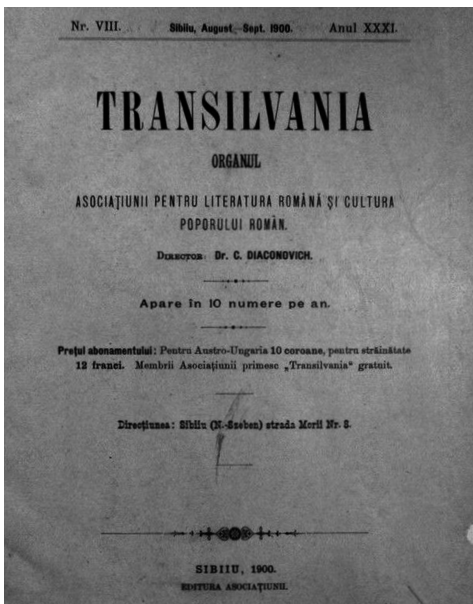


The Initiatives of ASTRA Meant to Improve the Lives of the Romanian Peasants in Transylvania (1900–1914)

ALEXANDRU
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Transilvania (Sibiu, 1900)

IN THE present study we focused on the involvement of the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (ASTRA) in the efforts related, mainly, to the development of Romanian agriculture. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Association tried to make known among the Transylvanian Romanians the cooperative system, and also the need to introduce new plant varieties, modern methods of cultivation, and the use of machinery. All of them had priority in the activity of the most important Romanian cultural societies in Transylvania.

In what concerns the methodology, I chose to present in the first part

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ASTRA's work in the theoretical support of the agricultural industry, through the publication of specialized studies in its official press organ, and the support for various printed works, disseminated through its system of libraries. In the second part I focused on the practical steps, such as the organization of lectures that conveyed information of general interest, particularly in the rural world (and especially among the illiterate), and the organization of their own cooperative system, which was the main concern in the early twentieth century.

Since its establishment, the Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People had had among the goals issues related to agriculture, industry and commerce. In this regard, an initiative supporting the creation of an agronomic section was launched in 1874 by the Braşov branch, however without any tangible result. Finally, the Herculanu General Assembly of 1900 decided to establish an economic section, which had on its agenda issues pertaining to agricultural development.¹

Attempts to Theorize the Cooperative System in the ASTRA

AS, STARTING with the second half of the nineteenth century, the Transylvanian Romanian elite became increasingly interested in various economic issues and in the issue of productivity,² it also turned towards a new approach in agriculture. In this context, before 1900, *Transilvania* magazine, the official organ of the ASTRA, published a series of articles on the agronomy and economy of Transylvania. Among the most significant contributions were: "Agricultur'a la Romani cu tóte ramurile sale dupa Columella" (Agriculture with the Romanians, with its all branches, after Columella),³ "Institutele de credit şi economii" (Credit and savings institutes),⁴ "Economia Naţională" (The National economy).⁵ One of the few articles that dealt with the cooperative system before 1900 was signed by the priest I. Costin.⁶ He urged the Romanians to unite and create their own economic institutions in villages, considering that the strongest popular unifying force of that time was the organization of economic partnerships, relevant not only financially, but also from a cultural and moral perspective.

Before 1900, ASTRA's magazine presented a series of published works of major importance for the cooperative movement, the most significant being F. W. Raiffeisen's "Credit associations operating in conjunction with consumer, sales, winemaking, dairy associations, etc.," translated by A. Brote.⁷ A detailed review was soon published, which set out the main ideas behind cooperatives of

this kind.⁸ It must be noted that the Romanian intellectuals were aware of the most important Western publications regarding cooperative associations.

