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SUMMARY

‘ASTRA’ AND ITS REGIONALS
IN
THE SERVICE OF SOCIAL PEDAGOGY AND ADULT EDUCATION
(1923-1948)

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Keywords: Astra, Bessarabia, Dobruja, Banat, Regional, division, cultural circles, social pedagogy, adult education.

'Astra' and its Regionals in the Service of Social Pedagogy and Adult Education is the title given to this doctoral thesis because during the period leading up to the Great War and the attainment of the Great Union of 1918, as well as beyond this point, the 'Transylvanian Association' was the cultural-national institution that was largely involved in the construction of the Romanian nation through culture, in Transylvania and Banat, but also beyond the arch of the Carpathian Mountains in the Old Kingdom of Romania. The work's relevance is summoned up by the need in the current Romanian historiography of a unified monographic work on Astra's social pedagogical approaches during 1923-1948.

The research aims to provide a comprehensive, integrating picture of the three Regionals, concerning Astra's functional-administrative manifestations carried out through its central committee and the regional committees of the central county divisions, of those constituted in the administrative-territorial districts of the counties, of the communal cultural circles, both in Bessarabia and Dobruja as well as in Banat. The specific activities were carried out with the aim of social pedagogy and emancipation through culture and education of the Romanians in the whole area of Greater Romania. There were organised conferences for intellectuals, lectures for villagers, libraries for the people, exhibitions, schools, and courses for villagers, and last but not least the erection and inauguration of public monuments, through which the Romanian people to remember the sacrifices of the Romanian unification process, respectively to honour the memory of the heroes.

In the areas of Bessarabia, Dobruja, and Banat, the Transylvanian Association set up some regional structures that were active from 1923 to 1948 in the service of the Romanian nation's construction through culture, as it had been envisaged since the 19th century by the models found in the Central European area. The affirmation of the Romanian identity, its language and its culture, the vision of community growth and development through cooperation and small trade, was Astra's aim in a succinct assessment of the period leading up to the Great Union of 1918. However, once the union was achieved, it imposed itself beyond the political phenomenon, a step forward on the way to the integration of inter-human relations, of achieving the spiritual cohesion of the Transylvanian Romanians, respectively those of Bessarabia, Dobruja, and Banat. Astra was not alone in this broad endeavour of building the union of Romanians on both sides of the Carpathian. The phenomenon of inter-institutional collaboration with other cultural societies from Greater Romania was achieved

by aiming initially at a cultural merger and then pursuing an honest collaboration between them.

Through the present research we aimed at filling a historiographical gap concerning Astra's approaches in the Bessarabian and Dobrujan regions, as well as its collaboration with the Romanian military officers during the interwar decades.

We also consider it necessary to contextualize the activity of these Astra's Regionals in the local/regional social-cultural environment, contributing through specific manifestations to local and regional emancipation, because of the implementation of Astra's programme from Sibiu. We note the inauguration of libraries, the support of publishing activities, the inauguration or continuation of the series of lectures for the people on themes of common interest to the Romanian rural environment in the period following the 1918 Union, conferences for intellectuals, rural schools, musical and theatrical activities. These are elements of the social pedagogy through which Astra, under the leadership of Vasile Goldiș and Iuliu Moldovan, sought to fulfil its purpose in Greater Romania.

In the first chapter of the thesis, I have made a radiography of those who approached this research theme of Astra, focusing especially on Bessarabia, Dobruja, and Banat Regionals. We recall here the work of Ioan Pelivan, published in 1930, '*Astra Basarabeană*' *Cultural Association* which presents a synthesis of the cultural activities and achievements during the 1926 – 1930 period.

Specialized research on the phenomenon of associationism has addressed this field during the 20th century. Although specific studies, specialized articles, monographic works, volumes of studies, the results of some doctoral research have been published, a unified and integral approach to the cultural, social, and national model proposed by Astra and applied through the Regionals of Bessarabia, Dobruja, and Banat does not exist to date - on the dimension of social pedagogy and adult education, the new fundamental aim of Astra within the framework of Greater Romania. There are important works that have already been published in the historiography of Transylvanian Romanian associationism, with an explicit focus on Astra, published in the period between the 3rd and the 5th decades of the 20th century. Obviously, here we are referring to the important general monographs produced by Horia Petra Petrescu, Eugen Hulea, Gheorghe Preda.

Onisifor Ghibu analysis in *Three Years on the Bessarabian Front* the activity of the Bessarabian Astra Association. The author highlights the importance of artistic departments in the development of social pedagogy and adult education. In 1986, Pamfil Matei has

published in Cluj-Napoca a monograph of Astra, in which we also find brief references to the establishment and activity of the institution's Regionals.

Researchers such as Leonte Opreș, Ioan Cucuiu, Ion Senior Ardeleanu, Lucia Cornea, Viorel V. Faur, Lucian Giura, Dorin Goția, Susana Margareta Spânu, Carmen Albert, Valer Moga, Cornel Petroman, Dumitru Tomoni, have developed relevant works that offer an accurate image of Astra's cultural life, in different districts and obviously around certain chronological coordinates of their history and manifestations.

The second chapter, entitled *The Central Committee, the Regional Committees and Their Role in Astra's Edification during 1920 – 1948*, constituted the functional-executive bodies through which the program assumed by the members of the 'Association' was optimally fulfilled during the annually general meetings.

