

ELITE STRATEGIES OF MINORITY NATION-BUILDING IN DUALIST HUNGARY: LAW GRADUATES SUPPORTED BY THE NĂSĂUD BORDER REGIMENT SCHOLARSHIP FUNDS*

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Background

Following the revolutionary events of 1848–1849, at the beginning of 1851, the two Romanian border regiments in Transylvania were dissolved. After almost nine decades of military administration, the Romanian population on the territory of the former border guard regiment of Năsăud would return to a civil administration.¹ Within this context, the Greek-Catholic vicar of Năsăud, Macedon Pop, cautioned, in a statement published in the *Gazette of Transylvania*, that “if we will not have higher and industrial schools, so that we are able to establish another way of life, a trade, a service in the civil jurisdiction for which we are now completely unprepared, in a short while we will be impoverished.”²

Therefore, it was deemed necessary to continue the educational project that had previously been implemented in the region, on the basis of the network of schools inherited from the period of the border guard regiment. These were to be complemented by middle schools, and most notably, by a concerted effort to support the descendants of the former border guards of Năsăud in their pursuit of higher education, in order to ensure the continued development of the region. A point worth emphasizing was the vicar’s mention of the need to prepare young Romanians for “service in the civil jurisdiction, for which we are now completely unprepared”. The transition from a military

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¹ Adrian Onofreiu, *Districtul Năsăud (1861–1876)* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2010), 109.

² *Gazeta Transilvaniei* 20 (1851): 91.

to a civil administration had brought to light the deficiencies of the local Romanian elites, namely the shortage of individuals trained in law, who would have been capable of occupying positions in administration. Moreover, the political transformations of 1867 – that had marked new stage in the life of the Monarchy – also announced the beginning of a difficult period for the nationalities in Transleithania. Within this context, the strategy of Romanian nation-building in the Hungarian Kingdom prioritized the establishment and promotion of a national intelligentsia, and particularly of a coherent body of Romanian jurists and lawyers.³

The Romanian population from the former border guard regiment in Năsăud aligned itself to the elite's efforts of filling this professional gap, embracing the idea and pledging significant material resources for its accomplishment. The collective mentalities of the Năsăud region demonstrated an awareness of the fundamental role played by education in securing one's future and that of the nation: this region had the highest percentage of middle school graduates in Transylvania.⁴ The Năsăud border regiment funds were the concrete result of this shared effort to increase the educational development of the region, as means of securing its social and economic prosperity.

The present study aims to analyse the collective elite strategies of national development of the Romanian population in Hungary during Dualism by means of a case study applied to the district of Năsăud. It focuses on the efforts to create a professional group trained in law and on its subsequent integration and employment in the various levels of civil and judicial administration, or as lawyers in private practices. The object of the study are the Romanian students who opted for a career in administration or law and who benefitted from scholarships awarded by the Border Regiment Funds from Năsăud.

Sources and methodology

The study of elites in Transleithania has witnessed major changes in approaches in the past decade, the most notable of which has been the implementation of quantitative methods that have, for instance, allowed the prosopographic enquiry into the backgrounds of political and administrative elites.⁵ The systematization of biographical information for the members of these heterogenous groups by means of databases has enabled a longitudinal analysis of the structural evolution of various elite segments.

A second recent pathway in the study of elites in this region has reconsidered the various elite groups in modern Transylvania from a structural perspective, emphasizing the necessity of viewing them as collective actors. The use of new methods and the framework provided by state-of-the-art sociological theories have created the premises

³ Cornel Sigmirean, *Istoria formării intelectualității românești din Transilvania și Banat în epoca modernă* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), 317.

⁴ Claudia Septimia Sabău, *Și ne-au făcut din grăniceri, țărani...* (Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 2015), 73.

⁵ Judit Pál, "The Representation of Transylvanian Towns in Parliament in the Period 1878–1910," *Transylvanian Review*, 4 (2013); Vlad Popovici, "The Electoral Process in the Banat (1861–1918). Statistics. Evolution. Prosopography," *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Barițiu din Cluj-Napoca* LIII (2014).

for analyses that can overcome current historiographical discourses on the formation of national elites in Dualist Hungary.

The Romanian students who were awarded scholarships by foundations operating in the Kingdom of Hungary during modernity have been the object of various studies in the past two decades.⁶ Although praiseworthy in many respects for revitalizing the field, the most recent endeavours in this sense have remained mired in the traditional historiographic discourse, and have regarded the process of awarding scholarships for Romanian students almost exclusively through the lens of the essentially conflictual relations between the Hungarian state and the national minorities. Moreover, these studies have adopted limited perspectives, focusing on individuals with exceptional careers in the form of singular case studies. Even when patterns in the process have been identified, the influence of variables such as the geographic provenance or the social status of students on the awarding of scholarships has been dealt with only on a descriptive level, thus limiting the explanatory impact of the research undertaken. Finally, the lack of even a qualitative relational perspective in the study of a phenomenon based on the existence of ties and networks established between students, intermediary actors, and various institutions deprives these efforts of an essential dimension.

The present study fills this research gap, and builds upon extant historiographical bases in an effort to explore these issues from a different and novel perspective. It focuses on the identification of the ulterior professional pathways of students who had benefitted from scholarships as a means of evaluating the success of the policies of educational development promoted by the Romanian elites. It also aims to shed light on the strategic exercise undertaken by this heterogeneous elite segment, whose purpose in ensuring financial support for aspiring Romanian students of law was to ensure its self-perpetuation in an unfavourable political context.