After 1900, *Transilvania* magazine published a series of articles related to the development of the cooperative movement, seen by ASTRA's leaders as palliative for the situation of Romanian agriculture in Transylvania. Authors like Romul Simu,⁹ Oct. C. Tăslăuanu,¹⁰ and Vasile C. Osvadă¹¹ supported the establishment of agricultural cooperatives, believing that only through this system Romanian agriculture in Transylvania had a chance to modernize. Analyzing the articles which contained information about the cooperative movement, I have seen that most of them advocated cooperative organization as a way to avoid usury and to improve the economic situation of the Romanians in Transylvania. The authors also considered that the main priority was the setting up of popular/village banks, to be followed by other types of agricultural cooperatives. Most theorists saw the movement as a national one—very few embraced a transnational approach (for instance, V. C. Osvadă)—, but also as a movement that would help the Romanians develop their villages by buying and working the land with modern methods and tools. A common point of the articles is the call for altruism, self-reliance, and equality. The investigated articles also show that the Romanians in Transylvania perceived the cooperative movement in rather negative terms and that it was seldom applied. We note that the cooperative actions of the Romanians in Transylvania, and in particular those of ASTRA, were not unanimously supported, and even among the Romanian elite that agreed with the idea there were various opinions related to its support and implementation.

As evident from the ideas of the authors listed above, some researchers found that the cooperative movement in Transylvania was perceived as a means to achieve the national aspirations, and with minor exceptions it was driven by national principles. This is why we see the creation of distinct Romanian, Hungarian and Saxon¹² cooperatives.

Following the intensification of cooperative propaganda, in 1912 the leaders of ASTRA decided to have a permanent column in *Transilvania* devoted to the creation of cooperatives among the Romanians in Transylvania.¹³ This did happen, but after that date they focused on practical information and stopped publishing relevant articles about the theory behind the movement, those mentioned above remaining the only contributions of this kind.

Information about the cooperative organizations of other nationalities in Transylvania¹⁴ was not missing from the debates conducted by ASTRA's leaders. Such information was pretty accurate and tried to capture the similarities and differences between them and those of the Romanians. They also played a powerful motivational role, in an attempt to trigger a similar process among the

Romanians. ASTRA members took into consideration the cooperative model of the Transylvanian Saxons, focusing in particular on the number of these institutions rather than on their model of organization.¹⁵ The cooperatives set up by the Transylvanian Hungarians were best described by V. C. Osvadă in his report completed in 1912.¹⁶ We must emphasize that the data presented in the official organ of ASTRA differs from that provided by contemporary researchers.¹⁷

Without being the most representative Transylvanian magazine when it came to supporting cooperative associations, the official press organ of ASTRA did nevertheless help to spread these ideas. If we take into account the life of the most important magazines that published articles about cooperation, such as *Bunul econom* (The good economist) (Orăștie, 1900–1908) and *Tovărășia* (The fellowship) (Hunedoara, 1906–1911), we find that after 1911 *Transilvania* was alone in this endeavor. Even if we cannot quantify its circulation and the extent to which the press organ of ASTRA had an impact upon Transylvanian society, we believe that the concern for this area is quite evident in the pages of the magazine, which managed to reach the rural areas through the libraries organized by ASTRA in villages. We also note that the articles published in *Transilvania* about the cooperative system reflect the perspective of the most important cultural societies of the Transylvanian Romanians. The data presented is relevant, even if often it did not coincide with the facts provided by contemporary researchers knowledgeable in the field. It remains important because the archive documents in the ASTRA Collection¹⁸ do not contain such information.

ASTRA's attempts to help the Romanian peasants in Transylvania was supported by the publication of several special works related to agriculture. One of the most important collections edited in the early twentieth century, "Biblioteca populară a Asociațiunii" (The popular library of the Association), had included among its aims the printing of more brochures about the role of village cooperatives and modern farming methods.¹⁹ The collection came to include several works devoted especially to the peasantry,²⁰ written in a language they could understand and often accompanied by drawings exemplifying the ideas therein. The mentioned collection was one of the main popularization vectors for agricultural techniques in the Transylvanian Romanian rural world.

An interesting proposal was made to ASTRA by Ioan Costin, a priest from Sibiu, on 3 April 1895. He wanted to edit an "Economic Library," covering topics that ranged from farming and gardening to animal husbandry and other economic activities. Due to the lack of funds, ASTRA could not accommodate his request,²¹ but it deserves to be mentioned because it shows the concern of ASTRA's members to improve the lives of the peasants.

