations of the same national community encouraged a dispute about the nation's "pure" character and hindered the solidarity of the elites and the masses. Astra's educated elites publicly recognized peasant contributions to Romanian national culture in an attempt to help villagers both recognize their place in the national community and realize their future in the nation. But the elite did not identify with the peasant characterizations of the nation that they had helped formulate. They considered themselves to be superior to villagers. In their minds, they and their wives had to assume the leading social roles in the national community because they alone had the proper education to provide the correct direction for the Romanian nation. But these men and women also had to rely on rural leaders for the success of the association's popular programs and the integration of the villagers into the national movement. Astra leaders who resided in towns and cities were far removed from village life, in many ways intentionally so. Village leaders on the other hand, lived in the rural communities as villagers. They shared similar hardships and lifestyles with their parishioners and pupils. Heads of Astra's central committee and regional chapters regarded these rural leaders as their natural subordinates who would be integrated into the association hierarchically below them. But the heads of Astra's local chapters (agenturi) did not accept the subordinate role assigned to them. Consequently, the different approaches to conceive of the national community created conflicts between rural and urban leaders, and the

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association's elites could not maintain as secure a hold over the national movement as they had expected.\textsuperscript{100}

Support from rural clergy and confessional schoolteachers for Astra was not uniform, but Astra could not take its message to the countryside without these men. In practice, the association relied heavily on the church representatives because they uniquely straddled the social divide between the intellectuals and the peasantry. Recognized as intellectuals in rural communities, the priests and teachers were Astra's "natural" choice to lead the masses into the national movement. Astra also needed the infrastructure of the organized religions. Without a Romanian national state or other political institution capable of organizing the various isolated communities in Austro-Hungary, the association had no means of assembling people or conveying its messages to the Romanian population.

The acquisition of Astra's museum collection illustrates the importance of local Romanian leaders. Upon occasion representatives from Astra's central committee traveled to Romanian villages hosting an Astra meeting and ethnographic exhibit, but it cost a lot of time and money to do so. In order to avoid the expense and travel, the central committee asked rural leaders, generally priests and teachers, to send in their most beautiful, original, and valuable local exhibit entries. The local leaders negotiated the release of the items to Astra with the owner. Items could be bought, donated, or merely loaned. Later the curators of the museum sent out lists of items they wanted to local leaders. In this way they retained more control over the acquisition process, but they still relied heavily on locals to procure the requested objects.\textsuperscript{101}

\textsuperscript{100} See chapter three for more details.
\textsuperscript{101} ANBN, fond ASTRA, dosar 132, file 26-27.
Because the support of the village clergy and educators was so important to the success of Astra’s cultural and educational efforts at the local level, rural church representatives were able to challenge the association’s central leadership by promoting themselves as the true heroes of the national movement. Some priests went so far as to call themselves the apostles of the Romanian people, apostles of Romanianism, or servants at the national altar.\textsuperscript{102}

Rural church representatives could make these claims because the social memories of the national community articulated by Astra’s central and regional leaders were not cast in stone. Leading Astra members could commemorate the peasantry as the essential base of the national community and themselves as national leaders, but the flexibility of memory allows room for re-interpretation. Rural clergy, like Orthodox priest Eliseu Dan from the administrative district centered in Bistrița, countered secular elites’ authority in his speech to the annual priestly conference in 1899. Dan argued that the Romanians had continually fought for their existence since Traian’s colonization of Dacia, and that the priest was the leader of this historic fight. The priest resisted conquerors by maintaining the faith, language, customs and dress of his ancestors. Dan insisted. “The priest was always in front of the people,” he confirmed, “not with sword or with arms, but with the gospel and the cross. in hard times even with the sword; he led the people on the path of goodness and truth. avoiding sin…. It is the same today gentlemen,” he exclaimed, “we priests are still called to lead the people in the fight for our existence, on the good pathway of virtue and progress; in our hands gentlemen is the fate and future of our people.”\textsuperscript{103} Dan’s reinterpretation of the memories of the nation that

\textsuperscript{102} AMO, III-514/3326-1899.
\textsuperscript{103} AMO, III-514/3326-1899.
Astra elites had articulated—namely that clerics, not educated townsmen with European lifestyles, always had led and would continue to lead the nation—was importantly partial. He did not challenge the existence of the Romanian nation or its peasant heritage: its Romance language, rural customs, or traditional dress. He simply recast the role of the national conservationist. In Dan's interpretation, Romanian villagers did not preserve the nation's heritage alone. They merely followed the priest's lead in his fight for the nation's authentic existence.