The present study relies on the 97 scholarship folders of law students, kept by County Department of the National Archives of Bistrița-Năsăud, preserved in the archival fund of the Năsăud Border Regiment Funds. Each folder contains varied information on each individual who applied or benefitted from a scholarship: biographical information, educational pathway (secondary and higher education), curricula and grades. It provides a glimpse into the medical, social, familial and economic difficulties encountered by beneficiaries of scholarships during their studies. It also offers relational information, detailing the institutions and law practices where these individuals undertook their compulsory traineeships after completing their studies, and including their correspondence with the secretary of the Committee charged with managing the Funds. It also contains various quantifiable information, relating to the amount of scholarships awarded. This rich archival material has made it possible to conduct a detailed analysis of the process by which a regional juridical elite was created. This information was corroborated with data extracted from the Hungarian and Austrian schematisms published during the Dualist period – *Magyarország Tiszti Czim- És*

⁶ László Szögi, *Studentii români din Transilvania la universitățile din Europa în secolele XVI-XX* (Târgu-Mureș: Editura Universității "Petru Maior", 2011); Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*.

Névtára (1873–1918) and *Hof- und Staatshandbuch der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie (1868–1918)*. These latter sources have provided insight into the extent to which former beneficiaries of scholarships were integrated into key professional fields, and could thus serve the Romanian communities that had supported them financially for the duration of their studies.

The Scholarship Fund

In 1830, during the existence of the military border regiments, a so-called “mounting fund” was created in the area, meant to cover the expenses related to the acquisition of uniforms. The sums collected stemmed from the following sources: one third of the income of the communal houses; the revenue from the leasing of the mountain “Dosul Stânișoarei” and of the mountain area in Rodna; the share paid in cash by the fiscus for the footwear that the border guards were obliged to craft themselves; the sums paid by the officers for the wood provided and transported by the border guards from their forests; the cash share paid to the border guards for the use of their uniforms during campaigns and outside the regiment district. When the regiment was dissolved, the “mounting fund” had reached the sum of 28435 florins and 38 *Kreuzer*.⁷ During the assembly of the communities that had been part of the former border regiments, which took place in Năsăud on the 13th of March 1851, the representatives decided that these funds would remain an indivisible “wealth community”. Its revenue would be used to provide scholarships for the descendants of the former border guards, which led to it being renamed as a “scholarship fund”. However, this decision could not be immediately implemented: shortly after the introduction of civil jurisdiction, the state’s financial authorities confiscated both real estate and monetary resources, declaring them “erarial (state) properties”. A protracted petitionary activity led by the Romanian political leaders from Năsăud would enable the funds to be used for their intended purpose beginning with 1861. To prevent any changes in the use of the funds (the scholarship fund was complemented by a central and a community-level school fund), the representatives of the communities decided in late 1861 to concentrate these resources in Năsăud. Their management would fall to an “Administering commission”, the executive branch of the “Committee for the border regiment funds”.⁸

Between 1861 and 1918, the scholarship fund in Năsăud awarded 2977 scholarships and aids for higher, secondary and trade education, amounting to a total of 434551 Austrian florins⁹. This was not an insignificant sum, and tallied with the total amounts offered by similar Romanian foundations operating in Dualist Hungary, such as the

⁷ Ioan Pop, “Mișcarea petiționară din ținutul Năsăudului în perioada 1851–1861,” *Marisia X* (1980): 245, 251, 268.

⁸ Lazăr Ureche, *Fondurile grănicerești năsăudene (1851–1918)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2001), 33–37.

⁹ In 1892, a law was passed by which the crown was introduced in Transilvania, a currency that circulated in parallel to the florin until the end of the century, according to I.A. Pop, T. Năgler, A. Magyari, eds., *Istoria Transilvaniei*, vol. III (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2008), 528. After 1899, the scholarships awarded by the Năsăud fund were provided

“Emanuil Gojdu” foundation or the foundations administered by the Metropolitan consistorial authority in Blaj.¹⁰ These organizations shared the ideological purpose of the Năsăud fund, aiming to aid in the creation of an elite segment trained in the key fields of higher education, but differed in criteria and mechanisms of selection.

Law Students: Beneficiaries of Scholarships from the Năsăud Fund

Of the total of scholarships awarded, 1117 were destined for higher education, and of these, 322 went to individuals who pursued university studies in the fields of law and political sciences. Thus, 28.8% of the total number of scholarships for higher education were awarded to those who sought a career in the practice of law or administration. The field of law studies surpassed all other domains from this perspective: the second and third highest fields were medicine (22.1% of scholarships) and philosophy (21.8% of scholarships). While this situation corresponded to the regional specificities of higher education and to the “nation of lawyers” described by Victor Karády as typical for Dualist Hungary,¹¹ it is by no means self-explanatory that minorities within the Kingdom of Hungary would guide their strategies in an identical manner. These figures suggest that the study of law was understood by the elite segment handling the administration of the scholarship fund as an integral part in developing a coherent body of civil servants, who would be able to play an instrumental role in the life of their communities.

The 322 scholarships were awarded to 90 students, for a period ranging between one and five years. According to the “Statutes for the administration of the border regiment school funds” and the “Rules for awarding of scholarships and aids”, the maximum number of years for which a student could be supported financially depended on the complete duration of higher studies in law. This pathway included four years of university attendance, and, optionally, an additional year for preparing the *Rigorosum*, the examination which entitled students to enrol in a doctoral program. The value of individual scholarships varied between 200 florins – during the first decades following the establishment of the fund – and 300 florins/600 crowns towards the late nineteenth century. It reached the maximum value of 1000 crowns (or 500 florins) immediately prior to the First World War, maintaining this level during the conflagration. Not all students benefitted from a scholarship, some only receiving aids for the duration of one year: these aids were generally lower than the scholarships themselves, varying between 100 florins and 580 crowns (the equivalent of 290 florins) in the years before the outbreak of the Great War.