One of the most effective means of spreading information in the rural world was the library system developed by ASTRA. It was the first cultural society which

undertook to establish libraries in Romanian villages. It sought to instruct the Romanians by granting them access to works of general interest. The network of village libraries reflected the idea that a library was not just for the rich, but also for the less wealthy, who were in the majority in the rural world.²² Therefore, the statutes adopted at the end of the nineteenth century provided for the establishment of popular libraries.²³ The ASTRA libraries offered free access to anyone interested in them. Even if the intention was to stock the departmental libraries with many texts on agriculture, these works were outnumbered by books of poetry, stories, fiction, history and geography.²⁴ With the departmental libraries in mind, works were published related to the development of agriculture, such as *Sădirea și cultura viei* (Planting and tending to vineyards) by N. Pop, and *Pomăritul* (Pomiculture) by Iosif Bălan.²⁵ Also for the needs of their own libraries, some departments printed books from their own funds.

The ASTRA's Actions in Organizing a Distinct Cooperative System

PROPAGANDA WAS the most efficient and effective way to mobilize the Romanians in Transylvania. Propaganda used means such as publications, dissertations, lectures and conferences, it had to stimulate the national development of social structures, indicating the optimal ways and solutions and the means for their implementation.²⁶

Before 1900, ASTRA organized several conferences with an academic character, dedicated to the cultural elite. Subsequently, it gave up on the idea of the academic character and the conferences focused on the rural areas, in the form of “popular lectures” where the intellectuals would interact with the peasants. This ensured the dissemination of ideas from the cultural elite to the villagers.²⁷ Until 1900 these conferences covered various topics, and just a few dealt with agriculture and insurance.²⁸

After the economic section was set up (in 1900), the best way of carrying out economic propaganda in villages was to organize conferences accompanied by practical demonstrations. This was due to the fact that in the villages there were a large number of illiterate people who could not obtain the information disseminated through printed works.²⁹ The decision to organize conferences was taken after the meeting held on 23 April 1904.³⁰ Soon it became necessary to hire several agricultural specialists³¹ able to organize the demonstrations. Until the two lecturers needed by ASTRA were employed (an agronomist and an expert in cooperatives, who entered in the service of the Sibiu cultural association in 1910 and 1913), the conferences were held by priests, teachers, agronomists,

lawyers, doctors, bank directors and officers, students, notaries, pharmacists, landowners, administrative clerks, merchants, etc. Every time the teachers and priests covered at least half of the annual conferences.

After 1900, not only ASTRA organized such conferences. For instance, the Economic Association of Orăștie, through its members E. Brote, R. Simu, V. Todărășianu, I. F. Negruțiu, Ioan Baciuc and others, organized economic conferences. The difference is that the broad audience of the Sibiu cultural society allowed it to reach the whole of Transylvania.³² It should also be noted that those listed above were also members of ASTRA.

To improve their approach, ASTRA's leaders issued a circular in 1908 which outlined the model of a popular conference and the subjects approached. The dissemination of information was supported by the setting up of popular libraries stocked with brochures about the topics addressed in some popular conferences.³³ Believing that through popular lectures they would be able to better inform the people, the most important cultural society of the Romanians in Transylvania tried to address topics of agricultural interest, such as apiculture, sericulture, the adoption of agricultural machinery, and new methods of cultivation.³⁴ Through its lectures, it also succeeded to generate a true mass education, addressing dozens of listeners. The effort was accompanied by the inclusion of popularization materials in its publications, *Transilvania* and the "Popular library of the Association."³⁵ Following the creation of a "popular magazine" in 1907 (the periodical *Țara noastră*/Our country), it was hoped that the lectures would also benefit, because in its columns the issues were treated by specialists devoted to the problems of the peasantry.³⁶

TABLE OF POPULAR CONFERENCES SUPPORTED BY ASTRA DURING 1906–1914

Year	TOTAL	Agriculture	Financial issues (association, partnership, insurance)	Financial (insurance)	Industry and commerce	Economy and its branches	Insurance and association	Participants (approx.)
1906	165							
1907	341	127	31					
1908	355	85		17	5	95		
1909	389		17		8			30,000
1910	497		49		7	97		100,000
1911	773		86		28	137		150,000
1912	1,140				50	151	64	125,000
1913	1,468							
1914	893							

As reflected in the table above, during 1906–1914 ASTRA organized 6,021 popular conferences, their number increasing each year. After analyzing the information, we concluded that over this period a number of approximately 240 issues approached the topic of cooperatives and over 200 touched upon agricultural issues.

