

*National Inventory
of Active Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements*

I. Domain

- knowledge concerning traditional crafts
- social, ritual practices and festive events

II. Intangible Cultural Heritage Element: The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (Alțiță) – an Element of Cultural Identity of the Republic of Moldova

Standard term: the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță)

Local/regional names: *cămașă de sărbătoare* [feast blouse], *cămeșă încrețită la gât* [blouse pleated around the neck], *cămașă cu altiță* [blouse with embroidery on the shoulder], *cămașă națională* [national blouse] (the most frequently spread names); *cămașa fetelor* [girls' blouse] (northern villages and those from the Soroca field), *ie* [Romanian blouse] (villages from the middle and inferior course of Prut), *cămașă cu altițe cu fir (șir, hir) metalic* [blouse with embroideries made of metallic thread] (villages from Central Woodlands and Camenca region, on the left bank of Nistru).

Area of manifestation

The traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) is frequently spread in the north and south of the Republic of Moldova, more seldom, in villages from the South. However, it is acknowledged, respected and admired everywhere as the most representative item of the woman costume. It is the main item of the feast folk costume. By its means, women bearers display symbolically their belonging to a community, their social status, the desire to live and share with others beauty. It is a complex creation, of highest artistic skilfulness in needlework, in using materials, designing ornamental motifs, structuring them in ornamental groups, including them in décor. There is a historically based link between the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) and its place within the ensemble of the folk costume, between wearing the costume and observing the etiquette. During several centuries, women and girls invested much artistic creativity in the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță), improved its materials, the artistic techniques and principles of ornamentation. At the same time, they kept its basic pattern, so that it has acquired an original expressivity and people wear it as an identity dress having a great social impact. People like it, stitch and wear it with great passion, with the aim to individualize the personality of bearers in relationship with other dress patterns, offered by the tradition. Romanian women prefer it as the most distinct identity dress mark. The same do representatives of other cultures when they participate at community feasts and wish to experience lively its splendours. Old persons wear it when they want to show their heritage and their competence before youngsters, folk craftsmen – during exhibitions, fairs and social and economic manifestations, those who receive honour guests. Young girls and women prefer it, when they participate in the artistic

activity of different ethno-folkloric bands, folk dance groups, during weddings, community feasts (Day of the Patron Saint or the Centenary of villages); when they visit within delegations communities from neighbourhood or more remote ones, within friendship relationships or cultural partnerships.

From the point of view of spread in other cultural areas, linked to the Romanian one, the element is encountered in Ukrainian and Hutsul communities from Western Ukraine. There, both the blouse and its constitutive parts bear other names, a chromatics and a design that visibly differ. From the point of view of the artistic specific, the clothes of Ukrainians and Hutsuls have bigger proportions of ornamental registers (the “altița” [embroidery on the shoulder] and the “încreț” [pleat] are broader); the ornamental graphics is denser, leaving too little white space among elements and motifs, including less white field among the ornamental groups. The chromatics is more frequently based on the principle of contrasts.

The spread of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) on the nowadays territory of the Republic of Moldova

In the North:

District of Briceni: Criva village (further – vil.), Larga vil., Drepcăuți vil., Hlina vil., Tabani vil., Bulboaca vil., Coteala vil., Grimăncăuți vil.

District of Ocnîța: Naslavcea vil., Lencăuți vil., Clocușna vil., Dângeni vil., Mihălășeni vil.

District of Edineț: Bădragii Vechi vil., Brânzeni vil., Gordinești vil., Edineț town.

District of Râșcani: Bălăneștii Noi vil., Hiliuți vil., Pârjota vil., Șaptebani vil., Zăicani vil., Văratec vil.

District of Glodeni: Ciuciulea vil., Petrunea vil., Moara Domnească vil., Hâjdieni vil.

District of Dondușeni: Cernoleuca vil., Crișcăuți vil., Rediul Mare vil., Baraboi vil., Mihăileni vil., Ochiul Alb vil.

District of Drochia: Drochia vil., Pelinia vil., Târnova vil., Țarigrad vil.

District of Soroca: Cosăuți vil., Bădiceni vil., Rublenița vil., Racovăț vil.

City of Bălți.

District of Șoldănești: Cușmirca vil., Vadul Rașcov vil., Alcedar vil., Pohoarna vil., Olișcani vil., Climăuți vil., Cobâlea vil.

District of Sângerei: Dumbrăvița vil., Prepelița vil., Heciu Vechi vil., Căzănești vil.

In the Centre:

District of Rezina: Lalova vil., Ignăței vil.

