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***THE ASSOCIATIONS OF THE ROMANIAN  
GREEK-CATHOLIC TEACHERS  
FROM TRANSYLVANIA AND THE BANAT***

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The nineteenth century witnessed a decisive cultural and scientific impetus for society's future evolution and school, as a fundamental cultural institution, played a central role. This was the time when under the influence of the state's reforming laws, new organizational structures emerged, amongst which those established on professional criteria were of special significance. Amid a general associationist trend manifesting itself at the European level since the eighteenth century, which became stronger in the first half of the nineteenth century and caused the strengthening of professional and trade-related cohesion amongst all the socio-professional categories, teachers at all levels set up their own associations to represent their professional and, implicitly, personal interests.

Through the research undertaken during our doctoral stage, we aim to highlight the emergence and evolution of the associations established by the Romanian Greek-Catholic teachers in Transylvania and the Banat during the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.

In order to outline a general framework, it is necessary to understand where and how the first European educational associations appeared, which were the factors that led to the adoption of this model and the creation of such associations by the Romanian Greek-Catholic teachers in Transylvania and the Banat during the period of Austro-Hungarian dualism.

Through an approach consisting of several stages, by placing certain interdependent issues under interrogation, we structurally defined twelve chapters and 43 sub-chapters, which focus on the most diverse subjects: the setting up of associations, their members and their responsibilities, the themes and the protocols of the meetings, criticism and "anti-criticism," the fight against absenteeism, the standardization of the curriculum, the establishment and endowment of libraries, the launching of mutual aid funds, the institution of media organs, the cultural enlightenment of the rural world, the connections established with state associations or the attempts to federalize the Romanian denominational teachers.

In **Chapter I**, we tried to capture **The First Manifestations of Educational Associationism at the European Level**, where we identified organizations of teachers at all levels, which appeared very early in the German and Slovak environments, where, in 1786, a Teachers' Association was founded in the Malohont region and, later, in 1813, the German Teachers' Union was created. Up until 1868, when under Article 147 of Law XXXVIII it was stipulated that in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy it was mandatory to establish associations for

the teachers who operated in the popular and state schools, which resulted in a spectacular numerical increase through the dissemination of the model amongst all the other nations, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the pole of action had been stronger in the German, Slovak, Croatian and Italian milieus, where the first beneficent effects of these associations had been recorded. In the mid-nineteenth century, the network of these associations operated throughout most Europe: its emergence had been determined, on the one hand, by the need to establish new forms of training and education (e.g. preschool institutions, elementary schools for both sexes, Sunday or evening schools) which would correspond to a society undergoing constant transformation, and on the other hand, by the desire to contribute to the development of the existing school systems, by optimizing didactic activities and increasing the quality of education. To achieve these objectives, the representatives of the school institutions, the teachers and instructors initially met within the context of simple conferences where issues of general interest were discussed, and then they convened in reunions, new and complex organizational structures, with contributing members, an administrative staff and subsidiaries, in which methodological debates and current activities acquired an official character, becoming more profound and better organized.

After examining the evolution of the phenomenon at the European level and identifying the legislative framework that fostered the emergence of associations in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, we detailed the manner of organization of the Hungarian teachers into county commissions and sub-commissions, which were represented in the General Assembly of all the teachers in Hungary or in the Regnicolar Commission.

Within the limits of the same pattern, we showed the crystallization of the first didactic organizations in the German and the adoption of this model in the Banat, where the students returning from studies in Germany promoted the thinking and organization mode set forth by Adolph Diesterweg. We should retain the substantial contribution of this great pedagogue of Pestalozzian formation, who championed the secularization of education and the organization of teachers' associations, sometimes with trade union agendas, to support the interests of the German teachers.

In the Banat, there functioned associations of the German and the Greek-Oriental teachers, as well as two "sister associations," the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers from Lugoj and the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers from the Land of Hațeg. Their

number expanded on the map of modern Transylvania through the Association of the Romanian Teachers from Sălaj, the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers from the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș, the “Mariana” Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers from Năsăud, the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers around Gherla, the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers from Maramureș, the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers from the Archdeanery of Sătmar in the Diocese of Oradea and the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers in the Counties of Satu Mare and Ugocea, established in the Diocese of Gherla in 1898.

