

Astra's Membership in the Early 1900s*

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Abstract: *Astra's Membership in the Early 1900s.* The study continues and develops the research initiated by V. Moga at the beginning of the 2000s regarding Astra's members in the period of 1913-1920, through a chronological extension towards the beginning of the century and a more detailed analysis of the evolutions during the First World War. After the Association went through a period of stabilization of the number of its members in the first years of the 20th century, starting with 1906, partially as an effect of the festive moment represented by the inauguration of the "Astra Museum" in the previous year, a period of growth followed, reaching its peak in 1912, one year after the 50 year jubilee. The combined effect of the extinguishment of interest after the festive moment and that of the breakout of the war caused a consistent recoil, which ended only in 1916, as a result of the efforts of the Association's leadership at all levels, however only the year of 1919 brought a return to the pre-war situation. From the point of view of the composition and of the profile of the body of members, it is obvious that Astra has mobilized the individual and institutional energies of all of the Romanian socio-professional layers, a significant share being held by the clergy, lawyers and banking institutions, followed by teachers and professors, "owners" (of mines, of farms, etc.), the body of petty functionaries, the doctors and pharmacists, officers, craftsmen and merchants, and, definitely, the peasants - the latter dominating a particular lower category, that of the "helping members", which included several thousands of persons. Women represented a relatively discreet presence within Astra, their number and percentage remaining low before 1919, and seeming to be often linked to the presence of their male partners.

Keywords: cultural associations, Transylvania, Hungary, early 20th century, civil society, prosopography

Rezumat: *Membrii Astrei la începutul secolului al XX-lea.* Studiul continuă și dezvoltă cercetările inițiate de V. Moga la începutul anilor 2000 privind corpul membrilor Astrei în perioada 1913-1920 printr-o extensie cronologică spre începutul secolului și o analiză mai detaliată a evoluțiilor din perioada Primului Război Mondial. După ce în primii ani ai secolului al XX-lea Asociațiunea a trecut printr-o perioadă de

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stabilizare a numărului membrilor, începând cu anul 1906, parțial ca efect al momentului festiv reprezentat de inaugurarea Muzeului Astrei în anul precedent, a urmat o perioadă de creștere, ce și-a atins vârful în 1912, anul imediat următor jubileului de 50 de ani. Efectul combinat al stingerii interesului după momentul festiv și al izbucnirii războiului a cauzat un recul consistent, care s-a oprit abia în anul 1916, ca urmare a eforturilor conducerii Asociațiunii la toate nivelurile, însă abia anul 1919 a adus revenirea la situația antebelică. Din punct de vedere al compoziției și profilului corpului membrilor, este evident că Astra a mobilizat energiile individuale și instituționale ale tuturor straturilor socio-profesionale, o pondere semnificativă având instituțiile de credit, avocații și clerul, urmași de învățători și profesori, „proprietari” (de mine, agricoli etc.), funcționăria măruntă, medici și farmaciști, ofițeri, meseriași și comercianți și, bineînțeles, țărani – aceștia din urmă dominau o categorie aparte, cea a „membrilor ajutători”, care includea câteva mii de persoane. Femeile au reprezentat o prezență relativ discretă în rândul Astrei, nu-mărul și ponderea lor rămânând reduse înainte de 1919 și apărând legate, de multe ori, de parteneri masculini.

Cuvinte-cheie: asociații culturale, Transilvania, Ungaria, începutul secolului al XX-lea, societate civilă, prosopografie

A few years ago, we opened a research workshop dedicated to the prosopographic analysis of Astra's members, whose first results focused on the starting period of the Association.¹ The present study shifts the focus towards the last two decades before World War I and its immediate aftermath, following in the footsteps of V. Moga's analysis of the 1913-1920 period,² to which a cross-sectional analysis of the 1901

¹ Vlad Popovici, "Astra's Founders. A Prosopographical Study," *Transylvanian Review*, 20 (2011), 2, pp. 88-97. Romanian version: "Fondatorii Astrei. Studiu prosopografic", in *Asociaționism și naționalism cultural în secolele XIX-XX*, eds. Liviu Maior, Ioan Aurel Pop, Ioan Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2011), pp. 151-160; Vlad Popovici, "Prosopografia membrilor Astrei – o necesitate istorică și un atelier de cercetare," [The Prosopography of Astra's Membership – a Historical Must-Do and a Research Workshop] in *Astra și românii. Memorie istorică și realități contemporane*, eds. Mircea-Cristian Ghenghea, Iulian Pruteanu-Isăcescu (Iași: Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” Iași, 2015), pp. 51-64.

² Valer Moga, "Astra și societatea. Membrii instituției în deceniul al doilea al secolului al XX-lea" [Astra and the Society. The Members of the Institution in the Second Decade of the 19th Century], *Apulum*, XXXVIII (2001), 2, pp. 193-205; Valer Moga, *Astra și societatea: 1918-1930* [Astra and the Society: 1918-1930] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003), pp. 164-175. Hereinafter, in order to avoid confusions, the reference Moga, *Astra* will refer exclusively to the most recent title (the book).

membership, and a closer look at the war period have been added. The objective of this paper is to analyze the socio-professional composition and the geographical distribution of Astra's members in its most flourishing period before the war, to compare the profiles of the members of the Association with the general profile of the Romanian society from Transylvania and Hungary and, last but not least, to identify the effects of the war on the interest towards the main cultural and scientific association of Romanians within the Habsburg Empire.

The nominal identification of the members has been based on annual detailed lists published by *Transilvania*, the official journal of the Association,³ although it is necessary to mention that another account is kept in Astra's archives.⁴ To our knowledge, the two accounts have not been thoroughly and globally compared, at least for the pre-war period.

Astra - "The Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People" ("Asociațiunea Transilvană pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român") - is one of the most intensely researched Romanian cultural institutions of the last one hundred and fifty years, competing at the level of interest with the Romanian Academy. It occupies a well-defined place in the historiography of the Habsburg Empire, next to the similar societies that were developed in the Central-European area,⁵ partially as a result of the

³ *Transilvania*, XXXII (1901), 5, pp. 66-101; *Analele Asociațiunii pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român*, 1902, 4, pp. 63-100; *Analele Asociațiunii pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român*, 1903, 4, pp. 67-87; *Analele Asociațiunii pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român*, 1904, 4, pp. 98-118; *Analele Asociațiunii pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român*, 1905, 4, pp. 101-123; *Analele Asociațiunii pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român*, 1906, 4, pp. 88-113; *Analele Asociațiunii pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român*, 1907, 3, pp. 79-105; *Analele Asociațiunii pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român*, 1908, 2, pp. 33-59; *Transilvania*, XL (1909), 4, pp. 223-252; *Transilvania*, XLI (1910), 4, pp. 207-237; *Transilvania*, XLII (1911), 4, pp. 499-535; *Transilvania*, XLIII (1912), 5, pp. 315-353; *Transilvania*, XLIV (1913), 5, pp. 211-249; *Transilvania*, XLV (1914), 7-9, pp. 340-383; *Transilvania*, XLVI (1915), pp. 178-210; *Transilvania*, XLVII (1916), 7-12, pp. 136-166; *Transilvania*, XLVIII (1917), 7-12, pp. 142-170; *Transilvania*, XLIX (1918), 1-12, pp. 40-67; *Transilvania*, L (1919), 1-12, pp. 70-98,

<http://documente.bcucuj.ro/web/bibdigit/periodice/transilvania/>, last accessed at 30.11.2018. When not referenced otherwise, all data and calculations throughout the paper are based on the information extracted from the abovementioned sources and detailed in Tables 1, 2a and 2b.