District of Telenești: Chițcanii Vechi vil., Mândrești vil., Chiștelnița vil.

District of Florești: Băhrinești vil., Trifănești vil., Napadova vil., Văscăuți vil., Ștefănești vil.

District of Fălești: Natalievca vil., Călugăr vil., Răuțel vil., Horești vil., Valea Rusului vil.

District of Ungheni: Boghenii Noi vil., Petrești vil., Pârlița vil.

District of Nisporeni: Boldurești vil., Chilișoia vil., Zberoaia vil., Iurceni vil., town of Nisporeni.

District of Strășeni: Lozova vil., Sireți vil., Recea vil.

District of Călărași: Păulești vil., Vălcineț vil., Nișcani vil., Sadova vil., town of Călărași.

District of Orhei: Chiperceni vil., Morozeni vil., Trebujeni vil., Clișova Nouă vil.

District of Ialoveni: Costești vil., Buțeni vil., town of Ialoveni.

District of Hâncești: Cărpineni vil., Cioara vil., Lăpușna vil., Pașcani vil.

District of Anenii Noi: Geamăna vil., Mereni vil., Șerpeni vil., Varnița vil.

District of Dubăsari: Molovata Nouă vil., Pohreba vil., Ustia vil.

In the South:

District of Basarabasca: Abaclia vil., Sadaclia vil.

District of Cimișlia: Gura Galbenei vil., Iurevca vil.

District of Căușeni: Sălcuța vil., Ursoaia vil.

District of Leova: Tigheci vil., Cociulia vil., town of Iargara.

District of Cantemir: Pleșeni vil., Gotești vil.

District of Cahul: Văleni vil., Găvănoasa vil., Giurgiulești vil., Colibași vil., Vadul lui Isac vil., Slobozia Mare vil., Cășlița-Prut vil., Manta vil., Brânza vil., Cucoara vil.

Villages were people stitch and wear the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder. 21st century

North:

District of Glodeni: Ciuciulea vil.

District of Drochia: Popeștii de Sus vil., Sofia vil., Pelinia vil.

District of Dondușeni: Crișcăuți vil., Baraboi vil.

District of Edineț: Brânzeni vil., Gordinești vil., Rotunda vil., town of Edineț.

District of Soroca: Cosăuți vil., Vădeni vil., Bulbocii Vechi vil., Rublenița vil.

District of Florești: Băhrinești vil., Putinești vil., Hârtop vil.

District of Fălești: Catranâc vil., Horești vil., Obreja Veche vil., town of Fălești.

Centre:

District of Telenești: Căzânești vil., Suhuluceni vil., Coropceni vil., Chițcani vil.

District of Sângerei: town of Sângerei, Biliceni Vechi vil.

District of Ungheni: town of Ungheni, Condrătești vil., Pârlița vil.

District of Călărași: Palanca vil., Vălcineț vil., Hârjauca vil., Temeleuți vil., town of Călărași.

District of Strășeni: Țigănești vil., Tătărești vil., Lozova vil., town of Strășeni.

District of Hâncești: Ciuciuleni vil., Mingir vil., Negrea vil.

District of Orhei: Clișova Nouă vil., Lucașeuca vil., Peresecina vil., town of Orhei.

District of Criuleni: Mașcăuți vil., Bălăbănești vil.

District of Dubăsari: Molovata Nouă vil., Holercani vil.

District of Ialoveni: Suruceni vil., Răzeni vil., Costești vil., Horești vil., Bardar vil.

District of Anenii Noi: Mereni vil., Hârbovăț vil., Puhăceni vil.

South:

District of Leova: Borogani vil., Filipeni vil.

District of Cimișlia: Gura Galbenei vil.

District of Căușeni: Fârlădeni vil., town of Căușeni.

District of Ștefan Vodă: Crocmaz vil., Răscăieți vil.

District of Cahul: Cotihana vil., Manta vil., Slobozia Mare vil., Văleni vil., town of Cahul.

The description of the element – ethnographic and historiographic data

The traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder is very old in the practice of communities living to the East from the Carpathians. This fact is proved by its name, its cut, the principles of ornamentation and the social practices in which it functions. Both words have Latin origin. *Cămașă* [“blouse”] comes from the Latin *camisia*, and *altița* [“embroidery on the shoulder”] – from the Latin *altitia*. It has an archaic cut, a simple and practical one: some pieces of rectangular fabric, ornamented with the needle and colour threads, join by a seam. The blouse becomes thus multifunctional, fit for all the activities specific for feasts. The ornamental groups have concrete names (on the sleeve: *altiță* – up, on the shoulder; *încreț* [pleat] – under it, and lower – *râuri* [streams of ornaments]; there also are *râuri* in front and backwards). Each ornamental group has specific motifs that do not repeat in other places. Their insertion within the ornamental group is made according to traditional rules. Due to the antiquity of the dress, one wears it at any feast. These multiple social functions invested it with an especially high prestige, enhancing its aesthetic aspects, so that it has become emblematic. It was passed on, according to the tradition, from one generation to another. Girls and women from different social layers contributed to its configuration as a distinct dress.