Law students initially received similar scholarships to those awarded for the fields of medicine, philosophy, and theology, but only half as much as students of the

in the new currency. Consequently, for greater accuracy, it may be stated that the total amount of scholarships provided reached 217897 florins and 433308 crowns.

¹⁰ Ureche, *Fondurile grănicerești*, 139.

¹¹ V. Karády, “Un ‘nation des jurists’. Des usages sociaux de la formation juridique dans l’Hongrie de l’ancien régime,” *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales* 86–87 (March 1991): 106–116.

commercial academy, the technical faculty, forestry and mountain studies. Despite these differences, the number of scholarships and aids awarded annually for the humanities and medicine was greater than for other fields. Gradually, the level of scholarships underwent uniformization, and a student could expect to receive the same sum regardless of the field of study. It should be noted that, beyond the trends of the time and the overarching educational strategy espoused by the national elite, individuals' option for the study of law also arose from pragmatic considerations. The study of law was regarded as easier than other fields, as even the requirements for obtaining a doctoral degree were less rigorous than in other domains. On the other hand, society's ability to absorb a great number of law graduates was much higher than for other fields.¹²

Despite this, law students often found themselves unable to fulfil their obligations to the financing authority, and consequently saw their scholarships temporarily suspended. According to the official notice received by the beneficiaries, they were obliged to act in accordance with the "Rules for the awarding of scholarships and aids", and therefore to provide evidence that they had enrolled in the faculty or juridical academy for which they had received the scholarship. After enrolment, students needed to provide written proof of their good moral and educational conduct, from the same institution. Periodically, beneficiaries needed to submit to the "Administrating commission" documents attesting to their educational progress (the number of hours spent for study each week, the courses attended, etc.) and to the successful passing of basic examinations. Only when these prerequisites were fulfilled would the students receive their scholarships, released in monthly rates. Moreover, keeping the scholarship in the event they decided to change fields of study depended on the timely agreement of the "Administrating commission", following a petition to be submitted within the first five months of the first year of studies. It was much more likely that the commission would accept a change in the higher educational institution initially selected in the scholarship application.¹³

Scholarships were granted following an evaluation of all applications by the members of the "Administrating commission". Application folders needed to be submitted before the 10th of August, and contain the following documents: an official document demonstrating the applicant's residence in one of the 45 communities on the territory of the former Border regiment of Năsăud (the communal competency); an extract from the parish or civil record of baptisms; a notarial copy of the baccalaureate examination certificate (the so-called maturity degree); a medical certificate attesting that the applicant "is both bodily and spiritually in good health"; a document detailing the material background of the applicant and his family, which also specified whether he was an orphan¹⁴. The applicant received his answer immediately after the meeting wherein the files were evaluated, which most often took place on the 20th of August.

¹² Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 108.

¹³ Serviciul Județean al Arhivelor Naționale Bistrița-Năsăud (hereafter abbreviated as SJANBN), *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1493, f. 44–45.

¹⁴ SJANBN; *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 237, f 6–7.

However, the awarding of the scholarship also needed to obtain the approval of the Ministry for Instruction and Cults.

The first document in the folder was provided by the communal authorities, signed by the district notary and the local priest or mayor. This was essential as a means of proving the applicant's background as a descendant of the former border guards. In some cases, a common document attesting to both the applicant's descent and his material status was drafted. This was however more than a simple certificate: it could also serve as evidence of the candidate's good standing in the community, and therefore as a proxy for a letter of recommendation. Individual folders rarely contained distinct letters of recommendation, as was for instance the case for Clement Istrate's application. He had received and annexed a letter written by the representative body of the urban committee of Năsăud, which recommended that the applicant be awarded a scholarship because "he was throughout his secondary education one of the most eminent pupils, and also received his maturity degree with eminence". Moreover, the letter argued that "because this community has previously contributed and is presently contributing to the increase of the income destined for the support of education more than any other in the district of Năsăud", its applicants were more than entitled to receive a scholarship. The pathway of the future graduate of law, despite an interlude in studies taking him outside the district (or even the province), was deeply intertwined with that of his local community: "if this young man is not awarded a stipend, this community would lose in the future another intelligent man".¹⁵

The extract from the parish or civil register of baptisms offers, beyond information concerning the date and place of birth, and parents' names, a glimpse into the applicants' confessional adherence and their social-economic provenance. Corroborated with data from the document describing the moveable and immoveable estate of the applicant's family, this information allowed us to conduct a quantitative analysis of the social-professional backgrounds of the law students whose studies were financed by the Năsăud funds.

The copy of the maturity degree offers insight into the applicants' evolution in the eight years of secondary education preceding the awarding of the scholarship, as well as into their geographic mobility during this time.

The medical certificate, usually drawn up by the Emil Filipan, the physician for the district of Năsăud,¹⁶ attested to the applicants' state of mental and physical health. Despite this certificate, more than half of those who were not able to fulfil their obligations towards the financing authority, as detailed in the "Rules...", motivated their breach of contract by noting that they had been ill for extended periods, and evidenced this state by providing other medical certificates. In the majority of cases, the "Administrating commission" ruled to temporarily halt the payment of the scholarship until the student could prove that he had fulfilled his duties. At this time, the entire

¹⁵ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1230, f. 1.