⁴ Sibiu County Service of the National Archives, Fund: ASTRA-Sibiu Administrative situation, inv. 433, files 30, 32, 33, 35.

⁵ Stanley B. Kimball, "The Austro-Slav Revival: A study of Nineteenth-Century Literary Foundations," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society. New series*, 63

emergence of nationalisms and their cultural-scientific dimension,⁶ partially as an effect of the development of civil society in its associative forms.⁷ Unfortunately, as underlined in a previous study,⁸ despite the existence of several well written monographs and some thoroughly compiled and truly valuable collections of studies,⁹ the historiographical interest, materialized in a plethora of small and medium sized articles, although consistent in a quantitative dimension, remained unbalanced from the point of view of the research fields, of the geographical or chronological coverage, and, last but not least, of the social structure of the Association. Various factors have contributed to this situation, such as the general level of the Romanian historical writing at the moment of the elaboration of certain texts, the ideological conditionings, and the aggressive nationalistic rhetoric of certain periods, the personal profile and the professional capacity of the historians that approached the subject, and, last but not least, the situation of the archives supporting the research of the topic.

(1973), 4, pp. 1-83; Peter Herrity, "The Role of the Matica and Similar Societies in the Development of the Slavonic Literary Languages," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 51 (1973), 124, pp. 368-386.

⁶ Zsuzsanna Török, *Exploring Transylvania. Geographies of Knowledge and Entangled Histories in a Multiethnic Province, 1790-1918* (Leiden - Boston: Brill, 2016), especially pp. 107-230.

⁷ Stefan-Ludwig Hoffmann, *Civil Society, 1750-1914* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2006), pp. 1-7.

⁸ Popovici, "Prosopografia," pp. 51-53.

⁹ Gheorghe Preda, *Activitatea Astrei în cei 25 de ani de la Unire (1918-1943)* [The Activity of Astra in the 25 Years Passed from the Great Union (1918-1943)] (Sibiu: Institutul de Arte Grafice „Dacia Traiană”, 1944); Eugen Hulea, *Astra. Istoric, organizare, activitate, statute și regulamente* [Astra: History, Organization, Activity, Statutes and Regulations] (Sibiu: Editura Astrei, 1944); Corneliu Dragoman, *Asociațiunea „Astra”. Activitatea editorială la Sibiu* [Astra Association - Editorial Activity in Sibiu] (Sibiu: s.n., 1973); Victor V. Grecu (coord.), *Astra 1861-1950* (Sibiu: Academia RSR. Secția de științe istorice, 1987); Pamfil Matei, *Asociațiunea transilvană pentru literatura română și cultura poporului român (Astra) și rolul ei în cultura națională (1861-1950)* [The Transylvanian Association for the Romanian Literature and the Culture of the Romanian People (Astra) and its Part in the National Culture (1861-1950)] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1986); Dorin Ilie Goția, *Astra în anii primului război mondial (1914-1918)* [Astra in the Years of the First World War (1914-1918)] (Cluj-Napoca: Universitatea „Babeș-Bolyai”, Ph.D. Thesis, 1998); Moga, *Astra*; Cornel Petroman, *ASTRA în Banat până la Marea Unire* [Astra in Banat before the Great Union] (Timișoara: Eurostampa, 2006); Dumitru Tomoni, *Regionala „Astra bănațeană”. Monografie istorică* [The Regional Branch of Astra in Banat. A Historical Monograph] (Timișoara: Eurostampa - Zamolsara, 2006).

The history of Astra in the pre-War Transylvania still remains a history of general assemblies,¹⁰ of festive or watershed moments, of departments, and of personalities. The overall cultural, scientific, artistic and publishing activity of the Association is also represented; however, solid monographs of the departments are scarce, while a social history of Astra is lacking almost entirely. One of the important and also necessary steps in this direction is represented by the recovery, categorizing, and study of the human capital of the Association, namely of its members, through the methods of biography (when the sources allow it) or of historical prosopography.¹¹ As a cultural society with social and national goals, Astra was nothing but the sum of the activities and the interests of those that have established it and of those that have joined over time, either when mentioning leaders or simple ordinary members. Getting to know its composition represents the first step towards the understanding of its functioning, but mostly of the impact of this cultural society on the Transylvanian Romanian world. Historiography has presented and analyzed the activity of the Association in almost exclusively eulogistic terms, especially for the period before 1918, but it is worth raising the question of why did the number of its members, although it has known an exponential growth starting with the 1890s, prove to be unable to reach the number of at least 3000 persons until 1914,¹² given that just the number of Romanian priests and teachers in Hungary sensibly exceeded this figure? In order to answer this question a comparison between the general structure of the Romanian society in Transylvania and Hungary at that time and of the socio-professional structure of the Association is required.

The characteristics of the recruitment pool: the Romanian society from Transylvania and Hungary at the beginning of the 20th century

Referring to the Romanian society from Transylvania and Hungary during the first decades of the 20th century, the author of Astra's most thoroughly written monograph views and analyzes it from the

¹⁰ Elena Macavei, *Asociațiunea Astra și adunările generale (1861-2011)* [Astra and its General Assemblies] (Sibiu: Editura Asociațiunii Astra, 2011).

¹¹ Lawrence Stone, "Prosopography," *Daedalus*, 100 (1971), 1, Winter (*Historical Studies Today*), pp. 46 sqq; Koenraad Verboven, Myriam Carlier, Jan Dumolyn, "A Short Manual to the Art of Prosopography," in *Prosopography Approaches and Applications. A Handbook*, ed. K.S.B. Keats-Rohan (Oxford: Unit for Prosopographical Research. Linacre College. University of Oxford, 2007), pp. 36-46.

¹² This figure does not include the so called "helping members," whose situation will be addressed below.

perspective of the 'public' of the Association, as a target and recipient of its activities.¹³ In this regard, V. Moga provided one of the best-drafted synthetic pictures of the social metamorphosis of the Romanians in Hungary between 1900 and 1930, while simultaneously linking it to Astra's fields of activity. The main reason why we will briefly get in touch in our own turn, in the lines below, with the same subject, is related to the fact that this target-group, well ethnically circumscribed, shared a second essential quality: that of recruitment pool for the members of the Association (as V. Moga also briefly acknowledges it).¹⁴ Or, given that the public interest rate converted into the acquirement of membership status has been, for the cultural Romanian Association, lower than for other similar associations in the Monarchy,¹⁵ any quantitative and qualitative analysis of its body of members needs to take into account all the more the social realities in which it was rooted.