Dan was not alone in his concern for continued clerical leadership. By and large clerics espoused the association's educational and economic goals and worked to create a sense of national unity, but they also rejected urban materialism and, like Dan, projected a strong moral vision of the Romanian nation with a deep religious base. As representatives of religious institutions, many of them never wholly shared the secular outlook of lay intellectuals and continued to uphold the church as an important moral and autonomous national institution. Their campaigns against luxury exemplify the contestation for leadership over the Romanian national community.

In their attempts to identify and resolve some of the root causes of Romanian poverty in their parishes, priests clearly identified extravagant spending and acquisition of luxury goods as problems.\textsuperscript{104} In particular rural clergy criticized those who had abandoned traditional peasant dress as engaging in some form of "intercultural breeding" that would lead to a compromised national character.\textsuperscript{105} These concerns were directed at the urban populations who had exchanged traditional Romanian dress for fashionable European attire and were creating social pressures on the poorer classes to spend their

\textsuperscript{104} AMO, III-424-1909.
\textsuperscript{105} AMO, III-514/3326-1899.

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meager incomes on manufactured clothing. At the same time that priests indicted the urban residents for transgressing national traditions and compromising their own national character, they used Astra's confirmation of the peasants as the real Romanians in order to argue that rural church representatives were the nation’s true leaders.106 The arguments bolstered clerical claims to national authority, for the clergy, like the peasants, had retained the nation’s traditions and preserved the authenticity of Romanian life.

**Women’s Apparel and the Nation**

The intellectuals could deny neither the charges against them nor the importance of traditional peasant dress for they had used folk costumes as symbols of the authentic peasant character of the national community but no longer wore them. They managed, however, to avoid confronting their own responsibilities for the sins of luxury because when priests did specify who was to blame for these ills, they almost always identified Romanian women. In their pastoral conferences, rural priests were not likely to single out Romanian women as the only national transgressors. They generally discussed the problem of luxury as a problem of the middle and, to a lesser extent, lower classes in the same way that they complained about indifference to the church.107 When priestly works on luxury were published by Astra, however, they often portrayed the problem of luxury as a woman problem. In an article printed in the Association’s journal, *Transilvania*, for example, B. Baiulescu, the archpriest for the Brașov tract, tried to show the national importance of Romanian women and their clothing. He argued that Romanians had avoided being assimilated with other peoples in Transylvania over the centuries because the women’s loyal adherence to their ancestors’ religion and traditions safeguarded the

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106 AMO. III-514/1408-1899.
107 AMO. III-514-1899, III-126-1903.
essence of the Romanian nationality. He noted though that many rural women no longer valued national folk costumes and encouraged them to weave their own cloth with warnings about the negative consequences of expensive manufactured clothes for village prosperity and the future of the national community. He did not counsel urban women to watch their budgets, but he did demand that they renounce luxury goods and wear the national peasant costume for all celebrations. Otherwise, he implied, the security of the Romanian nation could no longer be guaranteed. 108

Using similar arguments on the importance of maintaining the purity of the national costumes, urban men averted the implications that they too, having shunned traditional peasant dress, had forsaken the national community and placed the burden of national preservation squarely on women’s shoulders. In 1894, Pareniu Cosma, a prominent member of the Association, gave a talk in the relatively wealthy town of Săliște on the national duty women had to make their own clothes. He cautioned that if Romanian women from Săliște neglected their weaving, members of nearby communities would be forced to buy clothing from the German merchants in Sibiu. This not only would force people to spend money they don’t have, but it would also provide the merchants opportunities to introduce foreign traits to the Romanian community. Only clothing made by Romanian hands, he insisted, would guard against foreign influences and preserve the valued simplicity and elegance of the original costumes. 109