¹⁶ Oana Habor, *Incursiuni pe tărâmul medical transilvănean (1876-1914)* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2015), 249.

amount of the scholarship would be retroactively paid out, including that owed for the period of illness. The beneficiaries were well aware of the sanctions about to be imposed on them, and fully took responsibility for it, as the letter sent to the Commission in August 1913 by Ion Nășcuțiu attests to. Nășcuțiu, a student at the University of Cluj, noted that “according to the extant laws, at the end of this year I was supposed to undertake the second fundamental examination. However, because of illness, as the medical certificate attached shows, I was forced to postpone the date of the examination until September 1913. On the basis of this, I ask [the commission] to maintain the awarded aid, on the condition that at the beginning of next year I submit the results of the abovementioned examination.”¹⁷

The 90 beneficiaries of scholarships awarded by the Năsăud funds who studied law between 1861 and 1918 pursued an education at 11 law faculties and academies, 9 from the Dual Monarchy and 2 from outside its boundaries: The Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the Royal Hungarian University in Budapest, the Faculty of Law and Political Sciences of the “Ferencz József” University in Cluj, the Reformed Academy of Law in Debrecen, the Evangelical Academy of Law in Sibiu, the Reformed Academy of Law in Kecskemét, the Evangelical Academy of Law in Prešov, the Faculty of Law of the University of Vienna, the Catholic Academic Lyceum of Law in Pécs, and the Imperial and Royal Academy of Law in Košice. Students also went beyond the boundaries of the Empire, attending school at the Faculty of Law of the “Friedrich Wilhelm” University of Berlin, and the Law Faculty of the University of Bucharest.¹⁸

The great majority of the law students financed by the Năsăud funds attended the University of Cluj, over 75.5% of these enrolling at this institution for at least a semester. More than half (51.1%) of the students who were awarded scholarships for law studied exclusively in Cluj, despite the fact that the university was only established in 1872, becoming the second in Transleithania, after its counterpart in Budapest.¹⁹ One of the reasons behind this choice for Cluj might have been the centre’s proximity to the students’ home villages and towns, compared to other institutions, such as the one

¹⁷ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, dosar 2154, f. 16.

¹⁸ The information used in the analysis have been extracted from 97 personal files, some of which also pertain to applicants who were not awarded the requested stipend for the study of law. For nine of the former students of law who were awarded scholarships no files remain, so the information concerning their pathways was extracted from various other secondary sources. SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folders 1083, 1085, 1087, 1090, 1092, 1104, 1129, 1226, 1230, 1249, 1253, 1272, 1274, 1276, 1289, 1297, 1315, 1330, 1337, 1339, 1352, 1354, 1365, 1371, 1448, 1453, 1457, 1484, 1487, 1490, 1493, 1497, 1498, 1503, 1507, 1533, 1546, 1555, 1556, 1558, 1559, 1561, 1592, 1595, 1605, 1608, 1610, 1612, 1613, 1623, 1632, 1661, 1664, 1666, 1690, 1705, 1714, 1718, 1737, 1756, 1768, 1771, 1772, 1775, 1803, 1805, 1811, 1818, 1846, 1918, 1950, 1965, 1966, 1982, 2020, 2032, 2040, 2058, 2066, 2067, 2103, 2136, 2154, 2173, 2210, 2221, 2236, 2237, 2249, 2259, 2293, 2323, 2353, 2358, 2366, 2381.

¹⁹ Zoltán Pálffy, “Ethno-confessional patterns of the Choice of Study Paths among Transylvanian Students of Law and Medicine (1900–1919),” in V. Karady, B.Z. Török, eds., *Cultural Dimensions of Elite Formation in Transylvania (1770–1950)* (Cluj-Napoca: Ethnocultural Diversity Resource Center, 2008), 38.

in Budapest. Studying in Cluj also involved lower costs for students from the Năsăud district, as Iuliu Corneliu Oradace, one of the applicants, noted. After one year spent in Budapest, he asked the Commission to approve his transfer to the University of Cluj, arguing that “the expenses I had during the school year of 1889/1899 at the University of Pest considerably exceeded the amount of the scholarship approved, and therefore, if I were to remain in Pest, it would incur too greater expenses for my parents, which I would have no way of covering myself”.²⁰ Moreover, although the University of Cluj was regarded as superior to the law academies, compared to the law faculty of Budapest the one in Cluj was believed to be inferior, contemporaries remarking on the easiness with which one could obtain a degree in the field in the Transylvanian city.²¹

A second centre in the rankings of the students from Năsăud was the Faculty of Law of the Royal Hungarian University. This was often encountered in the options of students who had completed their four-year study at law academies, and, unable to pursue further doctoral studies in these forums, opted for the faculty in the capital of Dualist Hungary.