The 1900 census registered in Transylvania and Hungary a number of approximately 2.7 million Romanians, and that of 1910, 2.9 million. Following the confessional criterion, the figure seems to be somewhat increased: 1.8 million people of Orthodox faith and 1.3 Greek Catholics in 1910. In total, on the eve of the First World War, over 3 million Romanians lived in Hungary, relatively equally split between the two confessions (with a slight increase of those of Orthodox faith) and relatively equally distributed between the former Great Principality of Transylvania (with a slight increase) on one side, and the Banat region and the counties of Eastern Hungary on the other side. A small part of this population lived in cities: 118,097 (4.2%) in 1900, respectively 133,759

¹³ Moga, *Astra*, pp. 28-52. See also Vasile Dobrescu, *Elita românească în lumea satului transilvan 1867-1918* [The Romanian Elite in the Transylvanian Rural World] (Târgu Mureș: Editura Universității „Petru Maior”, 1996), pp. 15-22 (pages from pdf, at <http://www.bjmures.ro/bd/D/001/02/D00102.pdf>, last accessed 30.11.2018).

¹⁴ Moga, *Astra*, p. 40.

¹⁵ Comparative figures of the membership in Ioan Bolovan, "Societate, biserică și cultură în epoca modernă. Aspecte privind asociațiile culturale regionale românești și slave din Monarhia Habsburgică" [Society, Church and Culture in the Modern Era. Aspects Regarding the Romanian and the Slavic Regional Cultural Associations from the Habsburg Monarchy], in *Lucrările celei de-a XV-a sesiuni a Comisiei bilaterale a istoricilor din România și Rusia: (Cluj-Napoca, 6-11 septembrie 2010)*, ed. Ioan-Aurel Pop (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană - Academia Română. Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2011), pp. 80-81; Ioan Bolovan, *Asociația Națională Arădeană pentru cultura poporului roman 1863-1918* [The National Association from Arad for the Culture of the Romanian People 1863-1918] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia XXI, 2011), p. 102.

(4.5%) in 1910,¹⁶ also partially on the backdrop of some historic exclusivist traditions. As V. Moga observed, it was easier for Romanians to enter large rural communes, having between 5,000 and 10,000 inhabitants,¹⁷ which has also left its mark on the administrative structure of the Association.

The largest part of the Romanian population was made up by peasants (approximately 86% in 1910), with over half of them owning properties that were smaller than 20 holds.¹⁸ To these masses of peasants navigating the shallow waters at the borders of poverty, one should add the ones that lacked any land, the day laborers, the servants, and other categories of the rural *lumpenproletariat*.¹⁹ Under the conditions of a constant pauperization of the rural inhabitants, emigration became at the beginning of the 20th century a mass phenomenon: between 1899 and 1913 almost 100,000 people from Transylvania (regardless of ethnicity) emigrated, mainly into the United States of America.²⁰ Only 5.7% of the properties over 500 ha were owned by Romanians, the majority of them belonging in fact to the church or to different foundations. In the case of small properties (under 2.5 ha), 70.5% of owners were Romanians.

The craftsmen, merchants and laborers were socio-professional categories poorly represented among the Romanians in Transylvania, amounting to, in absolute figures, 26,376 people in 1910.²¹

Less than 5% of the Romanian population in Hungary came from families where the head of the household exercised liberal professions, worked in public service, or carried out entrepreneurial activities in the fields of commerce or industry. Among them, using the statistical sources of the time, K. Hitchins estimates the number of that segment of the Romanian middle class formed by “professional and white collar workers” to be of only 11,500 heads of household in 1910, among which approximately 6,500 were priests and teachers.²² This figure represents a starting point, but has to be regarded with caution while permanently taking into account the way in which the ethnic assignment has been

¹⁶ Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania 1860/1914* (Bucharest: The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999), pp. 104-105.

¹⁷ Moga, *Astra*, p. 32.

¹⁸ 1 hold = 0,57 Ha.

¹⁹ Moga, *Astra*, pp. 35-36.

²⁰ Liviu Maior, *Mișcarea națională românească din Transilvania (1900-1914)* [The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania (1900-1914)] (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1986), pp. 20-22.

²¹ Moga, *Astra*, p. 38.

²² Hitchins, *A Nation*, pp. 106-107.

made during the census of the population. Previous research made by C. Sigmirean identified for the period between 1867 and 1918 approximately 7.000 Romanian graduates of higher education institutions in Hungary, Austria, and other European states, originating from Transylvania and Hungary.²³ Recent estimations indicate however that this figure was definitely bigger. C. Sigmirean's sample, out of which a large part became "professional and white collar workers" does not include teachers, whose number also reached some thousands, neither does it include communal notaries, a specific category of the rural elite, with a very high influence at the local level, formed in great part by graduates of short-term special courses. Besides, not even at the level of the Romanian bank clerks were they all graduates of higher education.

The first two decades of the 20th century meant, for the Romanian society in Transylvania, the moment of the accelerated development of a "national" banking system, which did not maintain but the minimum of necessary technical relations with the banking systems from Hungary and Austro-Hungary and which was primarily directed towards the support of the agricultural credits destined for the middle peasantry and the great landowners. The number of Romanian banks grew from 66 in 1901 to 168 in 1914, being joined by over 100 rural credit unions.²⁴ Although the increase is spectacular, it shouldn't be overlooked that this Romanian credit system represented a very small part of the ensemble of the credit system in Hungary. Romanian banks formed only 2.85% of the total number of banks in historical Transylvania and 7.86% in Banat and the counties of Eastern Hungary.²⁵ Their social capital represented, at its turn, only approximately 2% of the social capital of the credit institutions from dualist Hungary.²⁶

The first decade of the 20th century also represented the moment of the quantitative explosion and diversification of the

²³ Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești din Transilvania și Banat în epoca modernă* [The History of the Formation of Romanian Intelligentsia in Transylvania and Banat in the Modern Age] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000).

²⁴ Hitchins, *A Nation*, p. 245.

²⁵ Maior, *Mișcarea*, pp. 30-31; Dobrscu, *Elita*, pp. 118-134.

²⁶ Vasile Dobrescu, *Funcții și funcționalități în sistemul de credit românesc din Transilvania până la Primul Război Mondial* (Târgu Mureș: Editura Universității „Petru Maior”, 2006), pp. 8-26 (pages from pdf, at <http://www.bjmures.ro/bd/D/001/01/D00101.pdf>, last accessed 30.11.2018); Marin Balog, "The Clergy's Involvement into the Romanian Credit System from Transylvania during the late Nineteenth and the Early Twentieth Centuries. Case Study: The Greek-Catholic Clergy," in *Recruitment and Promotion among the Romanian Greek-Catholic Ecclesiastical Elite in Transylvania (1853-1918)*, ed. Mirela Popa Andrei et alii (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2014), pp. 163-180.

Romanian press, which succeeded, after 1890, in finally truly reaching the villages via the gazettes specially intended for the rural public. Still fighting with the chronic illiteracy of the time (whose eradication became one of the main targets of the Association), the press represented the primary means of political activation and of stimulating the national consciousness of hundreds of thousands of Romanian peasants, whose force, although considerably diminished by the lack of experience of the elites, by the censitary franchise and by the frequent abuses, supported the post-1905 neo-activism.