In spite of the fact that urban men successfully sidestepped the implications of their own luxurious living, they still risked challenges to their own authority over the Romanian national movement under Astra, for the issue of folk costumes was more than

a concern for the purity of the national community. At heart, the debate was over proper national leadership. Urban men recognized the national importance of the rural priesthood at the local level but they claimed for themselves leadership of the nation. The priests countered that the rural population constituted the real nation, and thus, that they, true to time-honored traditions, were the real leaders. The issue made out of peasant dress was used to prove loyalty to the national community. Urban intellectuals could not serve as national leaders and be married to women who betrayed the nation in their attire. They needed to prove their ties with the national peasant base.

Organizers of Astra events tried to do this when they requested that the cultured women (damele) wear national costumes to some venues.¹¹⁰ Unlike the early 1860s when folk costumes for learned Romanian men were in vogue and well-bred Romanian women donned the latest fashions from Paris, in the early 1900s prominent Romanian women had the responsibility to display the uniqueness of the Romanian nation in woven cloth and Romanian men represented themselves as progressive, European leaders in smart business suits.¹¹¹ But the requests for national costumes at Astra events were a tall order. Women had to search for suitable apparel. In 1912 Astra organizers conceded the difficulty of their request when they asked Romanian ladies to wear folk costumes to the extent that it was possible.¹¹² Models of folk dress from Sâlășe were especially sought after because elites presumed that the simplicity of the black and white Sâlășe dress imitated most closely the clothing of the ancient Dacian women (even though examples

¹¹⁰ “Asociațiunea la Sibiu,” Tribuna. 27 May/9 June 1901. 390; ANS 275-1911: Muzeul național de istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca, Fond Iuliu Boiă, nr. inv. M721. When referring to peasant women, Romanian authors generally used the word fârance. Doamnă sau damele referred to female residents of towns and cities. Occasionally the wives of priests were also called dame.
¹¹¹ For more on the popular styles in the 1860, see the discussion in chapter two.
¹¹² “Damele sunt rugate, că să se prezinte în cât se poate în costum național.” Muzeul național de istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca, Fond Iuliu Boilă, nr. inv. M721.
of Dacian dress were not available).\textsuperscript{113} Those who wanted to attend cultural functions in traditional folk dresses appealed to other women to procure a loan for a traditional costume, but the costume could not always be found.\textsuperscript{114} Some women resorted to placing special orders for peasant costumes in Romania. In 1907 women with more entrepreneurial spirits set up sewing workshops in Orăștie and Sibiu. Under the direction of educated women, ten to twenty peasant women sewed traditional dresses and other "authentic" household linens in these workshops for profitable sale. One such sale took place at Astra's 1908 annual assembly.\textsuperscript{115}

The goal of the workshops, however, was not just to meet a growing demand. Elite women needed to redefine their relationship with the peasantry, the guardians of Romanian national traits. As the head of the Romanian women's society in Hunedoara explained, the goal was to create a bond between the educated female elite and the peasant women, to prove the elites' love for the peasant women's "unsurpassed diligence and industry," and to make refined rural products characteristic decorations for all Romanian homes. "as a title of pride in the intelligence of our women from the countryside."\textsuperscript{116} The prominent status leading Romanian women granted to peasant life was necessarily self-conscious.\textsuperscript{117} Elite attempts to appropriate popular traditions for new national purposes had become so successful that they had to claim some aspects of rural

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{113} Conversation with Maria Bocșe, historical and ethnological researcher at the Muzeul etnografic al Transilvaniei in Cluj.
\item \textsuperscript{114} At least two women from Blaj were disappointed in 1906 when the women they contacted could not procure suitable peasant costumes from Sâliște. Muzeul național de istorie a Transilvaniei, Cluj-Napoca, Fond Iuliu Boiă, nr. inv. M392.
\item \textsuperscript{115} Giodariu, "Elena Pop Hossu-Longin," 489.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{117} Shanny Peer makes this argument in a very different French context in her book France on Display, 136.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
life for themselves too. If they strayed too far from the rural base, they risked being grouped with foreigners and so did their husbands.