Two of the abovementioned law academies were clearly preferred by the students from the district of Năsăud. Of those attending the reformed academy in Debrecen, two thirds also studied at another university as well. The reasons for this choice pertain not only to material considerations, but also to the quality of the education offered by Debrecen, as Simon Filipoiu’s letter from 1909 shows. After having studied for the first three years in Debrecen, he had relocated to Cluj for his fourth and final year: “I live in the Petran student housing, where I am accepted for free. The housing is reserved for the young Romanian university of students of little means. [...] I want to become acquainted with the educational system in Cluj, with the professors and books here, so fundamentally different than the ones from the Academy, which are completely filled with notes, and contain much, too much theory, and very little practical parts: other authors, other ideas and interpretations”.²² The fourth centre in the order of importance was Sibiu. The Evangelical Academy of Law was an option regularly embraced by students until the 1870s. After this period, the only student to attend this institution was Emil Verzariu, in the 1880s.²³ Moreover, more than half of the students from Năsăud complemented their studies in Sibiu with those in Cluj or Vienna. The Academy of Law in Sibiu lost its attractiveness for Romanian students following the founding of the University of Cluj and the introduction of Hungarian as the language of study.²⁴

The Law Faculty of the University of Vienna, as well as the other law academies from the Dual Monarchy were only stages in the process of educational formation undertaken by the law students awarded scholarships by the Năsăud funds. The majority of students only spent between one and three semesters at these institutions. It should also be noted that none of the students from this group opted for the Law

²⁰ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1690, f. 43.

²¹ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 109.

²² SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1918, f. 23–26.

²³ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1289, f. 24.

²⁴ Sigmirean, *Istoria formării*, 133–134.

Academy of Oradea, a fact which is impossible to explain on the basis of the present data. As far as the institutions outside the boundaries of the Empire were concerned, the cases of Ioan Pop and Matei Pop, who also pursued studies at the “Friedrich Wilhelm” University of Berlin, were rather exceptional, and confirmed the reservations shared by the great majority of students from Năsăud regarding the idea of studying in other European states. In the same exceptional category are the two students – Nicolae Onoae și Viorel Grivase – who benefitted from scholarships to pursue the study of law in Bucharest. Their choice most likely also owed to the international context at the time when they began their studies – the university year 1918/1919 –, only a few months before Transylvania was united to the Kingdom of Romania.

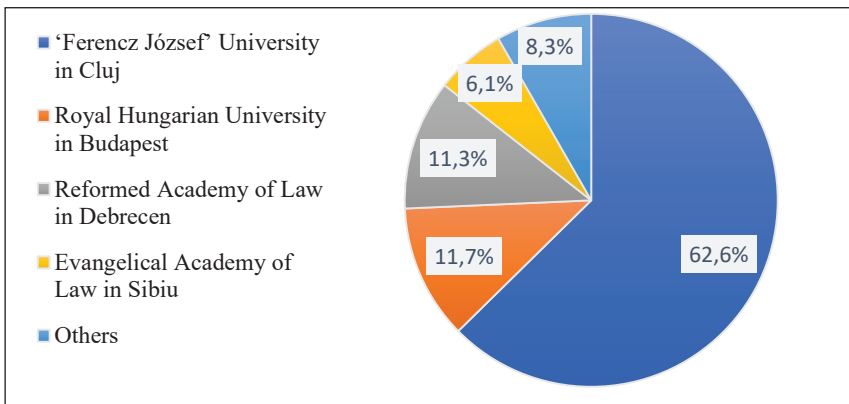


Fig 1. The institutions of higher education attended by the law students, whose studies were financed by the Năsăud Border Regiment Funds

The study of law did not come as a natural first choice for all of the 90 scholarship beneficiaries in this group. For 15.6% a career in the field of law was a compromise, as they had originally manifested their inclination towards other fields such as medicine, theology, veterinary medicine, forestry and mountaineering, or humanities and technical sciences. Despite this, 64% of the individuals in this category would complete at least four years of law studies, and 57% of them would also pass the *Rigurosum* in order to enrol in doctoral studies. Owing to various reasons, on which we can only speculate, individuals grew into the idea of pursuing a career in the field of law, despite initially having chosen a completely different domain of study.

While for some the compromise of studying law was a personal choice taken after the first semester of studies in another field, for others this choice left no room for personal considerations: they had either failed to enter the university and field of first choice, or the commission had conditioned the awarding of the scholarship to pursuing studies in the field of law, even if it was not their preferred option. Octavian Utalea for instance asked the Commission in a letter dated August 4th 1889 to “show fatherly mercy” and consider him for a scholarship for the study of philosophy at the University of Cluj. On the 25th of September 1889, after having been awarded the scholarship, he

asked to be allowed to ‘try a bit’ of the funds for the study of law at the same university, where he was already enrolled as a student. Utalea gives no information referring to the reasons behind this choice, and the commission approves it, while noting that if he “were to transfer to yet another faculty, the stipend will be halted for perpetuity”. Possibly owing to this as well, Octavian Utalea completed his education in law in Cluj, and shortly after, also underwent the *Rigurosum* in order to obtain the title of doctor in the same field.²⁵ A similar case was that of his colleague Simion Pop, who in the same year, asked the committee to finance his studies at the university of Budapest, where he would have liked to become familiar with “cattle medicine”. Meeting with a refusal from the financing authority, he gave up the plans to study veterinary medicine and enrolled in the Faculty of Law in Cluj. In 1890, he again petitioned for a stipend “in order to continue a career in law”, attaching a copy of his grades for the school year of 1899/1900. He was awarded a scholarship which he managed to keep for four years, including the period dedicated to preparing for the examination prior to the obtaining of a doctoral title.²⁶ Also among those who had initially opted for veterinary medicine was Victor Drăgan. While in the previous two cases – of Octavian Utalea and Simion Pop – the decision to study law was made at the beginning of the first year of studies, Drăgan changed his mind at the end of his first semester. In his initial scholarship file, dated 9th August 1912, law did not figure among the two options expressed, as he had opted for either “veterinary medicine, or maybe a commercial academy”. The aid offered by the Commission, valued at 580 crowns, proved to be insufficient for studies in veterinary medicine, which led to his request on the 23rd of January 1913 to transfer to the faculty of law during the second semester. His arguments, relating to the “financial means which do not allow me to further pursue my studies at the superior veterinary school”, had apparently convinced the members of the Commission to approve his transfer. Despite this approval, after only a semester he would also give up on a career in law, and again petition for a scholarship in agricultural sciences in Bucharest after the end of the War.²⁷