This is the raw socio-professional sketch of the world that Astra was trying to nationally mobilize through culture, to educate it, and from which it could hope to attract members and supporters.

Astra's membership - quantitative evolutions

According to the stipulations of the statutes published in 1897, "the members of the Association are: founders, lifelong, ordinary, helpers, correspondents and honorary".²⁷ The hierarchy of the members was based on the sum that they paid to the Association's budget, as follows: founding members paid a sum of minimum 200 Gulden (400 Krone) only once; the lifelong members paid a minimum of 100 Gulden (200 Krone) only once; the ordinary members paid an annual tax of 5 Gulden (10 Krone); the helping members paid an annual tax of 1 Gulden (2 Krone). The correspondent members, later the members of the literary and scientific sections, and the honorary members did not pay taxes, but they were expected to support Astra's goals.

This hierarchy also implied different duties for each category of members: "the rights and the duties of the founding members, of the lifelong members and of the ordinary members are for them to cooperate by all means towards the furthering of the goal of the society, they have the right to make proposals in this sense during general assemblies; they have the right of initiative and casting vote in general assemblies; and they receive the organ of the Association for free. The helpers can vote only in department assemblies."²⁸ According to the statute, the helping members were therefore exclusively involved in the local activity, at the departmental level, without being able to influence in any way the decisions and the general orientation of the Association.

Beyond these statutory stipulations, the practice of mentioning the members and the payment of taxes in the official press organ of

²⁷ *Transilvania*, XXVIII (1897), 7, p. 170.

²⁸ *Transilvania*, XXVIII (1897), 7, pp. 170-171.

Astra, Transilvania, paints even more obviously the delimitations between the founding, lifelong and ordinary members, on one hand, and the helping members, on the other hand. The ones from the first category were almost always mentioned nominally, with information regarding their profession, domicile, and the value of the tax they paid. The ones from the second category appear as simple figures, followed by the quantum of the sums they have paid, even if they sometimes exceeded the minimum of 1 Gulden per year (without usually exceeding, however, 1-1.5 Gulden). At this point, the very fluctuating dynamic of this category of members has to be underlined, which decidedly differentiates them from the others: in 1907, when we identified the first of their statistics, only 735 people were registered as helping members. Between 1909 and 1910, their number sharply increased from 770 to 2,197, to reach 10,598 in 1911 (the year of the 50 years jubilee) and a maximum of 11,851 in 1912. Starting with 1913, their number decreases, again in a sudden manner, to 7,664, while in 1915 there were only 6,202 such members. In all of the cases, over 80% of these members were "plowmen" (peasants).²⁹

If the number of helping members was recorded annually for several years (at the peak of their involvement), on departments, their socio-professional structure was more seldom detailed. One of the few exceptions dates from the year 1914, when statistics indicate a number of 6725 helpers, originating from 565 communes. Among these, 5519 (82%) were "plowmen," 144 (2.1%) priests, 299 (4.4%) teachers, 512 (7.6%) craftsmen, 29 administrative clerks, 63 bank clerks, 14 students, 11 servicemen, 20 lawyers, 12 doctors, 26 "privates," and 79 institutions.³⁰

The question justly arises: to what extent does this particular category of members have to be taken into account when analyzing *Astra's* membership, given that not even the official statistics of the Association would keep accounts of them, most of the time? Numerically speaking, they represented nearly a double of the members from the first categories, almost four times their numbers in 1911 and 1912, and according to the statutes, they officially formed a category of members. According to the same statutes, they had considerably reduced duties and rights: they were expected to activate exclusively at the local level,

²⁹ *Analele Asociațiunii pentru Literatura Română și Cultura Poporului Român*, 1908, 2, p. 88; *Transilvania*, XL (1909), 4, p. 278; *Transilvania*, XLI (1910), 4, p. 263; *Transilvania*, XLII (1911), 4, p. 593; *Transilvania*, XLIII (1912), 5, pp. 407-408; *Transilvania*, XLIV (1913), 5, pp. 317-318; *Transilvania*, XLV (1914), 7-9, pp. 310-311; *Transilvania*, XLVI (1915), 7-12, pp. 150-151.

³⁰ *Transilvania*, XLVI (1915), 7-12, pp. 150-151.

and they did not benefit from voting rights or rights of initiative other than in the communities in which they activated, even there only with consultative purposes. From this point of view, Astra seems to be organized similarly to the National Romanian Party. There was an elite at the central level, formed by the members of the executive board and, in the case of Astra, of the literary and scientific sections too. There was also a second echelon, formed by the representatives of the committees from the counties, respectively from the departments, at the national congresses / general assemblies (founding, lifelong and ordinary members in the case of Astra). Finally, at the base of the pyramid stood the great majority of the voters that supported the party, respectively the helping members in Astra's case. Neither one nor the others could be politically / culturally activated in the absence of the second echelon. However, on the other hand, they both represented the main propaganda agents at the grassroots level for the great mass of the rural Romanian population, which did not have the right to vote / to participate actively in Astra's actions.

Within this layered system of politically or culturally institutionalized frames, the base of the pyramid, formed in Astra's case by the helpers, represented an essential link between the top and local elite and the more or less amorphous great mass of the Romanian population. In their absence, the propaganda activity, the conferences, the literacy courses, and generally the effects of Astra's actions at grassroots level would have probably been diminished a lot. Seemingly prestige-indifferent, not interested in decision-making, or too financially burdened to afford the status of ordinary member, their great majority being farmers or small craftsmen, the helpers' presence and activity allows a better understanding of the Romanian rural population's integration within the institutionalized civil society of the time. The existence of this category certainly represented an important factor of Astra's penetration within the rural world, but signals, in equal measure, through their limited rights and implication, an elitist conception concerning the mission of the Association and of the Romanian middle class in general in the process of nation-building. Their socio-professional structure transforms their prosopographic research into a matter of micro-history at the level of departments, circles and local agencies, and in the present research they will be included only in comparative instances, which does not diminish, however, either their importance as propaganda agents, or the necessity of future more detailed analysis, which has the potential of nuancing the understanding of Astra's actions in the rural world and especially of the latter's feedback.