The necessity for Romanian elites to embrace aspects of the peasant culture that they had previously shunned was an unintentional result of their successful cultural activities in Astra. Concerns about luxuries, the disappearance of homemade Romanian folk costumes, and the need for decorative household linens came about because they had helped popularize peasant dress and household industry as material symbols of the pure Romanian nation in Astra’s publications, festivals, and competitions. Romanian intellectuals who incorporated rural leaders into Astra at the end of the nineteenth century in an attempt to expand the Association’s influence over the countryside and bring enlightenment to the villages could not effectively control the expansion. With the additional rural leadership and attention to village concerns, the nation took on a peasant character that opposed the urban lifestyles of Romanian intellectuals. Those intellectuals consequently had to adapt to the new developments if they wanted to retain their leadership over the national movement they had initiated.

**Conclusion: the Appeal of the Nation**

Despite the differences among members of the Romanian national community, nationalists of all stripes continued to imagine their nation as a culturally homogeneous collective. This was possible because the concept of the national self shifted depending on the concept’s use. The intellectuals envisioned the future of the nation vested in an enlightened community of scholars. To the peasants, however, they argued that the authentic nation was a community of literate, prosperous farmers. But, Romanian

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villagers were hardly prosperous. In fact most were barely self-sufficient.\textsuperscript{118} This fact did not deter Romanian intellectuals. They believed their nation was in the process of becoming. More education and hard work would transform villagers into prosperous, active participants in the political life of the region and thus provide a solid foundation on which the Romanian nation would someday stand equal to other Europeans. Although villagers gradually became more aware of their place in the nation, they did not always embrace the call for change. Romanian villagers and their leaders could ignore appeals for their transformation, since intellectuals themselves claimed that the Romanian villager was the genuine representative of the national community. Villagers could, therefore, take ownership of the homogeneous national ideal and argue that the rural community in its present form constituted it.

Villagers who helped Astra leaders build the Romanian nation in Transylvania by participating in Astra activities were empowered to represent themselves as Romanians. The national ideal was effective because it gave people on the lower rungs of the social scale power: it elevated their status within the national community. In theory Romanian villagers in Transylvania were equal to every other co-national. They could stand before their more urban and prosperous counterparts as villagers, proud to have safeguarded the essential qualities of the Romanian nation. This amplified their voices, which would have otherwise been quieted in the larger national conversation. The ideal, thus, offered them a measure of greater personal autonomy and authority. Reality, however, rarely measured

\textsuperscript{118} At the end of the nineteenth century approximately 83% of the Romanian population depended on agriculture. Over 70% of peasants in Transylvania owned 10 iugare or less (1 iugare = 0.5775 hectare). 22% owned between 6-10 iugare, 29.5% owned between 1 and 5 iugare, and 20.4% owned less than 1 iugare. A. Egyed, “Structura proprietății funciare în Transilvania la sfârșitul veacului al XIX-lea.” in Anuarul institutului de istorie și arheologie Cluj-Napoca, 1974, vol. XVII, 146.
up to the ideal. Promises of equality remained unfulfilled. Nevertheless, the ideal made villagers "more equal" than they had been.

Village leaders also benefited from the national ideal. They gained a "more equal" footing with their more urban and secular counterparts within Astra. Just as the regional and central Astra officials who could not control the construction of the nation, village notables who tried to empower themselves as national leaders also had limited success. But, the fact that they did have some success explains, in part, the appeal and pervasiveness of the national ideal.
Concluding Remarks on States and Nations