In the category of those who had opted for law following the decision of the Commission was Clement Istrate. On August 10th 1875, he wrote to the Commission expressing his preferences in a succinct manner: “in the first place, I would ask for a stipend for technical studies, but outside our homeland [Dualist Hungary], and if not, then for forestry studies, and in the third place, for the study of law [...] I am able to embrace any career, but I would still however rejoice if I were approved a stipend to study technology at any university beyond our homeland, as I have an inclination towards this field.” Despite the clearly-expressed options, the response of the Commission conditioned the awarding of a scholarship to the pursuit of law studies. Considering the high costs associated with his preferred field of study, Clement Istrate saw himself compelled to accept the Commission’s decision and pursue a career in law.²⁸

²⁵ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1457, f. 1, 8–9.

²⁶ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1453, f. 1, 6, 14, 64–66.

²⁷ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 2136, f. 1, 11, 43.

²⁸ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1230, f. 4–5.

The costs associated with university studies in various fields were decisive in determining the choices of the applicants. Both the chosen field, and the city where the aspiring students wished to pursue an education in were directly influenced by their social background and the status of their families. According to the testimonies of many scholarship beneficiaries, this source of funding was not enough to completely cover the costs incurred by the student during the school year. A great part of the money received were used to secure lodgings – although many benefited from accommodation in student housing for those of little means – and daily consumption. Another part of the scholarship would be used to procure manuals and handbooks, while the preparation for the *Rigurosum* also involved high costs, as Andrei Mureșan noted in 1913: “... at the university of Budapest the fees for the *Rigurosum* have doubled, from 50 to 100 cr[owns]... everything is collected with great expense”.²⁹ Under these circumstances, the social provenance of scholarship beneficiaries was a decisive factor in the analysis of the process of the formation of the juridical elite from Năsăud. In a significant part of the applications, the document detailing the financial situation of the candidates’ families noted that they did not possess either moveable or immoveable assets, sometimes specifying that they were “one of the poorest graduates of this year”, living “in a dreadful state, without even the smallest moveable or immoveable wealth”.³⁰ This situation was also caused by the fact that, while more than one third of the beneficiaries stemmed from peasant families (*economi*)³¹, almost 60% were sons of teachers, professors, priests, or small clerks, whose wages were insufficient to support their offspring at studies outside their district of origin. Although the study focuses on a region that had been militarized for more than 90 years, it may appear as surprising that only a very small percentage of scholarship beneficiaries stemmed from families with a military tradition. A similarly low percentage were themselves sons of lawyers (Fig. 2).

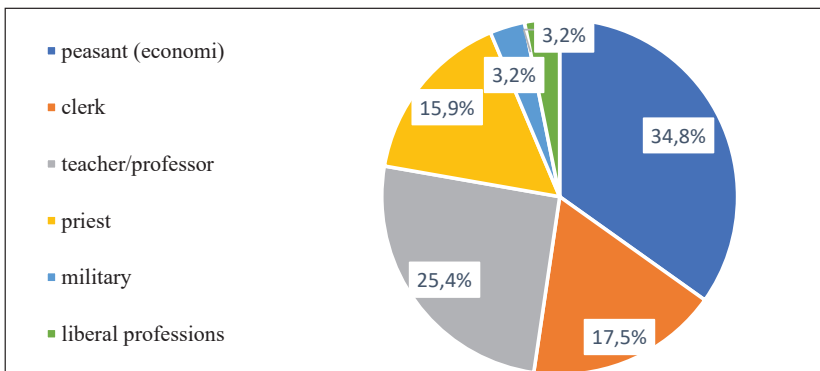


Fig. 2 The social-professional background of the fathers of law students who had received scholarships from the Năsăud Border Regiment Funds

²⁹ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 2103, f. 35.

³⁰ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1249, f. 1; folder 1632, f. 3.

³¹ On the basis of archival documents and secondary literature, we have identified the father’s profession for 70% of the scholarship beneficiaries.

Some students were part of extended families, where several siblings pursued secondary or higher education roughly around the same time. Their applications offer a glimpse into the hardships encountered by parents who wished to offer their offspring an extensive education. In his letter addressed to the Commission, the priest Leon Vertic from Mocod expresses precisely such hardships: after considerable financial efforts to support his sons during their secondary studies at the gymnasiums of Blaj and Năsăud, he was rendered utterly disappointed and helpless by his inability to further finance his eldest son's higher education. As Vertic wrote, "the difficulties I have faced during these twelve years in which I have struggled to keep in school these two sons of mine, will only be understood by those who have to keep two in Blaj at present times. [...] Moreover, having been punished by Providence with the insufferable yoke of keeping my first born son Ioan, sick for the past 20 years, with a wandering mind. [...] All these difficulties have now brought me to a state in which I am unable to fulfil my fatherly duty, and to utter despair, seeing myself incapable of further maintaining [at university] my son Gavrilă, even after all throughout his studies he has pleased not only his educators with his eminent progress, but everyone who has had the fortune of knowing him".³² The precariousness of material circumstances was even more visible in the case of students who had been orphaned of one or both parents, who amounted to over 25% of the total of scholarship beneficiaries. The most dramatic cases in terms of financial resources were those of students whose fathers had perished. Widowed mothers, regardless of setting, would have encountered significantly more difficulties in ensuring the livelihood of their families, especially if they owned only small plots of land. For instance, Vasile Pahone widowed mother, Paraschiva Pahone from Borgo-Russ "only possessed very few immoveable assets, which are barely enough to support her family, and in order to support her son's graduation she had to borrow money from the local credit enterprise, and therefore her little property is now burdened to the amount of 300 fl". The widow's efforts were successful in 1895, when Vasile Pahone managed, with the help of the scholarship fund, to pass his examination for the title of doctor in law.³³ Four years later, he was already a member of the chamber of lawyers in Bistrița.³⁴