Table 1. Evolution of Astra's membership, by type of members (1901-1919)³¹

Year	Founding	Lifelong	Ordinary	Honorary	Sections	Correspondents	Total	Helpers
1901	83	204	1219	7		20	1533	
1902	86	212	1237	6	25	14	1580	
1903	79	215	1192	6	23	14	1529	
1904	83	227	1208	6	25	14	1563	
1905	86	233	1226	8	25	17	1595	
1906	90	252	1347	8	25	20	1742	
1907	95	255	1393	10	25	22	1800	735
1908	101	263	1319	8	24	22	1737	886
1909	103	274	1478	8	25	21	1909	770
1910	112	289	1579	8	25	23	2036	2197
1911	118	316	1939	9	25	24	2431	10598
1912	142	406	2101	12	25	40	2726	11851
1913	149	445	1902	12	25	165	2698	7664
1914a	144	492	1732	12	40	284	2704	6725
1914b	156	548	1211	12	40	284	2251	6202
1915	150	506	1271		319 (H+S+C)		2246	
1916	156	497	1026				1679	
1917	167	516	1079	8	37	276	2083	
1918	181	584	1083	7	37	276	2168	
1919	237	690	2033	7	36	276	3279	

The table above conveys the statistical evolution of the number Astra's members in the period of 1901-1919 and includes the following categories: the honorary members, members of the sections and corresponding members, founding members, lifelong and ordinary members of the departments and outside them, and on a distinct column, the helping members. The allegiance of the first three mentioned categories to the Association was, naturally, very strongly motivated by

³¹ Data extracted from the yearly statistics referenced in footnote 2 and 29 above. Some different (most probably miscalculated) figures regarding the ordinary members for the years 1907 and 1909 can be found in *Transilvania*, XLII (1911), 4, p. 407.

the prestige associated to their status, obtained in the virtue of their scientific and intellectual achievements. Certainly, both the quality of being a member of the departments and the internal differentiations implied a dose of prestige, but in this case the impulse and the personal decision played a much more important role. The honorary members, the members of the sections and the correspondents constantly grew in number from fewer than 50 at the beginning of the century, to over 300 on the eve of the First World War, when they formed, therefore, approximately 10% of Astra's membership.

It has to be mentioned from the beginning that these figures (taken from the official publication of the Association) do not have to be considered as being absolute. Firstly, they do not always include, obviously, the helping members (whose dynamic, as much as it is known, has been presented previously). Secondly, a comparison between these figures and the members nominated by the same periodical (*Transilvania*) leaves room for differences, since the members were usually registered in August, on the occasion of the general assemblies, while the annual statistics would sometimes convey the records at the end of the year, therefore including the taxes paid subsequently, until December. Thirdly, we do not know in what measure do they include or not the members that have passed away during that year, nominated separately. Fourthly, it has to be taken into consideration that the figures reflect annual cross-sectional situations that do not take into account the fluctuations and the renewal rate of the members. Taking as an example the department in Blaj, one of the oldest and largest, built around the ever so active cultural, economic and political environment of the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan Church, we ascertain that among the 44 members at the level of the department (therefore exempting the honorary members and those that were part of the sections and resided in Blaj) in 1901 and 1905, only 26 are the same. If we also eliminate the deceased members (4), we are left with a fluctuation rate of 32% on a span of 4 years, which signifies that a considerably more extended segment of the Romanian population has been at a given moment part of the Association. In another example: the Caransebeș department from Banat registered 67 members in 1900, 29 in 1912, 35 in 1915 and 39 in 1918; however, in the 1900-1918 interval, a number of 109 people had the quality of being a member, for longer or shorter periods.³²

³² Dumitru Tomoni, *Societate, cultură și politică. „Astra” în Banat (1896-1948)* [Society, Culture and Politics. Astra in Banat (1896-1948)] (Timișoara: Arhiepiscopia Timișoarei, 2009), p. 476.

Moving over the slight relativity of the figures, it can be noticed that, in the evolution of Astra's membership, there are some moments of quantitative leaps that peg the process of doubling the number of members between 1901 and 1919. The period of 1901-1905 registers among 1500-1600 members and was characterized by slight annual fluctuations of some tens of people. The first susceptible qualitative leap took place in 1905/1906, and starting with 1909 the growth has become more accelerated. Where did this increase come from in the first place, given that the number of departments remained roughly the same? In 1906, 19 out of the 44 departments registered declines of the number of their members (-68), other five registered stagnation (which, as we have shown earlier, does not exclude nominal fluctuations), and growth has been due to, in great measure, the newly-coopted members in the other 26 departments (215). Among these, some departments have been highlighted: Sibiu, with 57 new members, Brad (with 18), Făgăraș (with 17), Caransebeș (with 12), and Agnita (with 11). Most probably, the 1905 general assembly of Sibiu determined the strong growth of the number of members within this department, while the inauguration of Astra's Museum, on the same occasion, generated a wave of enthusiasm at the whole level of Transylvania, metamorphosed into new adherences.³³

In 1912, also partially as an effect of the previous year's jubilee, the number of 2,649 members has been reached within the departments and 77 within the sections, the maximum of the pre-1919 period. It is now that the helping members also reached their peak number. This was followed by a recoil, accentuated by the tough conditions during the war years, although the period between 1916 and 1918 brought slight comebacks, so that in 1919, for the first time, over 3,000 members were registered. The general evolution of the number of Astra's members has been, therefore, a stable and slightly fluctuating one between 1900 and 1905, constantly increasing between 1905 and 1912, regressive between 1913 and 1916, low but stable between 1916 and 1918, and it exploded again starting with the year of 1919. The importance of festive moments for attracting new Astra members, already highlighted in the literature,³⁴ is obvious: both major leaps (1905/1906 and 1911/1912) have succeeded such events. Just as obvious is the diminishing of the interest in the following period, especially after 1912. At this point we should also highlight that, despite the chronological overlapping with the break-out of the new activism, in 1905, the growth in Astra's membership has, in

³³ *Transilvania*, XLII (1911), 4, pp. 457-475.

³⁴ Moga, *Astra*, p. 164.

our opinion, very little to do with the political developments of the time – unlike a decade before, after the Memorandum law suit.

An analysis of the differences between the years of 1912 and 1915 reveals the fact that, at the level of the departments, even in centers such as Sibiu, Blaj, or Braşov, important decreases of the number of members have been registered, while overall, two thirds of the departments have been affected. The dropouts have hit especially the departments from large and medium cities, many of them having traditions of over several decades, but they did not bypass some large Romanian communes either (Braşov -65, Blaj -59, Făgăraş -49, Şimleu -49, Târgu Mureş -47, Sătmar and Ugocea -47, Sibiu -46, Reghin -33, Abrud -29, Beclean -28, Dej -28, Gherla -24, Târnăveni -23, Lăpuş -21, Timișoara -20, Zărneşti -20). The recoil has been obviously more powerful in the large cities, due probably to the existence of a larger number of Romanians that have registered here in 1911/1912, given the festivity of the moment. Between 1900 and 1912, the departments of Blaj (+69), Sibiu (+68), Sătmar and Ugocea (+67), Gherla (+58), Beclean (+48), Târgu Mureş (+44), Braşov (+43), Sălciua (+43), Făgăraş (+38) have been counted among the most active in the attraction of new members, so that the wave of dropouts after this date is perfectly explainable. Besides, the same departments have also registered the largest losses until the end of the war; nevertheless they have also had spectacular comebacks in 1919.

Among the 24 departments that have succeeded in keeping a positive trend in registering new members between 1912 and 1915, Jibou (+34), Viştea (+30), Orăştie (+23), Şercaia (+21), Biserica Albă (+21), Băseşti (+21), Baia Mare (+18), and Chioar (+17) were the most successful. The only large city in which Astra kept a positive membership trend between 1912 and 1915 has been Oradea. The majority of the departments that have registered significant growth (with the exception of Orăştie) were however newly established, which means that, overall, the combination of the diminishing of the post-jubilee enthusiasm and the outbreak of the First World War has brought the Association, from the point of view of the number of members, to the pre-1910 situation, in order for the new wave of enthusiasm of 1919 to bring an increase in the number of members, again. V. Moga's conclusions regarding the existence of a core characterized by real interest towards the activity of the Association, around which the members with fleeting interest were attracted, seems therefore completely validated, sketching the image of an association that is dependent on the real activity of less than 1,500- 2,000 people at the scale of the whole Transylvania.

