



# **The Nation in the Village: The Genesis of Peasant National Identity in Austrian Poland, 1848-1914**

*Keely Stauter-Halsted*

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How do peasants come to think of themselves as members of a nation? The widely accepted argument is that national sentiment originates among intellectuals or urban middle classes, then "trickles down" to the working class and peasants. Keely Stauter-Halsted argues that such models overlook the independent contribution of peasant societies. She explores the complex case of the Polish peasants of Austrian Galicia, from the 1848 emancipation of the serfs to the eve of the First World War.

In the years immediately after emancipation, Polish-speaking peasants were more apt to identify with the Austrian Emperor and the Catholic Church than with their Polish lords or the middle classes of the Galician capital, Cracow. Yet by the end of the century, Polish-speaking peasants would cheer, "Long live Poland" and celebrate the centennial of the peasant-fueled insurrection in defense of Polish independence.

The explanation for this shift, Stauter-Halsted says, is the symbiosis that developed between peasant elites and upper-class reformers. She reconstructs this difficult, halting process, paying particular attention to public life and conflicts within the rural communities themselves. The author's approach is at once comparative and interdisciplinary, drawing from literature on national identity formation in Latin America, China, and Western Europe. *The Nation in the Village* combines anthropology, sociology, and literary criticism with economic, social, cultural, and political history.

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