After the employment of lecturers on agronomy and cooperatives, in 1910 and 1913, respectively, we find a number of conferences on the topic of agriculture and cooperation, a number that appears in their annual reports. Between 1 September 1910 and the first part of 1911, Aurel Cosciuc, newly hired as lecturer on agronomy, held 49 conferences in 26 communes, stressing that in every lecture he had spoken about the “issue of cooperatives.” In 1912, of the 40 conferences delivered by the lecturer on agronomy, only 4 were about cooperation (one on cattle insurance—delivered twice, one on credit associations and one about the importance of agricultural associations) and the rest touched upon various problems pertaining to agronomy.³⁷ In 1913, the lecturer held 233 conferences in 103 localities,³⁸ of which only 22 were about agricultural associations (particularly credit associations).³⁹ The following year, Aurel Cosciuc organized 138 popular conferences in 58 villages, of which only 7 were about agricultural associations.⁴⁰ After the outbreak of the Great War in the second half of 1914, no popular conferences were organized,⁴¹ a situation that lasted until the end of the war. For this reason, in a report from October 1915, Aurel Cosciuc mentioned that he was out of a job, because he could no longer fulfil his duties.⁴² On this occasion he presented a detailed report showing that he had held a total of about 500 conferences on various aspects pertaining to agriculture, and a course on horticulture and viticulture, organized in Pianul de Jos and Sibiu.

It should be noted that during 1900–1914 ASTRA held lectures and conferences in all of its territorial units, which means that it covered almost the entire area of Transylvania. The main topics were related to agriculture, cooperatives, hygiene, emigration to America, alcoholism, clothing, housing, etc. As it can be seen from the data presented, although not numerically dominant, the conferences about cooperatives were some of the most important, as it was emphasized that such conferences should help establish effective associations.⁴³ In what concerns the penetration of cooperative ideas in the Romanian villages in Transylvania, it is considered to have been consistent with the agricultural situation of the Romanian peasantry.⁴⁴

The popular lectures had a practical result in regard to the setting up of village cooperatives in Transylvania. In the report about the activity of ASTRA’s departments we find information about associations set up as a consequence of the lectures, but the data is often incomplete and not very accurate, which is why at this time we cannot propose a precise figure in connection to this process.

The most conclusive survey of the cooperative system organized by ASTRA until 1914 belongs to Nicolae Iancu, the second lecturer specialized in cooperatives. In a report presented to the board of the Association, he provided a brief overview of his entire activity. He made a table with the village banks established by him until the middle of 1914:

Commune	County	Popular bank name	Number of members	Participation (crowns)	The total capital of the subscribed participations (crowns)
Curciu	Târnava Mică	Izvorul Săteanului	54	20	1,080
Sâncel	Târnava Mică	Înfrățirea	40	20	800
		Însoțirea de			
Boian	Târnava Mică	Economii și Credit	35	20	700
Școla	Târnava Mare	Poporul	35	20	700
Turnișor	Sibiu	Steaua	21	25	525
Brânzic	Hunedoara	Plugul	54	20	1,080
Săcămaș	Hunedoara	Izbânda	40	20	800
Sohodol	Turda-Arieș	Moțul	50	20	1,000
Ponor	Turda-Arieș	Deșteptarea	40	20	800
Ocolișul					
Mare	Turda-Arieș	Izvorul	42	20	840
Aruncuta	Cojocna	Aruncuteana	30	50	1,500
Idicel-Sat	Mureș-Turda	Izvorul Plugarului	45	20	900
Bicfalău					
Talpatak	Trei Scaune	Furnica	100	20	2,000
Dragomirești	Maramureș	Creștinul	99	50	4,950
Petrova	Maramureș	Petrovana	135	20	2,700
Dumitra	Alba Inferioară	Însoțirea de Credit	30	20	600
Săușa	Alba Inferioară	Însoțirea de Credit	30	20	600
Stremți	Alba Inferioară	Frăția	40	20	800