This situation has been pointed out even better in the last years of the war. At the end of 1914, the statistics registered a decrease of almost a third of the number of ordinary members, so that in 1916 their number reached less than 1100 people, namely half of the 1912 figure. At the same time, the contraction of the general number of members ends in the same year of 1916, while in 1917 a slight increase recommences. In 1917 and 1918, 25 founding members, 87 lifelong members, and only 57 ordinary members entered or re-entered the Association. The fact that the first two categories, which paid substantially higher taxes, register a double increase compared to that of ordinary members in this period, marks the effort of that core interested in the Astra's proper functioning, formed in great part by members of the local Romanian bourgeoisie, of assuring the proper functioning and the funding of the institution and of setting an example for the other categories of members.

Astra's members – the socio-professional structure

In his analysis, V. Moga offered a well-built image of the socio-professional structure of the Association's members, in its peak moment before the war and in the first years of Greater Romania. What we propose in the following section is to try to capture the evolutions of the first decade of the 20th century, by also adding to his data a sample from 1901. For a greater accuracy of the comparison, we have followed the socio-professional structure used by V. Moga, with slight modifications: we have merged a series of ecclesiastical positions under the title of "ecclesiastic elite" (in general, the positions superior to that of archpriest, both the hierarchical ones, and the ones in the Church administration), we have slightly restructured the categories of public officials, we have added the religious communities to the ecclesiastic institutions, we have added other lay communities alongside the communes. Even so, the comparison can be here and there suspected of slight inconsistencies, which we believe do not affect, however, the overall conclusions.

The socio-professional category that clearly dominated Astra's local organizational structures was represented by the clergy. From the priests and archpriests to the ecclesiastical elite (metropolitans, bishops, vicars, canons, consistorial assessors, etc.), regardless of the category of members, the clergy formed, in the first decade of the 20th century, approximately a third of the number of members. From this point of view the situation was identical to that of the 1860s and it strengthens our hypothesis regarding the persistence of a 1/3 to 2/3 clergy/lay ratio among the "elite" of the Romanian national movement until close to the

First World War.³⁵ Research conducted by M. Balog on the Romanian credit system of the time strengthens this hypothesis too,³⁶ which implies the necessity of a more thorough analysis in the future. If, at the beginnings of Astra, archpriests formed the greater part of the clergy members, thirty years later priests had an overwhelming presence: a fifth of the total number of Astra's members in 1901 and a quarter in 1913 were priests. Priests have also known an ascending trend in the period between 1913 and 1920, but their percentage, likely to that of the entire clergy sector, has decreased susceptibly (down to 18.79%), on the background of the massive enrolment of other categories following the establishment of Greater Romania. The presence and influence of the church within Astra is also highlighted by the presence among members of various institutions, from the Metropolitan Greek-Catholic Chapter in Blaj (member since 1861) to various parish communities, most probably influenced by the priests.

Table 2a: The socio-professional distribution of Astra's members (1901-1913-1920) according to the categories of members³⁷

Profession	FM 1901	FM 1913	FM 1920	LM 1901	LM 1913	LM 1920	OM 1901	OM 1913	OM 1920
Priests	5	8	30	19	80	136	292	533	559
Archpriests	3	3	3	6	18	25	74	95	88
The ecclesiastical elite	6	11	8	5	8	12	30	11	11
Religious communities and institutions	2	2	2	6	7	10	9	20	20
Total Church	16	24	43	36	113	183	405	659	678
Lawyers	15	14	55	23	78	93	115	224	84
Judges		4	7	5	1	12	10	9	42
Notaries public			2	2		1	2	2	8
Others	2		1			5	6		17
Total	17	18	65	30	79	111	133	235	151

³⁵ Popovici, "Astra's Founders," p. 91.

³⁶ Balog, "The Clergy's Involvement."

³⁷ Data for 1913 and 1920 from Moga, *Astra*, pp. 167-169, slightly corrected according to *Transilvania*, XLIV (1913), 5, pp. 211-249; *Transilvania*, LI (1920), 5-9, p. 631 and Annex 6 pp. I-XLIV. Data for 1901 from *Transilvania*, XXXII (1901), 5, pp. 66-101.

Law/Justice									
Banks and credit institutions	4	25	31	9	36	38	11	20	23
Bank directors		3	7	3	23	27	10	23	16
Bank clerks				3	11	6	44	44	10
Total Banks	4	28	38	15	70	71	65	87	49
High civil servants	2	4	5	1		2	6	1	
Notaries (local levels)	3	1	5	6	15	41	71	76	95
High Sheriffs / Praetors ³⁸			6	1	1	19	9	2	24
Other			20	5	12	8	34	94	388
Total Civil service	5	5	36	13	28	138	120	173	507
Communes and other lay communities	16	16	19	34	35	112	8	7	37
Other various institutions	1		10		7	14	5	6	40
Industrial enterprises			4	2			1		
Professors	2	1	6	5	27	53	70	31	153
Techers			1	1	15	42	76	138	298
Doctors	1	6	15	4	22	27	33	22	46
Pharmacists			2	1	3	4	3	7	4
Engineers			2	2	8	10	6	8	15
Officers	2	5	14	2	8	24	7	12	280
NCOs									33
Owners	11	13	18	29	35	58	71	77	168
Peasants				2	3	20	20	9	385
Craftsmen			2		1	17	17	15	98
Merchants	1		13	4	15	31	64	73	86
Industrialists						4	1		3
Women ³⁹	2	13	34	5	22	52	23	49	180

³⁸ *Főszolgabíró* and *szolgabíró* before 1919, *protopretor* and *pretor* after 1919.

³⁹ Following the original methodology of Moga, *Astra*, pp. 167-169, the category of Women only includes those women that did not have a distinct profession mentioned and who only appeared as wives/widows of certain male members. For the complete figures see the respective discussion below.