The researcher Valentin Zelenciuc asserts that some cloth items have a greater age, but the whole Moldavian costume was formed beginning with the 14th century, along with the formation of the state the Moldova Principality (B.C. Зеленчук. *Молдавский национальный костюм* [The National Moldovan Costume]. Кишинев: Издательство Тимпул, 1985, с. 14). Already in 1713, the Swede Erasmus Heinrich Schneider von Weismantel expressed his admiration for the Moldovan women’s dress: “They wear on the body a thin blouse, stitched along a width of one finger and more with different silks and gold and silver in 4 strips, in front and backwards, up till down to the seam that reaches the feet.” (Schneider Von Weismantel, Erasmus Heinrich. *Scurtă descriere a ținuturilor moldovene* [Brief description of the Moldovan lands]. În: *Călători străini despre Țările Române* [Foreign Travellers about the Romanian Principalities]. Vol. VIII, edited by Maria Holban, București, 1983, p. 356-357).

The homemade folk dress was a unitary phenomenon until late 18th century. After 1812, after the Russian Empire had annexed the north-eastern part of Moldova, the prestige of these traditional clothes gradually decreased. Women were encouraged to dress in clothes of European fashion. They wore traditional clothes under those of European fashion. Only during important rituals for human life, such as weddings, burials, bidding farewell to youngsters that joined army, one used traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*), stitched at home, including for gifts. Old women preserved their old wear. However, because they recommended, at their death, to be buried in the marriage blouses (so prescribed the custom),

the oldest items were buried together with them. In the context of the diminishing tradition, under the impact of modernity, the removal of these items from the circuit had consequences on maintaining in use the old items bearing a great artistic value.

Although such blouses were stitched and worn by women from boyar families, peasants, shepherds, priests, parish clerks and handicraftsmen ones, there remained written documents only from richer families, because these families, due to economic possibilities, used to write dowry acts. In the testament of Dumitru Jărdan, a “vornic de poartă” [a court office in medieval Moldova], from the Radeni village, Orhei county (20 of March 1820), is mentioned among “*Other things that remained from my dead wife Maria and should be given to our daughters Safta and Eleana, as indicated further, 2 embroidered kerchiefs, one on fabric, the other one on paper, 3 linen blouses stitched with “altițe cu fir”* [embroideries on the shoulder with threads] [...]” (Leon Boga. *Documente basarabene* [Bessarabian documents], vol. III. Testamente și danii (1672-1858) [Testaments and donations (1672-1858)], Chișinău: Tipografia Eparhială – „Cartea Românească”, 1929, p. 47). In the document issued at the death of the mother of the Moldovan boyar Neculai Murguleț are mentioned a *red “fotă”* [peasant apron], two “*peșchire*” [a kind of traditional carpets] and a pair of “*altițe cu sârmă*” [embroideries on the shoulder with wire] (Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, *Arhiva istorică a României* [Historical Archive of Romania], vol. 1, 1864-1865, edited by I. Oprișan, SAECULUM I.O. Publishing House, 2013, p. 71).

The manuscript from 1848 about three towns and 69 villages from the Balta county, beyond Nistru, where lived mainly Moldovans, concerns the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță), made from thin fabric, having the sleeves decorated with different ornaments stitched with iron thread (А.Смеречинский. Географическое и Этнографическое сведение о южной части Балтского Уезда и о жителях оной Молдаванах. 1848 [Geographic and ethnographic data about the southern region of the Balta county and about Moldovans, its inhabitants. 1848]. Архив Русского географического общества [The Archive of the Russian Geographical Society]. Saint Petersburg, XXX, 32, no. 138, p. 77).

In late 19th century, due to the usage of graphic methods and photo, sources become more frequent and more eloquent.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Fig. 1. The Polish painter Jozef Chelmonski witnesses, with a pencil, on the paper, a woman dressed in a traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (*Voyage en Bessarabie*, published in “Monde illustré” in 1884).