The situation for Romanian nation builders in Astra changed dramatically after 1914. The outbreak of war had severely curbed the activities of Astra’s regional and rural chapters.¹ After the war, Astra leaders found themselves in the middle of what Irina Livezeanu describes as a Romanian national revolution. "The 'embarrassment of riches' Romania faced with the postwar settlement…brought apparent and momentary glory but concealed untold social, demographic, political, and cultural challenges."² Romanian nationalists planning to Romanianize the newly acquired territories of Greater Romania had a large task ahead of them. The new state had increased its territory and population by more than fifty percent, and substantial numbers of the new population were minorities.³ Romanian leaders expressed their anxieties about the state’s ability to assimilate non-Romanians in debates on the plight of Romanian villagers. Concerned that non-Romanians dominated the educational and cultural institutions in the newly incorporated territories, Romanian nationalists initiated a campaign to give Romans more educational opportunities so that they could take over the institutions directing

¹ Astra regional chapters struggled to maintain any activity during the war years. Although the association’s budget increased annually, the money came from dividends on prior investments: ordinary and associate membership dropped off significantly after 1914. Astra used the available funds to finance educational stipends, send literature to wounded soldiers, and expand the holdings in the central library. Dorin Goția. "Din activitatea Astrei în perioada 1914-1918." Sarția XXV (1992-1994): 711-26.
³ In 1914 Romania covered approximately 138,000 square kilometers with a population of 7,700,000. The peace settlements gave Romania an additional 156,000 square kilometers and 3,500,000 new inhabitants. Keith Hitchins, Rumania 1866-1947 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 290. Livezeanu indicates that the state’s population increased by roughly seven million people, Cultural Politics, 8. Among the population transferred from Hungary to Romania, including Transylvania, 46% were Romanians, 33% were Hungarians, and the remaining 21% of the population consisted of Germans, Jews, Ruthenians, Russians, Serbs, and Poles among others. R.W. Seton-Watson, A History of the Roumanians (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934), 566-67. In 1930 the population of Greater Romanians consisted of 12,981,324 or 72% Romanians; 4,125,507 or 8% Hungarians; 745,421 or 4% Germans; 728,115 or 4% Jews; 594,571 or 3% Ukrainians; 409,130 Russians; 366,384 Bulgarians; 262,501 Gypsies; and 544,055 other peoples. Livezeanu, Cultural Politics, 10.
cultural policies. During the social and cultural crises that ensued, Astra members worked alongside and in competition with other Romanians for influence over the shape of the nation.

Although the state played the leading role in the interwar Romanian national movement, Astra leaders saw work to do everywhere they looked. Educational and cultural institutions were not Romanianized overnight. The enormous challenges facing government officials in Bucharest convinced many Romanian leaders in the provinces that they would have to solidify Romanian national hegemony in the new territories on their own.⁴ Even if the state had overcome the numerous obstacles it faced in urban areas, Astra's goals to unify and educate the rural Romanian communities remained as important in the post-war state as they had been in pre-war Hungary. In the former Hungarian-governed region of Maramureș (bordering Ukraine in present-day Romania), for example, seventy-three percent of the population was illiterate. The Romanians who comprised only fifty-four percent of the Maramureș population did not just need education, they also needed economic opportunities. If Romanians in Maramureș were going to form part of the prosperous foundation of the Greater Romanian state, they would have to be able to compete against the Jews there who controlled commerce, industry, fifty percent of private forests and all of the investment institutions except for two Romanian banks.⁵

Astra leaders hoped to begin their work right away, but the association could not just pick up where it had left off in 1914. The post-war situation complicated Astra's mission. In the first place Astra lost its common focal point when it abandoned its

⁴ Livezeanu, Cultural Politics, 130-87.
campaign of cultural resistance against the political organization of the Dualist Monarchy and the Magyarization policies of a Hungarian nation-state. Without the dominant Hungarian "other" obstructing Romanian national development, Astra competed in the fight for the Romanian nation's life against several non-Romanians "others" who resided throughout the new territories of the Greater Romanian nation-state. Romanians nationalists searched for a new definition of their nation that could stabilize their movement. Because the majority of the Romanian population lived in rural areas and because groups like Astra had legitimized the image of an authentic, rural Romanian national community for the general population, interwar Romanian leaders settled on a predominantly rural representation of the national community. Urban society and culture became suspect as alien, and Romanians viewed the Hungarians, Germans, and Jews who dominated urban centers as more difficult to assimilate than the rural Ukrainians or Magyar-speaking Szeklers. The Jews in particular served as an important symbol of everything non-Romanians because in addition to the largely urban and Magyarized Jewish populations throughout Greater Romania, the Jewish faith opposed the Romanian national identity that groups like Astra had formed around Orthodox and Greek Catholic Christianity.  