At least 36% of the scholarship beneficiaries who studied law shared Vasile Pahone's successful integration into their field, after graduating. Successful law graduates who had benefitted from scholarships awarded by the Năsăud fund were later on employed in the county administration or judicial system, or worked as lawyers in private practices. If the sample is reduced to those who had benefitted from a scholarship for more than two semesters, then the share of those who were active in the practice of law (including in civil service) rises to 46.5%. The success rate of the Năsăud project increases to 48.5% if we consider that the students who began to

³² SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1085, f. 1–2.

³³ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1448, f. 7, 52.

³⁴ *Hof- und Staats-Handbuch der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Monarchie für 1899* (Wien: Druck und Verlag der K. K. Hof- und Staatsdruckerei, 1899), 912.

attend university in 1914 completed their studies at the earliest in 1918, and therefore their professional evolution was impossible to track on the basis of the Austrian or Hungarian schematisms for the Dualist period.

A significant part of the individuals whose careers we are able to track activated exclusively as lawyers – 45.4% –, while another 9.1% initially went into the county-level administration of Bistrița-Năsăud, and only afterwards appeared as members of the chamber of lawyers. A great majority of individuals in this broader category appeared on the lists of the Târgu Mureș Bar (chamber of lawyers), and were employed in lawyerly practices in Bistrița, Năsăud or Rodna. The only exception was Octavian Pavelea, who opened up his own practice in 1907 in Beclean, within the Bar of Cluj.³⁵

Another important segment of graduates found employment in the civil service in the district of Năsăud, and, after the administrative re-organization that united it with Bistrița in 1876, in this new administrative unit's corps of civil servants. 36.4% of the law graduates supported by the Năsăud funds worked exclusively in the county-level administration, and 9.1% – mentioned previously – would give up their positions in this system to become self-standing lawyers.

Among the scholarship beneficiaries who served in the county-level administration Leon Scridon stands out. Born in 1863 in Feldru, to the peasant family of Teodor Scridon, he completed his secondary education at the gymnasium in Năsăud in 1883, obtaining a certificate of maturity from this institution. In the same year he applied to the “Administrating commission” of the Năsăud funds, requesting that he be awarded a scholarship, “for the purpose of perfecting myself for the juridical career, and to be able to study at the University of Cluj.” His scholarship was approved by the Commission, and would be re-approved for the entirety of his studies, including the preparatory examination for obtaining the title of doctor in law, which he successfully passed in 1889.³⁶ Beginning with 1889, he appears in the administrative structures of Bistrița-Năsăud, first as a trainee/*közig. gyakornok* in the district of Livezile.³⁷ After only one year, he was appointed constable/*szolgabíró* in the district of Vișoara,³⁸ and starting from 1892 he held the same office in the district of Rodna.³⁹ In 1893 he advanced to the level of vice-notary/*aljegyző* of the Bistrița-Năsăud county⁴⁰, a position he would hold for almost 15 years. In 1906 he was named first-notary/*őjegyző* of the county⁴¹, and would remain in this office until 1918. This final appointment made Scridon the third most important figure in the hierarchy of the Bistrița-Năsăud county, after the lord lieutenant and county commissioner, and the most successful individual to have been supported by the Năsăud funds during his law studies. His career in the civil service did

³⁵ *Tiszti Czim- és Névtára 1907* (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1907), 448.

³⁶ SJANBN, *Administrația Fondurilor Grănicerești Năsăudene*, folder 1354, f. 1–44.

³⁷ *Tiszti Czim- és Névtára 1889* (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1888), 116.

³⁸ *Tiszti Czim- és Névtára 1890* (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1890), 79.

³⁹ *Tiszti Czim- és Névtára 1892* (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1892), 83.

⁴⁰ *Tiszti Czim- és Névtára 1893* (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1893), 82.

⁴¹ *Tiszti Czim- és Névtára 1907* (Budapest: Pesti Könyvnyomda-Részvény-Társaság, 1907), 83.

not prevent him from also acting as member of the “Adminstrating commission” of the Năsăud border regiment funds between 1896 and 1923.⁴²

A very limited percentage – only 6.1% – of the scholarship beneficiaries managed to pursue a career in the juridical system. Ariton Mărcuș reached the highest office in this category, being appointed district judge/*járásbíró* in Năsăud in 1873.⁴³ Another singular case was Nestor Șimon, who, after completing his juridical studies, dedicated his entire energy to helping the institution that had supported his endeavours, working as a secretary of the Năsăud border regiment funds from 1889 until his retirement.⁴⁴