From the information provided, it appears that the total number of banks established after the popular propaganda supported by ASTRA through this lecturer reached 25. Apart from these activities, N. Iancu provided counselling on the issue of statutes in 60 other Romanian villages and got in touch with more than 200 heads of villages from different counties. Unfortunately, he failed to complete his work because of the outbreak of WWI.⁴⁵

Following the analysis of the data, we believe that to the 25 cooperatives set up by the second cooperative lecturer of ASTRA we should add those organized by the first cooperative lecturer and those supported by the one specializing in agronomy, but also those organized after popular conferences. Therefore, the number of cooperatives organized by the most representative Transylvanian cul-

tural society is more than 25, but at present it would be difficult to determine the exact number. This because some of the cooperatives were rather ephemeral, others had short lives and some, despite having statutes, were never actually functional. However, regardless of the number of cooperatives established, we appreciate ASTRA's approach as being beneficial for the agricultural development of Romanian Transylvania.

Analyzing the cooperative process in Transylvania, researchers considered that, especially after 1900, the activity of ASTRA could be considered a third stage of the phenomenon. The previous stages were represented by the actions of Albina Bank, followed by the intervention the Romanian agricultural association of Sibiu and Orăștie.⁴⁶ All three stages up to 1918 involved the application of distinct cooperative models.⁴⁷ During this period, the three major types of cooperative can also be found in Transylvania: Schulze-Delitzsch, Raiffeisen, and Haas.⁴⁸ The last was a compromise between the first two. The Raiffeisen-type cooperatives were limited to a single commune because, besides banking activities, they also undertook a series of actions in the general interest, aimed at modernizing farms by introducing agricultural machinery, livestock breeding, etc.⁴⁹ These characteristics made this cooperative system quite appropriate for the social and economic needs of the peasants in Transylvania.

The Transylvanian Romanian cooperative movement should be seen in relation to the other nationalities in the province. ASTRA's direct involvement in the organization of village cooperatives in Transylvania intensified after 1913 when, by hiring specialized lecturers, it acquired the means for necessary action. Even before this date, it had campaigned for the smooth implementation of the system, a good vector being the lecturer on agronomy and the popular conferences. The activities carried out in this field by the Sibiu cultural association were not the most important of their kind in Transylvania, as other Romanian financial institutions in the province managed to organize more cooperatives. ASTRA's involvement is however relevant, insofar as it exceeded the regional character of the other Romanian institutions, disseminating the model of cooperatives among the Romanians living throughout the whole of Transylvania.

ASTRA's importance for the cooperative movement is demonstrated by the fact that it was supported by the vast majority of Romanian Transylvanian peasants,⁵⁰ without forgetting that it made its intentions known with the help of *Transilvania* magazine, of other publications such as "Popular library of the Association," and of episodic publications.

Conclusions

ASTRA'S LEADERS of the early twentieth century combined cooperative propaganda with the development of agriculture, an initiative supported by the lecturers on agronomy and cooperatives. Their activities raised the awareness of the intellectual elite and highlighted the need for their involvement in the development of agriculture, especially because the vast majority of Romanians in Transylvania lived in rural areas.

Even if we did not focus very much on the theoretical approaches, we noticed the involvement and the good knowledge of the international works related to cooperatives, as the authors mentioned above were already familiar with the global cooperative models. It is also worth noting that through its system of libraries, ASTRA managed to spread the theoretical information featured in its own publications and in other texts.

Perhaps the most efficient way of encouraging new cultivation methods, the introduction of agricultural machinery, and the implementation of a distinct cooperative system were the popular conferences, delivered by the village elites (teachers and priests), and by lecturers specializing in the transmission of information to an otherwise uninformed audience.

After 1900, the involvement of ASTRA's leaders in improving the lives of Romanians in Transylvania, especially of the peasants, demonstrate the awareness of the Romanian cultural elite that without economic development and rising standards of living, the implementation of its cultural program did not have any chance of success.