Active participation in the cultural politics of the Romanian nation-state also infused new debates and controversies into the association. Politics formerly confined to closed-door discussions at Astra meetings surfaced after Astra reinitiated activities in 1920. Astra's pre-war annual assemblies celebrating national unity turned into forums for

6 Livezeanu, Cultural Politics. especially 11-13, 135-36, 302-03.
public debates that revealed significant national divisions, and the association had to work hard to maintain the appearance of national harmony.\footnote{Moga, "Adunările generale," 185-214.}

Astra also faced new organizational challenges after 1920. No longer confined to a specific geographical area, Astra had to decide if it wanted to expand its organization throughout the enlarged state. The nation-building programs in the pre-war era had already taxed Astra's resources, if the association wanted to extent its organization, it would have to find better ways to collect dues and raise funds. Astra members discussed large-scale expansion of its organization and did move into neighboring regions, but in the end expansion was not a realistic goal. Astra was no longer the main player in the Romanian national movement. The formerly dominant association had to share center stage and national resources with the Romanian state and with the other major cultural societies outside of Transylvania. In this atmosphere Astra struggled to maintain its influence within its former chapters and to continue to play a leading role in the on-going construction of the Romanian nation.\footnote{Astra leaders worked hard to maintain a balance between state support and institutional independence that reflected the struggles between centralists and federalists in the post-war state. Pamfil Matei, Astra. \textit{Asociația transilvană pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român 1861-1947} (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia, 1986), 64-100.}

Astra successfully retained a leading role, but ultimately it could not compete with the Romanian state.\footnote{} The state could handle the ever-expansive nature of nation-building activities more efficiently than any non-governmental association because it had access to regular income, bureaucratic administrators following orders, and legal power to enforce its decisions. The history of the association shows, however, that nation building does not require a patron state to be successful. From 1861 until 1914 Astra
convinced many Romanians across Transylvania and Hungary that their nationality was important enough to participate in the association's activities and to fund the association through donations and memberships. It is impossible to predict what would have happened had the Habsburg Empire not dissolved with the war, but Astra's activities had intensified in the years preceding the war and showed no sign of abating.

The involvement of the state in Romanian national politics both aided and complicated the task before Romanian nation builders. Substantial revenue, centralized direction, and coercive power among other state resources gave Romanian nationalists new impetus, but the authority of governing leaders to grant access to state power by way of enfranchising citizens raised troublesome questions. Because Romanian nation builders had worked to create cultural unity before political unity, the state's enfranchisement of citizens who did not fit the predetermined cultural definition of a Romanian national, an action mandated by the peace settlements, sparked controversies among nationalists.

When the constitutional question of Jewish emancipation came up in the early 1920s, student radicals who unsuccessfully opposed enfranchising Jews formed political organizations to influence public opinion in an attempt to get the state to limit the enrollment of Jewish students in Romanian universities. Anti-Semitic radicals also committed violent acts against Jews. It was difficult for moderates to discredit the extremists. In the first place groups like Astra had created a prevailing image of the genuine rural Romanian national community. Astra's populist leader and national poet Octavian Goga who, before 1914, had promoted the village as the birthplace of the

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9 For more on Astra's lasting influence in the interwar period in the new field of Romanian bio-politics see Maria Bucur, *Eugenics and Modernization in Interwar Romania* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh)
Romanian national soul praised the student radicals in the 1920s for upholding the national ideal.\textsuperscript{10} Other interwar Astra leaders like Iuliu Moldovan, Iuliu Hațiegan, and Gheorghe Preda among others, began to link biology with the Romanian nation and furthered the conception that a pure national community existed.\textsuperscript{11}