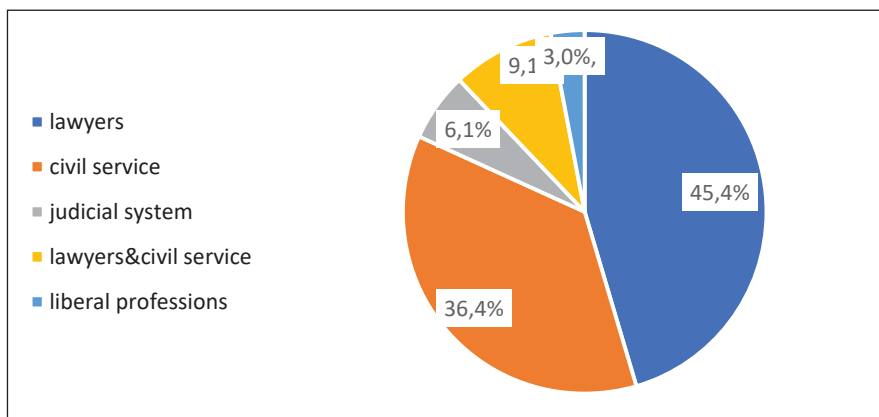


Fig. 3 The distribution of law graduates supported by the Năsăud border regiment funds according to field of activity after graduation

Concluding remarks

The Năsăud project, which aimed to enable the creation of a local elite with higher studies in various professional domains deemed essential to the development of the Romanian nation in Transylvania, should be regarded as part of a broader endeavor in this sense, publicly assumed by both members of the intelligentsia and the Romanian population in Hungary. The priorities evidenced by this project can be taken as a proxy for the strategies employed by the heterogenous elite segment that had helped to bring it to fruition. Initially, the Năsăud funds prioritized within their funding choices those students who aimed to pursue studies in the humanities, as a means of supporting the nascent Romanian body of professors to be employed at the Romanian Gymnasium of Năsăud, established in 1864. Gradually, and in sync with the overarching tendencies in the Kingdom of Hungary, the field of law studies became a priority concern. Helping to create a legal elite, whose presence in the civil service and whose experience

⁴² Adrian Onofreiu, “La cumpăna veacurilor și a vremurilor. Leon Scridon sen. în apărarea averilor și a liceului grăniceresc din Năsăud,” *Arhiva Someșană* XIV (2015): 67–68.

⁴³ *Tiszti Czím- és Névtára 1873* (Budapest: Nyomatott az Athenaeum Nyomdájában, 1874), 255.

⁴⁴ Mircea Gelu Buta, Ioan Bolovan, Adrian Onofreiu, *Nestor Șimon. Restituiri* (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centru de Studii Transilvane, 2012), 19–20.

in dealing with the complicated Hungarian legal system was increasingly regarded as a means of giving a voice to the silent national minorities in the dual state, was paramount. Lawyers, notaries, and various clerks who had been supported by the Năsăud funds were at least tacitly expected to keep in mind their ethnical background and the efforts their home communities when handling these communities' affairs as the state's representatives. This was all the more important in the context of the magyarization policies enacted by the Budapest governments during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The fact that almost half of the long-term law graduates supported by the project in Năsăud managed to gain employment in their field of study indicates the success of the policies promoted by the Romanian elite.

The mechanisms and criteria employed in the selection of the scholarship beneficiaries also corresponded to this broad goal of educational and social-economic development. A scholarship could function as a motor for ascendant social mobility in the familial and individual context, allowing those less fortunate to achieve an educational and occupational level that would not have been imaginable without this considerable material support. Beyond this purely material aspect, the decisions of the Commission charged with awarding scholarships were guided by pragmatic considerations: candidates who were deemed to have good chances of successfully completing their studies, regardless of their background, were a priority in terms of funding. The Commission did not apparently discriminate on the basis of confessional adherence: although the majority of scholarship beneficiaries belonged to Greek-Catholicism, this reflected the confessional differentiation in the Năsăud county, where, with the exception of the villages situated on the Bârgău Valley, the great majority of Romanian inhabitants had converted to Greek-Catholicism during the existence of the border regiments.

Finally, the results of the present research suggest further directions of enquiry. The existence of collective elite strategies of nation-building in the Kingdom of Hungary, as in other modern composite states, is already an undisputable thesis. While the goals of such strategies have been extensively dealt with in the extant scholarship, the concrete means by which they were enacted, outside the discursive clashes between the national movements and the state and the active petitioning activity championed by nationally-inclined leaders, have not been appropriately discussed. By attempting to delimit, identify, and quantify one such project and the way in which it was implemented, we have shown the extent to which the efforts of the Romanian intelligentsia and of the Romanian communities in the former border regiment area contributed to the fashioning of a coherent body of individuals trained in law, a regional elite capable of serving the interests of its promoters and further advancing the agenda of the broader Romanian elite groups.

**STRATEGII ELITARE DE CONSTRUCȚIE NAȚIONALĂ LA
MINORITĂȚILE DIN UNGARIA DUALISTĂ: ABSOLVENȚII DE STUDII
DE DREPT SUSȚINUȚI DIN FONDURILE GRĂNICEREȘTI NĂSĂUDENE**

Rezumat

Studiul urmărește analizarea fenomenului acordării de burse pentru studenții români din Ungaria dualistă de către Fondurile Grănicerești Năsăudene. Scopul principal al cercetării vizează identificarea mecanismelor de acordare a bursei și sistematizarea informațiilor cu privire la acest grup de indivizi care au fost susținuți financiar pe perioada studiilor în centrele universitare europene, urmărind atât proveniența acestora cât și parcursul lor profesional ulterior. Cuantificarea gradului de absorbție a acestui nou-constituit grup elită în structurile instituționale publice și private după încheierea studiilor reprezintă o modalitate nouă de a evalua succesul acestui efort strategic colectiv al elitei românești.