Notes

1. Romul Simu, "Raportul secțiunii economice a Asociațiunii despre activitatea sa în anul de gestiune 1903/4," *Analele Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român* (Sibiu) 4 (1904): 184.
2. Keith Hitchins, *Afirmarea națiunii: Mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania, 1860–1914*, trans. (Bucharest: Ed. Enciclopedică, 2000), 211.
3. G. B., "Agriculter'a la Romani cu tóte ramurile sale dupa Columella," *Transilvania* (Sibiu) 5–6 (1886): 33–37.
4. G. B., "Institutele de credit și economii," *Transilvania* 7–8 (1887): 49–51.
5. "Economia Națională," *Transilvania* 3 (1896): 49–58.
6. I. Costin, "Glasul timpului," *Transilvania* 8 (1895): 230–234.
7. "Economie," *Transilvania* 1–2 (1896): 42.
8. "Economie," *Transilvania* 4–5 (1896): 144–147.

9. Romul Simu, "Situția noastră economică și mijloacele pentru îndreptarea ei," *Transilvania* 2 (1909): 75–85.
10. Oct. C. Tăslăuanu, "Organizarea satelor noastre," *Transilvania* 2 (1911): 117–121.
11. Vasile C. Osvadă, "Mișcarea cooperativă," *Transilvania* 1–2 (1912): 1–38.
12. Vasile Dobrescu, "Literatura și propaganda cooperatistă economică românească din Transilvania—concepții, tendințe, rezultate (1848–1918)," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai. Historia* 1–2 (1995): 37; Attila Gábor Hunyadi, *Cooperativele minorității maghiare din România în perioada interbelică* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2010), 63.
13. "Ședința a V-a a comitetului central ținută la 11 Maiu 1912," *Transilvania* 3–4 (1912): 287.
14. On the history of the Saxon community in Transylvania, see Hunyadi, 71–87, and regarding the Hungarian movement, see 88–104.
15. "Cronică," *Transilvania* 10–12 (1914): 507. The cooperative lecturer of ASTRA, specified that "the Saxons' Central Cooperative, based in Sibiu, in early 1914 had as members 252 cooperatives, namely: 184 rural Raiffeisen system banks with 15,985 members, 59 consumer cooperatives with 3,549 members, 5 wine cooperatives with 158 members, one mill cooperative with 36 members, and also one central consumer cooperative, one central cooperative for wine storage and the Storage house of Sibiu."
16. Osvadă, 9–16. After studying the cooperative movement in the whole of Hungary, V. C. Osvadă stated that there was a total of 7,200 of companionships.
17. For the Hungarian system of cooperatives, see Hunyadi, 103–104, 109. For the Saxons see Vasile Dobrescu, *Sistemul de credit românesc din Transilvania 1872–1918* (Târgu-Mureș: Ed. Universității Petru Maior, 1999), 232–233.
18. National Archives, Sibiu County Division, the ASTRA collection and the ASTRA–Acte collection.
19. "Ședința a V-a a comitetului central ținută la 11 Maiu 1912," *Transilvania* 3–4 (1912): 285–287.
20. *Asociațiunea—"Astra" Activitatea editorială la Sibiu* (Sibiu: Biblioteca Astra Sibiu, 1973), 1–10. The reference is to Valer Moldovan, *Despre cărțile fundare în întabulări* (1902); id., *Despre testament: Explicarea articolului de lege XVI din anul 1876* (1903); Ioan F. Negruțiu, *Gărdina de legume: Disertațiune poporală* (1904); id., *Cultura cucuruzului: Disertațiune poporală* (1904); id., *Împărțirea, lucrarea și îngrijirea unei moșii: Disertațiune poporală* (1905); Romul Simu, *Comuna "Viitorul": Sfaturi și pilduiri pentru înaintarea unui sat prin sine însuși* (1907, 1912); A. Cosciuc, *Lucrarea pământului* (1911); Nicolae Iosif, *Creșterea pomilor: Sfaturi și povețe pentru țărani români* (1912); Ioan F. Negruțiu, *Nutrețul măiestrit sau cele mai bune plante de nutreț. Cu mai multe ilustrațiuni* (1912); Aurel Cosciuc, *Îngrășarea sau gunoirea pământului* (1913); Iosif N. Simu, *Sfaturi pentru popor cu învățături pentru lucrările economice* (1914).
21. "Proces-verbal," *Transilvania* 5 (1895): 155.
22. Tudor Nedelcea, *Civilizația cărții: Incursiune în istoria cărții, presei și a tiparului* (Craiova: Scrisul Românesc, 1996), 123–125.
23. "Statutele Asociațiunei," *Transilvania* 7 (1897): 169. We will not reiterate here the way in which the library system of ASTRA was developed, which is very well analysed