Moderate state leaders also had a hard time discrediting the new generation of student extremists because the Romanian state’s nationalist discourse had helped the radicals gain the sympathy of the mainstream public who repeatedly acquitted radicals on trial. With the support of many Romanian nationalists, the radical movement only advanced. Late in the 1920s the fascist leader of the student extremists, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu left urban centers for the countryside. Traveling on horseback throughout remote areas of Transylvania and Bessarabia, Codreanu promised villagers justice for centuries of misrule once the nation was unified and incited Romanian villagers to violent acts against their Jewish neighbors.\textsuperscript{12} Codreanu’s visit could incite villagers, not only because they were in the midst of an economic crisis, but also because the image of a genuine rural Romanian national community that the fascist leader used had been propagated and legitimized by groups like Astra.

The threat to state leaders increased when radical nationalists formed the Iron Guard and entered electoral politics in the early 1930s, gaining more than fifteen percent of the popular vote in some years. By 1938 when Guardists were preparing to take over the state, the Romanian dictator King Carol II who suspected Codreanu and his followers to be German agents was only able to counter the growing movement with force. In April

\textsuperscript{10} Livezeanu, \textit{Cultural Politics}, 276-79.
\textsuperscript{11} Bucur, \textit{Eugenics and Modernization}, especially 26-42, 168-75.
\textsuperscript{12} Livezeanu., 287-96.
1938 Carol's government arrested and imprisoned the Iron Guard leader and his followers in concentration camps, eventually killing Codreanu as he "attempted to escape" in 1938.\textsuperscript{13}

The inability of the Romanian government to control its nation-building campaign is not exceptional. Because the nation is a socially constructed category, no single group can ever determine the shape of the nation. Members of the national community who concede that a coherent nation exists but cannot agree on its form can invoke competing concepts of the nation that legitimize their efforts to alter power relations and advance their own interests. In this sense, the nation is never built. It is always under construction. The only prerequisite for nation builders is a prevalent understanding that an identifiable national community exists.

The elimination of Codreanu and many of his followers did not stem the radical nationalist movement. Carol II's attempt to rally the nation behind him failed, especially after the forced cessation of roughly thirty percent of Romanian territory to the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria in the spring and summer of 1940. In April 1940 Carol freed the remaining members of the fascist Iron Guard who returned to politics and supported the ascendancy of General Ion Antonescu over the royal dictator in September 1940. Antonescu rewarded the Guardists with ministerial posts in his new dictatorial government, but the alliance did not last long. The general broke with his unreliable and violent partners who sought to replace him with their own leader Horia Sima, suppressed a rebellion Guardists mounted in January 1941, and established a military dictatorship that same month. Scholars dispute whether or not Antonescu was fascist or inspired by

German political and economic order.\textsuperscript{14} They also contest his stance against Romanian Jews. "The assumption is still circulating that Antonescu has been the savior of the Jews of Romanian. It is true that, from 1943, when it was clear that Germany would lose the war, he opposed the application of 'the final solution' to the Jews in the Old Realm (representing 263,192 people, plus 44,184 in Romanian Transylvania and 25,828 in Romanian Bucovina)."\textsuperscript{15} Nevertheless one cannot overlook Antonescu's intention to Romanianize his "national totalitarian state," or his actions to disenfranchise and dispossess Romanian Jews beginning in September 1940. A year later the nationalization campaign began to deport Romanian Jews to concentration camps in Transnistria. Between 100,000-150,000 Jews from Bessarabia and Bucovina perished in the pogroms and in the camps from 1940 until 1944.\textsuperscript{16} It was the idea of a genuine Romanian nation that partly justified these actions against Romanian Jews. Moderate members in pre-war or post-war Astra never intended their image of the authentic Romanian nation to be put to this use, but once the image entered the mainstream of public life, it escaped their control and became difficult to discredit.

about how the issues of
the grounds for national unity, the hope to modernize and educate, and the
drive for some kind of alternative path to economic development have
continued to plague the nation, through the fascist period, state socialism,
and after Ceaucescu

\textsuperscript{15} Z. Orea, The Romanian Extreme Right (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1999), 372.
\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.; Ioanid, The Sword of the Archangel, 199-234.
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