The establishment of new forms of personal development and teacher training methodology among the Romanian Greek-Catholic teachers was part and parcel of a European associationist trend, which manifested itself in the Romanian space through the *casine*, the pupils’ and the students’ reading societies, the theater and musical companies, the craftsmen’s guilds, the pharmacists’ and the naturalists’ reunions, the women’s associations or those dedicated to the Holy Virgin Mary.

Having identified and outlined a brief definition of the teachers’ associations and included them in a general associationist trend with national and denominational overtones, we channeled our research towards a new stage: in **Chapter II**, we presented the first means of methodological training, the practical activities deployed in the application schools of the *preparandias* (pedagogical institutes) and their further development through lifelong learning, supported by the individual study of professional or literary works, such as those of Voltaire, Montesquieu, Jean Jacques Rousseau or the national canon, represented by the old Moldovan chroniclers Miron Costin and Ion Neculce, by Nicolae Bălcescu, Ion Heliade Rădulescu and Mihail Kogălniceanu, which ultimately contributed to outlining the **Intellectual Profile of the Romanian denominational Teachers**.

We also sought to highlight the entry into the Romanian school environments of benchmark pedagogical principles, such as the Herbart-Zillerian principles or the phonomimical, scriptological methods, or that of normal words, and we emphasized the influence they had on the thinking of renowned Romanian pedagogues like Petru Șpan, Ștefan Velovan or Vasile Petri, whose contribution we examined also from the perspective that he was one of the most important textbook authors. In the domain of school supplies, we made a few considerations regarding the textbooks used in the Romanian Greek-Catholic schools and a short inventory of those banned by Ministerial Order no. 17095 of 1906.

The standardization of the school curriculum through the purchase of the same books and common room stationery supplies, the establishment of school libraries and the implementation of unique educational curricula, such as the 35-week Curriculum, compiled on the basis of the acts and decrees issued by the Synod of Oradea for the schools and approved for the schools in the Archdeanery of Satu Mare in 1899 or the Special plan for classes in the Romanian Greek-Catholic people's school, provided with a teacher, represented the directions of analysis in this chapter.

In **Chapter III**, suggestively entitled **The Establishment and Organization of the Teachers' Associations in Transylvania**, we thematically and chronologically presented both the structural elements common to all associations and the individual activities undertaken at the level of the head office or of the branches.

For an overview of the functioning of these meetings, we made a retrospective analysis of Law XXXVIII, whereby the two Romanian - Greek-Catholic and Orthodox - Churches obtained the status of a tutelary authority over denominational schools. In this context, the entire responsibility for the functioning of these institutions, from ensuring the school premises, equipping the classrooms with auxiliary didactic materials, and the training or specialization of teachers in these associations came under the jurisdiction of the churches.

The supreme spiritual patron of all the associations was the metropolitan. His hierarchical subordinates, the bishops from the suffragan dioceses were honorary chairmen of the associations, while the vicars were their leaders in the territory, where there were central associations and smaller organizational structures called branches.

Each association branch carried out its activity within the boundaries of an archpresbyteriate, the archpriest of that region serving as its president. Typically, teachers were proportionately represented in the management structures; however, there were also exceptions, such as the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers around Gherla, where the only function assigned to an elementary school teacher was that of librarian, the other functions being filled by the teachers from the Preparandia of Gherla, the artisans of this association.

In addition to organizing, opening and leading the works of the general assemblies, the archpriests had the mission to oversee and facilitate the collection of financial contributions from the members, the dissemination of books, specialized reviews or consistorial decisions in the

territory. At the bottom of the pyramid there were the ordinary members - the elementary school teachers, on whom the activity of the association practically relied.

Normally held twice a year at branch level and once a year in the case of the central reunions, general assemblies were the living expression of the ideals espoused by the association, with benefits on several levels. On the one hand, through the usual rotating system instituted and through system of “drawing lots”, teachers were compelled to participate actively in the meetings, to develop lesson plans - an element of novelty introduced by the associations, to consult the specialized literature or ensure that they have the best quality teaching tools. Making here a brief aside, we should draw attention to the zeal of some elementary-school teachers, who improvised some of the most original teaching materials, but also to the ignorance and superficiality of others, who did not teach their classes on account that they did not have appropriate support materials. The critical committee had an important role in improving the methodology used by the proponent: it analyzed both the pedagogical and methodological performance of the teacher and the level of the group of students.