in Ioan Holhoș, “Concepția biblioteconomică promovată în acțiunea Astrei de creare a sistemului de biblioteci publice în Transilvania și în alte provincii românești,” in *Astra 1861–1950, Asociațiunea Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român. 125 de ani de la înființare*, ed. Victor V. Grecu (Sibiu: Academia Republicii Socialiste România, Secția de Științe Istorice, Societatea de Științe Filologice din R.S. România, Filiala Sibiu, 1987), 384; Mariana Daneș, “Astra și bibliotecile populare,” *Corviniana* (Hunedoara) 9 (2005): 244; Eugenia Glodariu, “Biblioteci populare ale Astrei (Partea I),” *Acta Mvsei Napocensis* 6 (1969): 352; id., “Biblioteci populare ale Astrei (Partea a II-a),” *Acta Mvsei Napocensis* 7 (1970): 310–312; Nicolae Gastone, “Rolul școlilor și bibliotecilor sătești în realizarea programului cultural al Astrei,” in *Astra 1861–1950*, 357.

24. “Din despărțeminte,” *Transilvania* 1 (1901): 40–41.
25. “Proces-verbal,” *Transilvania* 2 (1907): 124.
26. Vasile Dobrescu, “Astra în viața social-economică a românilor din Transilvania (1861–1918),” *Marisia* (Târgu-Mureș) 8 (1978): 185.
27. Nicola Roxana Gabriela, *Despărțămintele ASTREI în comitatele Hunedoara și Zarand [1873–1918]* (Sibiu: Techno Media, 2009), 46.
28. “Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român pe anul 1899,” *Transilvania* 8 (1900): 95.
29. Valentin Orga, “Strategii de implementare a ideilor asociaționiste în lumea satului. Studiu de caz: Zona Orăștie,” in *Centru și periferie*, eds. Corneliu Gaiu and Horațiu Bodale (Cluj-Napoca: Accent, 2004), 320.
30. Mihai Sofronie, “Contribuția secțiunilor științifice ale Asociațiunii Transilvane (Astra) la propășirea culturală românească până la 1918,” *Anuarul Institutului de Cercetări Socio-Umane Sibiu* 2 (1995): 230.
31. “Proces-verbal: Ședința secțiunii economice a Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român, ținută în Sibiu la 11 Iulie n. 1905,” *Analele Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român* 4 (1905): 168.
32. Dobrescu, “Literatura și propaganda cooperatistă,” 42.
33. “Circulară,” *Transilvania: Analele Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român* 4 (1908): 221–222.
34. “Raportul general al comitetului central al Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român către adunarea generală convocată în Bistrița la 21 și 22 Septembrie st. n. 1907,” *Transilvania: Analele Asociațiunii pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român* 3 (1907): 64.
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Abstract

The Initiatives of ASTRA Meant to Improve the Lives of the Romanian Peasants in Transylvania (1900–1914)

This study shows how ASTRA intended to support the economic development of the Romanians in Transylvania. Realizing that the vast majority of them lived in villages, the most important actions were undertaken in the field of agriculture. Efforts were focused on two levels, one concerning the theorization of new agricultural techniques, the introduction and implementation of a cooperative system and of machinery, and a practical one, involving the organization of conferences for the dissemination of such information, practical demonstrations, and the development of a distinct cooperative system.

Keywords

ASTRA, Transylvania, cooperative system, agriculture, culture