Others	2	6	5	1	2	18	21	6	91
Profession not recorded		11	15	9	2	54	66	118	124
Total	80	146	342	195	495	1043	1215	1732	3426

Table 2b: The socio-professional distribution of Astra's members (1901-1913-1920) - totals and professional percentages

Profession	Total 1901	Total 1913	Total 1920	% 1901	% 1913	% 1920
Priests	316	621	725	21,21%	26,17%	15,07%
Archpriests	83	116	116	5,57%	4,89%	2,41%
The ecclesiastical elite	41	30	31	2,75%	1,26%	0,64%
Religious communities and institutions	17	29	32	1,14%	1,22%	0,67%
Total Church	457	796	904	30,67%	33,54%	18,79%
Lawyers	153	316	232	10,27%	13,32%	4,82%
Judges	15	14	61	1,01%	0,59%	1,27%
Notaries public	4	2	11	0,27%	0,08%	0,23%
Others	8	0	23	0,54%	0,00%	0,48%
Total Law/Justice	180	332	327	12,08%	13,99%	6,80%
Banks and credit institutions	24	81	92	1,61%	3,41%	1,91%
Bank directors	13	49	50	0,87%	2,06%	1,04%
Bank clerks	47	55	16	3,15%	2,32%	0,33%
Total Banks	84	185	158	5,64%	7,80%	3,28%
High civil servants	9	5	7	0,60%	0,21%	0,15%
Notaries (local levels)	80	92	141	5,37%	3,88%	2,93%
High Sheriffs / Praetors	10	3	49	0,67%	0,13%	1,02%
Other	39	106	416	2,62%	4,47%	8,65%
Total Civil service	138	206	681	9,26%	8,68%	14,16%
Communes and other lay communities	58	58	168	3,89%	2,44%	3,49%
Other various institutions	6	13	64	0,40%	0,55%	1,33%
Industrial enterprises	3	0	4	0,20%	0,00%	0,08%
Professors	77	59	212	5,17%	2,49%	4,41%
Teachers	77	153	341	5,17%	6,45%	7,09%
Doctors	38	50	88	2,55%	2,11%	1,83%

Pharmacists	4	10	10	0,27%	0,42%	0,21%
Engineers	8	16	27	0,54%	0,67%	0,56%
Officers	11	25	318	0,74%	1,05%	6,61%
NCOs	0	0	33	0,00%	0,00%	0,69%
Owners	111	125	244	7,45%	5,27%	5,07%
Peasants	22	12	405	1,48%	0,51%	8,42%
Craftsmen	17	16	117	1,14%	0,67%	2,43%
Merchants	69	88	130	4,63%	3,71%	2,70%
Industrialists	1	0	7	0,07%	0,00%	0,15%
Women ⁴⁰	30 (42)	84 (105)	266 (368)	2,01%	3,54%	5,53%
Others	24	14	114	1,61%	0,59%	2,37%
Profession not recorded	75	131	193	5,03%	5,52%	4,01%
Total	1490	2373	4811	100%	100%	100%

Beyond this, a matter that has been left unstudied especially because of the difficulty encountered in accessing a large number and variety of sources is that of the number of confessional professors and teachers that activated within the Association. In 1901, the professors and teachers amounted together, in equal proportion, to 10.35% of Astra's members. Their number slightly increased in 1913 and more in 1920 (the number of teachers, for example, tripled between 1901 and 1920), but their percentage diminished on the background of the diversification of the socio-professional structure of the body of members. Many of them were, however, employees of the confessional education system, patronized by the two Romanian churches, which raises, in fact, the percentage of the church presence among Astra toward 40% in 1901 and 1913, respectively 30% in 1920. This percentage speaks for itself about the role of the two churches within the national movement, especially at the grassroots level, about the enormous influence that they had, and of their role as opinion makers and trend-setters in a society whose defensive identity position offered fertile ground for conservatism.

⁴⁰ Following the original methodology of Moga, *Astra*, pp. 167-169, the category of Women only includes those women that did not have a distinct profession mentioned and who only appeared as wives/widows of certain male members. The complete figures regarding women are mentioned between brackets.

The following three important socio-professional categories, in the order of their quantitative presence, were of jurists, of public officials, and of the representatives of the banking system. Each had its own specificities. Among jurists, the most active category was represented, before 1918, by lawyers. At that given moment, they dominated the central leadership of the National Romanian Party⁴¹ and shared with the clergy the leading positions in the leadership of the Romanian banking and credit systems.⁴² Their presence, as V. Moga observed, has been considerably diminished after 1918, both numerically and as ratio. Among the hypothesis that he has put forward, we support the one that highlights the transition of the Romanian lawyers before 1918 in administrative offices at county and sub-county level, but we believe that we also have to take into consideration a shift in mentality, which has driven away some of them from their pre-war national-cultural involvement, on the grounds that the most daring of the political ideals and hopes that have been uttered before the war have been fulfilled. All of the other juridical categories represent, in the first decade of the 20th century, an absolute minority among Astra's members, a part of them being former judges, now retired.

The public officials of all levels, formed an especially heterogeneous category, in which we have included the mayors and communal notaries, High Sheriffs / praetors, high county officials, but also members of the Parliament. Their number almost doubled between 1901 and 1913, but their percentage witnessed a regress, on the same background of the extension and diversification of the socio-professional structure of the body of members. Leaving aside the necessity of a future more accurate delimitation within this group, we underline here the fact that their presence within Astra relativizes one of the common places of the era and of historiography, which underlines the obstacles raised by the Hungarian state in the way of Romanian functionaries that were members of Romanian cultural associations. There have certainly existed teasing and interdictions, but they have never been analysed in the particular context in which they took place, and the numerical growth of this category in the researched period indicated the fact that the explanations are probably more nuanced. Moreover, our previous research has highlighted that it is possible that the option of becoming a member of Astra has more likely been conditioned by the socio-professional position

⁴¹ Vlad Popovici, *Studies on the Romanian Political Elite from Transylvania and Hungary* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2012), pp. 71-89.

⁴² Balog, "The Clergy's Involvement," pp. 169-180.

and the income of the Romanian civil servants, rather than by the formal or informal pressure exercised by the authorities.⁴³

The Romanian banking system and its social profile, whose development in the studied period has been well-highlighted in the literature,⁴⁴ is represented both through institutions (banks and credit institutes), and by their personnel. The growth between 1901 and 1913 is obvious, in all of the delimited categories (institutions / presidents / bank clerks) and can be attributed to the general flourishing of this field. It shouldn't be forgotten, however, that given the large percentage of clergy and lawyers in the leadership structures of the banks, it is normal for the involvement of the banking system as a whole in the Association's activity to be stimulated by these two categories so well represented within Astra's members. After 1918, the percentage of this sector has diminished, on the background of the general growth of the number of members, but the sudden decrease of the number of bank clerks has to be remarked, especially given that the number of banks and of bank directors registers slight increases. The explanations are connected, most probably, to the pecuniary effort required by membership in the difficult years after the war, but also to the possible change of generation among the bank clerks, out of which many have entered into the new Romanian administration.

A category with a particular route was represented by the military. Among 1901 and 1913, the number of Romanian officers that were members of Astra grew, but their percentage remained minor (0.75%-1%). However, in the first years after 1918 their numbers explode and, for the first time, in the lists of members also appear the non-commissioned officers, a situation unprecedented before 1918. In 1920, the servicemen went from 1% to 7% of Astra's members, being present in the number of over 350, this attitude change being very well explained by V. Moga, both through the change of environment (from the multinational army to the national one), and through the example set by their superiors.⁴⁵

⁴³ Vlad Popovici, "Considerații privind funcționarii publici români din Transilvania. Studiu de caz: Comitatul Sibiu și scaunele săsești care l-au format (1861-1918)" [Considerations regarding the Romanian Civil Servants from Transylvania. Case Study: The County of Sibiu and the Saxon Seats from which it was formed], *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie 'George Barițu' al Academiei Române din Cluj-Napoca*, LV (2016), pp. 174-175.

⁴⁴ Dobrescu, *Elita*; Dobrescu, *Funcții*; Balog, "The Clergy's Involvement."