To keep absenteeism under check, the associations established “fines” for the absentees, which could vary between 2 and 4 florins, according to the number of offenses on record. Although unusual and sometimes critiqued, the method had the desired effect. The money accumulated in this way was channeled towards well-determined practical purposes, such as the purchase of books for the branch libraries of the associations.

In order to understand the administrative complexity, we detailed issues pertaining to the members’ classification and duties: ordinary, founding, honorary, correspondent, biased or helpful, the manner of choosing and the powers of the clerks and, respectively, of the president, the vice-president, the first and the sub-secretary, the duties of the librarian, the notary, the treasurer, the controller and the attorney. We also focused on the contributions they had to make and the payment thereof, the structure and competences of the General Assembly, the organization and responsibilities of the Central Committee, the dissolution of the association or the teachers’ manifestation in the subsidiary associations.

Within the same pattern, we analyzed, in **Chapter IV, The Establishment and Organization of the Associations from the Banat**, more specifically, the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers from Lugoj and the Association of the Greek-Catholic teachers from the Land of Hațeg, subordinated to the Diocese of Lugoj.

The novelty of the Romanian Greek-Catholic teachers' associationism was the registration and activation of the members of these associations in organizations of the Hungarian state, such as the Association of all the reunions in Hungary, the House of the teachers in Budapest or the Helping Fund for the Latin- and Greek-rite teachers from Esztergom. Placing the events from the period of forced Magyarization, promoted at the time of the Austro-Hungarian dualism, against the background of the restrictive attitude adopted by the state representatives, who sought to limit or even prevent the convening of the Romanian reunions, we naturally asked ourselves what had caused this conciliatory attitude of the Romanian teachers? The explanation is that the desire to obtain rights that were the equivalent of those held by the Hungarian teachers took precedence over nationalism. This explains the Romanian teachers' participation in funding these organizations, some of them having been set up for the purpose of methodological improvement, others for granting financial assistance or accommodation to the Romanian students sent for various levels of education to Budapest. All these aspects are detailed in **Chapter V**, entitled **The Associations of the Greek-Catholic Teachers and the Hungarian State Associations**.

Since the granting of a per diem to cover expenses related to traveling to various teachers' conferences or reunions was a common and extensively debated problem, we also expressed a few considerations on this.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the activities carried out within these associations were channeled towards the establishment of alliances, of new organizational structures, at a regional and even a larger scale, to represent the interests of all the teachers in Transylvania and the Banat, which is why in **Chapter VI** we treated **The Attempts towards the Federalization of the Teachers' Associations**.

**The Financial Support of the Associations** through contributions, donations or the establishment of scholastic Funds or new forms of mutual aid: the Funeral Fund, the "All for one" Fund, the Support Fund for the students of the preparandia, the Funeral Reunion and the Orphanage for the care of the orphaned offspring of teachers from the elementary people's schools, or from the higher and civilian schools, the asylum directors and all the preparandia teachers from the Greek-Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș and the suffragan dioceses of the Metropolitan See of the Blaj - these are all themes treated in **Chapter VII**.

Given that the associations were not subsidized by the state, but ensured their own financial resources (from the members' contributions, from donations, from the printing and sale of pedagogical works or ball tickets), the maintenance of this philanthropic system required an additional effort.

As the teachers' associations were professional organizations with a cultural character, structured on national-denominational bases, which proposed, in addition to the methodological improvement of its members, also to raise the cultural level of the Romanian society, especially in the rural environment, in **Chapter VIII** we submit to the readers' attention **The Role of the Teachers' Associations in the Cultural Enlightenment of the People**. Although this dimension was somewhat identified with the ASTRA actions, we must emphasize the unswerving involvement of these teaching organizations, which extended the function of education reserved, up to that time, to the priests and elementary-school teachers and, in parallel with the programs deployed by ASTRA, developed new forms of education and literacy destined for the adult population.

On the one hand, through lectures and dissertations delivered by teachers, priests and other intellectuals in the general meetings of the associations, the peasants learned the principles of rational economy, in which the land they cultivated could produce rich yields, while beekeeping, silkworm rearing, the cultivation of a variety of trees or the farming of selected breeds of cattle could provide immediate economic gains.