We mention the involvement of professor Onisifor Ghibu from Cluj-Napoca, an ex officio member of Astra's Central Committee, Astra's commissioner for Bessarabia, of General Ioan Vlădescu and Major Magistrate and Royal Commissioner of the IX Infantry Division Mihail Dumitrașcu, from Constanța's Regional, but also of the teacher and general school inspector of Region I Timișoara, Sabin Evuțianu. As for Astra's Banat Regional, it was especially supported by professors Iancu Călțun and Ilie Rusmir.

The third chapter, *Astra's Inter-Institutional Relations with Other Cultural Societies in Greater Romania (1919 – 1948)*, presents Astra's collaboration which unfolded from the perspective of inter-institutional approaches with other societies, meetings, leagues, and cultural associations and during the period of the 3rd decade of the 20th century aimed at twinning and federalizing the cultural societies. For reasons specific to their management, this desideratum could not be fulfilled.

We mention here the collaboration with the Cultural League, the Society for Romanian Culture and Literature in Bucovina, the National Houses Syndicate, the 'Prince Carol' Royal Cultural Foundation and with the Cluj University Extension in particular, a prestigious academic association, led at that time by Virgil Iuliu Bărbat (sociologist) and Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă (psychologist).

The fourth chapter, 'Bessarabian Astra' Regional (1923 – 1935), presents the cultural activity of this Regional, emphasizing the preliminaries of its constitution, the election of the central committee, the establishment of literary – scientific sections, the divisions established in military units from Bessarabia (Regiment No. 28 Infantry Ismail, Regiment No. 10 Chasseur-Tighina Garrison, Regiment No. 35 "Matei Basarab" Cetatea-Albă), and of the central - county divisions. This chapter ends with the presentation of the means of cultural propaganda

in Bessarabia: *România Nouă* and *Cuvânt Moldovenesc* periodicals, and *Viața Besarabiei* Magazine.

The fifth chapter, '*Dobrujan Astra*' Regional, presents the cultural activity of this Regional, emphasizing the preliminaries of its establishment, the election of the management committee, the establishment of sections and the central – county divisions of Constanța, Caliacra, Durostor, and Tulcea. Also, in this chapter there can be found information about the establishment and activity of cultural circles within the Regional. To complete the picture of cultural activities, a sub-chapter is dedicated to the lectures and conferences organized within the '*Dobrujan Astra*' Regional, and another refers to the means of cultural propaganda, the *Dobrujan Astra* Magazine - *The Association's Official Bulletin for the Romanian People's Culture*.

The sixth chapter, '*Banat Astra*' Regional, presents the stages of its establishment starting from the preliminaries, continuing with the central committee, with the literary – scientific sections and the establishment of the central (county) divisions and regional ones. A subchapter is dedicated to '*Astra's* Schools for Banat's Villagers. The schools for the villagers were, in the opinion of *Astra's* central committee, the means through which the peasantry could be educated. These schools were organized for the practical skills of the villagers, to shape the man to know the land, to work for it, to know and promote the peasant's past values. Another subchapter refers to the '*Banat Astra's*' General Assemblies seen as an expression of the manifestations of cultural regionalism.

The means of cultural propaganda are also presented. We refer here to *Luceafărul* Magazine, *Luminătorul* Gazzete, *Dacia* Daily Journal and *Astra Bănățeană* Publishing House. '*Banat Astra*' played an important role in the propagation of culture in this area. It established numerous peasant schools, departments, published numerous brochures, thousands of copies of which reached the masses, especially in rural areas. It has also given great importance to theatre and opera performances. With the support of the Cluj-Napoca's National Theatre, it has held 72 performances in Timiș County and 13 opera performances, supported by the Romanian Opera of Cluj-Napoca.

Regarding the methodology of our work, our scientific approach began by studying archival sources, encyclopaedias and dictionaries, albums, general and special works, studies, and articles published in specialist journals and memoirs.

We have selected the most relevant information for this thesis. We have also looked through periodicals of the epoch - *Curentul*, (Bucharest), *Cuvânt Moldovenesc*, (Chișinău), *Cuvântul* (Bucharest), *Dacia*, (Timișoara), *Dimineața*, (Bucharest), *Dobrogea*, (Constanța),

Dobrogea Jună, (Constanța), *Dreptatea*, (Bucharest), *Foaia Diecezană* (Caransebeș), *Foaia Poporului*, (Sibiu), *Gazeta Sibiului*, (Sibiu) etc.

The primary sources of the work were collected from the Sibiu County Directorate of the National Archives, the Sibiu ‘Astra’ County Library’s Archive, the Orthodox Diocese of Tomis’ Archive, the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Banat’s Archive, *Aurel Cosma jr.* Fond., the Republic of Moldova’s National Archives, ‘Cultural Association for the Light and Culture of the Astra People’ Fund. *Bessarabian Regional*, National Archives’ Caraș-Severin County Service, National Archives’s Timiș County Service, etc.

The cultural regionalism promoted by Astra through the three regions represented a local response of the elites from Bessarabia, Dobruja, and Banat involved in the process of building the Romanian nation, through social pedagogy and adult education, requiring a better promotion of the regional specificity.

The ‘Astra’s’ Regionals represented the expression of the concept of the Transylvanian Association’s decentralization and the formation of certain autonomous substructures, both according to local particularities and cultural and patrimonial specificities, seen in their statutory meaning, as regionals of the Central Astra of Sibiu, proposing a development model to the Romanian world through social pedagogy. Moreover, knowing the history, the organization, the evolution of the specific forms of manifestation, of the Central Committee’s members of each regional, of the members of the functional sections of these regionals, but also of the inter-institutional relations that Astra developed through its regionals, represented a necessary approach of historiographical recovery.