⁴⁵ Moga, *Astra*, pp. 88-91.

Other categories, such as medical or technical professionals have known at their turn slight increases in number and percentage among 1901 and 1913, remaining however at a much lower level compared to their general percentage in Romanian society and to the growing interest towards these fields of study.⁴⁶ Doctors, especially, seemed to be slightly less interested in being members of *Astra*, maybe because their profession was much more time-consuming, but also because it simultaneously offered them social status and prestige that was sufficiently raised so as to inhibit the tendencies of increasing it by taking part of cultural associations. It is not impossible, also, that the specifics of the profession have made them more “science oriented” and “nationally indifferent”⁴⁷ than other co-nationals.

The situation of the “owners,” a very heterogeneous group, has been discussed by V. Moga,⁴⁸ and their category has not known but a slight increase between 1901 and 1913, exploding after 1918. The peasants and craftsmen were present in small numbers before 1918 (we have seen that they formed the bulk of the category of “helping members”), but explodes quantitatively immediately after the 1918 union. Merchants were somewhat more numerous and surpassed even the representatives of the medical sciences, a sign of the increasing growth of the Romanian petty bourgeoisie.

Among the institutional actors that have opted for membership in *Astra*, only those from the church and banking spheres, already mentioned, have known notable increases between 1901 and 1913. The administrative communes and the various associations have remained at the same level during this period. The presence of the institutional members, inaugurated even from the moment of *Astra*’s establishment in 1861, highlights the existence of a yet under-researched network within the framework of the Romanian civil society from Transylvania, in which the relations and personal options were converted into institutional support for and through collective actors. In other words, when and if it was possible, people acted through institutions.

Finally, a separate discussion should focus on the presence of women within the membership of the Association. As we have mentioned previously, the tables above only register those women that

⁴⁶ Sigmirean, *Formarea*, pp. 160-165.

⁴⁷ Tara Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis,” *Slavic Review*, 69 (2010), 1, pp. 93-119 for a theoretical approach, as well as a literature overview of the concept.

⁴⁸ Moga, *Astra*, p. 173.

have not been associated with a profession, but mentioned through their kin relationship with a man, usually a member or an ex-member (deceased) himself. In 1901, 42 women (2.8%) have been registered as members of the Association, among which only half exercised one of the mentioned professions. Approximately a quarter of them were professors or teachers, other registered professions being of "owner," merchant, or governess. Among those mentioned as wives of the male members, the wives of priests/archpriest or of lawyers are the most numerous. In 1910 their number was of 75, among which at least 48 appear as wives/widows, for other 16 the profession was not mentioned, while the rest had the same occupations as in 1901. The situation was in large part the same in 1913: although their number grew to 105 (4.4%), 84 of them (80%) appear as wives/widows. In 1920, according to V. Moga's calculations, among the 368 women that were members (8%), 266 (72%) were mentioned as wives/widows, among the others the majority of them being professors (32), teachers (13), functionaries (27), owners, students and a merchant.⁴⁹ Although the increase of the number and percentage of women among Astra's members has been constant, even exponential after the First World War, their professional situation and the way in which their large majority are registered reflects very well the overall situation of a traditional, conservative society, in which the woman's condition is situated in an altering process, but in which the pace of progress remains slow.

Conclusions

In what measure did Astra's composition reflect the socio-professional structure of the Romanian ethnic body from Transylvania and Hungary and the relations within it at the beginning of the 20th century?

Related to the overall situation, it is certainly unrealistic to expect from a cultural and scientific association, essentially elitist as structure and composition, in spite of its generous aims of social and national pedagogy to reflect *in nuce* the nation that it represented and which forms the object of its actions. The structure and composition of the Association reflected, in a much better organized manner, but based on the same principles and mentalities, the model of the National Romanian Party, in which the mass of voters was (or was not) part of the political act, but never of the decisional process. The elitism of Astra's membership is highlighted by the almost complete absence, until 1918, of peasants, craftsmen and workers from the ranks of the founding,

⁴⁹ Calculations based on data referenced in footnote 2 above.

lifelong, or ordinary/active members, namely those that formed the majority with decision-making powers at the level of the departments and in general assemblies. The socio-professional structure of Astra also reflects the unshakable presence of the church within the Romanian society of the time. The clergy quantitatively dominated the local leadership organisms, while the association with the confessional didactic personnel and the relations with the banking system offered it the role of main actor and of unalienable mediator between the rural population and the national elite that wished to educate it. Regarding the didactic personnel, its adherence in a much reduced number compared to that of the clergy has to be taken into account, a lack of interest whose explanations have to be searched for probably in financial reasons, but also in the higher personal autonomy of the teacher, even of the confessional teacher, compared to that of the priest.

Leaving aside these quantitative imbalances that highlight however the power relations and prestige options of a society caught between the necessity of modernizing and that of preserving and constructing its national identity, we observe that Astra hosts representatives of the largest part of the socio-professional strata that formed the middle class / the Romanian bourgeoisie of the time. Next to clergymen and pedagogues we find jurists (primarily lawyers), the public officials (more numerous than the specialty literature is accustomed to see), the representatives of the banking system, different categories of small entrepreneurs, retired officers, more and more women and a network in continuing development of partnering institutions and communities, a sign of a functional and active civil society. The reduced presence of doctors is surprising, but even more so the small number of press people (integrated into the "Others" category), explicably through the still ambiguous condition of the journalist and through their relatively modest earnings.

But only when to these categories, more or less interested in the cultural act, in its national goal or in the associated social prestige, we add the almost completely ignored category of "helping members," their immense majority being peasants and craftsmen, we obtain the image of the relation between Astra's body of members and the society that it wished to refine. The existence of some thousands of peasants willing to get directly involved in this process, as equal intermediaries, probably closer to their fellow villagers than even the priest or the teacher, shows the measure in which the Association was capable of transmitting its message in the rural space and explains, partially, the explosion of its number of members, including peasants and craftsmen after 1918.

To conclude, taking into account the stage of this research workshop, that has yet been assumed as a main direction of study only in a primarily quantitative manner and which did not furnish but results with a high level of generality, we believe that a series of methodological observations are welcomed. Because, as our research points out, the renewal rate of Astra's membership can vary between 30% and 60% according to the department and period, in the future the analysis using cross-sectional sections will have to be complemented by in-depth sociological analyses. To this end, Astra's members from 1901-1918 have been already added to the historical data base Historical Data Grinder, whose public release is scheduled for Summer 2019. The diversity of the professional titles of the members and of the typology of institutions having the quality of member necessitates a mandatory process of standardization (currently in development), both by using an international coding system (e.g. HISCO)⁵⁰, and through a more careful ranking of the professional positions. Criteria such as the administrative level at which the officials activate (central, county, sub-county, commune), the differentiation between the confessional or state teachers/professors, the particular situation of the retirees or even the level of salary or income can help us move forward from the general conclusions towards the nuanced understandings of the success or failure of Astra in the attraction of the different socio-professional categories.

⁵⁰ <https://socialhistory.org/en/projects/hisco-history-work>, last accessed 30.11.2018.