According to the majority opinion, the purpose of education was to train the future farmers in the village areas, so the goal was to strike a balance between the theoretical knowledge transmitted in school and their practical implementation. This explains the creation of model application gardens pertaining to the Romanian Greek-Catholic schools or of the first nursery in the Vicariate of Maramureș, at Sat Șugatag, established with the support of the elementary teachers' association.

Conducted through a comprehensive, long-term process, which involved, in equal measure, the state, the church, the school system, cultural associations or even some individuals, combating illiteracy was another major objective of the ordinary members, who, thanks to the favorable legislation, gave lectures for the education of the adult population. Along with these, there were organized village celebrations, cultural sittings, reading reunions, choral or theatrical



groups, temperance or economic reunions, which undeniably contributed to raising the cultural and economic level of the Romanian villages.

Another function of the associations was to defend the preservation of the national identity through language, traditions and local customs. We should not lose sight of the teachers' contributions to the collection and transmission of folklore, particularly since members of the associations entered the composition of the first generation of folklorists from Maramureș.

Remaining in the sphere of the teachers' cultural enlightenment, in **Chapter IX** we presented **The Establishment and Endowment of the Central and Branch Libraries of the Teachers' Associations**. Additionally, for a broader synthesis, we reconstituted the inventory of the Central Library of the Romanian Teachers' Association from Sălaj, the catalog of the books from the branch library in Băsești and those belonging to the Central Library of the Greek-Catholic Teachers' Association from the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș.

The efforts made by the teachers for **Setting up Their Own Media Outlets**, such as *The Romanian Teacher*, the project for the association in Sălaj, or *The Scholastic Sheet*, the review of the Greek-Catholic Teachers' Association from the Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș, or the distribution of *The Practical School*, represent the essence of **Chapter X**. In order to shape a global picture of how these specialized journals were created and maintained, we presented, on the one hand, the local efforts of the associations, and on the other hand, the transformation of *The Scholastic Sheet* into an official mouthpiece for all the Greek-Catholic associations in the Metropolitan See of Blaj.

Since the pedagogical press facilitated the teachers' possibility to consult lesson plans, pedagogy studies or child psychology treatises, methodological reflections, considerations on the subject matters and, last but not least, the latest in educational legislation, we acknowledge the major contribution of the periodicals to the extensive process of standardization that the educational system in our country underwent.

The central role that the vicars **Alimpiu Barbulovici**, **Victor Mihály of Apșa**, **Ioan Marian** and **Tit Bud** had in the life of the associations and the relations established between the local **Romanian intelligentsia and the teachers**, highlighted through the vantage point of those concerned here, are summarized in the last two chapters of the thesis.

The **catalog of all the members** enrolled in the **Romanian Greek-Catholic Teachers' Associations in Transylvania and the Banat**, **graphics of the sessions**, the official **Statutes** of

the Teachers' Associations, of the **Orphanage** and the **Funeral Reunion** or the lists of library books are inserted into the section entitled **Annexes**.

Established, in a sense, as control tools of the state administration, the associations often became strongholds of Romanian nationalism. Faced with the destabilizing tendencies promoted by the authorities, the teachers adopted firm positions, rejecting outright the projects advanced by the state representatives, who tried to determine the leadership of the reunions to adopt Hungarian in the public speeches held at various conferences.

Protected by the provisions inserted in the Statutes validated by the Ministry of Culture and Public Education, which stipulated that the Romanian language should be used at the reunions, teachers did not bow to pressure, but continued to use the Romanian language in all their manifestations. Even when the Romanian Teachers' Association from Sălaj was officially summoned to remove the name 'Romanian' from its titlature, it did not comply and managed thus to maintain its official name until its dissolution, which occurred because of internal disagreements and against the background of the outbreak of WWI.

In a timid and perhaps unconscious manner, the actions the teachers promoted in the reunions supported national unity, irrespective of denominational affiliation, and defended the Romanian language, folklore and traditions.

Through assiduous work, conducted both in schools, the teachers' reunions or cultural associations and through societies meant to promote the economic welfare of the Romanian peasants, teachers stood out as the principal actors in the cultural enlightenment of the rural world at a time when this project represented a key issue for the Romanian society in Transylvania. And through this contribution, we are hereby launching other challenges for approaching this type of subject.

**Keywords:**

The Associations of the Greek-Catholic Teachers, Transylvania, Banat, Austro-Hungarian dualism, training methods, scientific sessions, associations.

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