At the ethnographic exhibition from 1867, organized within the Moscow University by the Society of Amateurs of Natural Sciences, were presented photos of local costumes from the Bârnova village, Soroca county (Д.Коцовский, Село Бырнова, Сороцкого уезда в 1867 году [Bârnova village, Soroca county, in 1867]. In: Записки Бессарабского областного статистического комитета [Annals of the Bessarabian Regional Committee for Statistics], vol. 2, Chişinău, 1867, p. 217). The oldest known photos, illustrating women that wear this blouse, date from 1884 (The negatives are kept in the collections of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, as well as in the collections of the Ethnographic Museum of Peoples from Russia, Saint Petersburg).



Fig. 2. A family of Bessarabians from the Hotin county. 1884. The girl's blouse in the image has "altiță, încreț, râuri" [embroidery on the shoulder, pleat, streams of ornaments].

The geography of this item completes also the album of the photographer J.X.Raoult (Raoult de Paris), published in 1898 in Odessa (Несколько народных типов России [Some ethnic types from Russia], 2nd part, 1898)

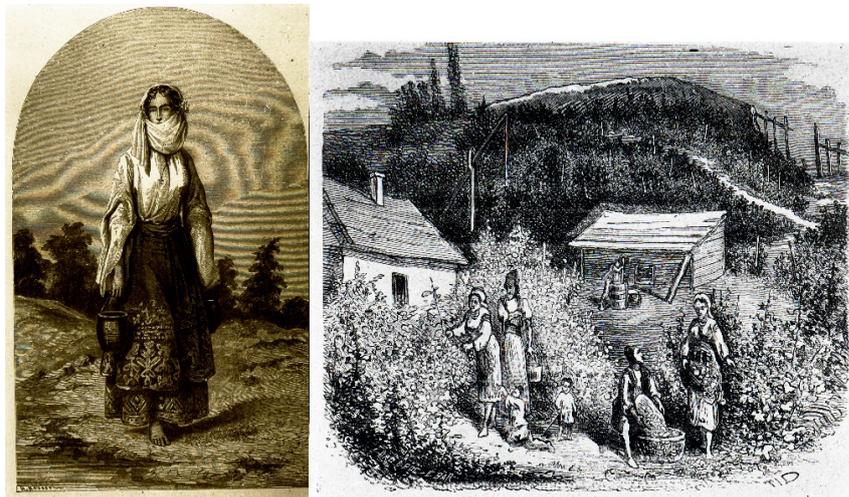


Fig. 3. Woman from the vicinity of Chișinău. Fig. 4. Women gathering grapes in a vineyard. Bessarabia. (Живописная Россия [The Picturesque Russia almanac], Moscow, V, 1898)



Fig. 5. Wedding dress from northern Bessarabia. The garden of the Bessarabian Zemstvo Museum. 1906.

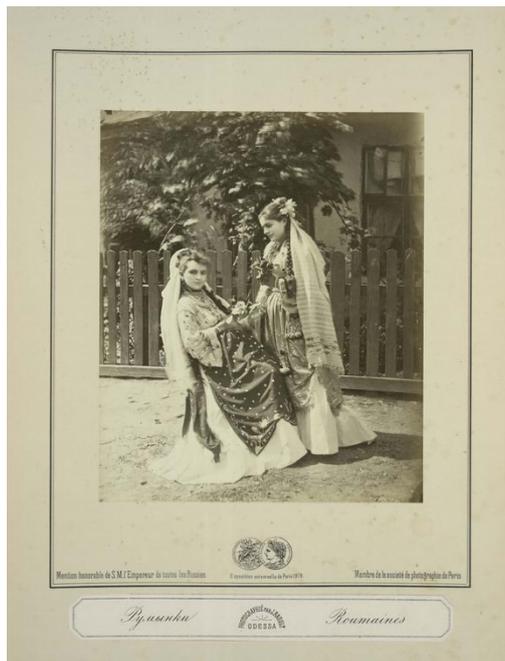


Fig. 6. Young women from southern Bessarabia, on the Black Sea shore. Photo by J.X.Raoult, 1898.

In late 19th century and the first decade of the 20th century, the women's folk dress, including the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder continued to be worn in the villages from northern and southern Bessarabia, where continued the patriarchal way of life and urban influences were less significant.

Already in early 20th century increased the society's interest for making use of the traditional dress, including the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, in order to support the rhythms of traditional life from rural communities. In 1903-1906, several local exhibitions were organized. Within them were presented too folk costumes, traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder in Edineț (1903, 1906), Cernoleuca and Cotiujei (1906). The Bessarabian Zemstvo Museum from Chișinău, with the direct participation of local scholars, bought, among other dress items, 5 old traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (Отчет Музея Бессарабского земства за 1906 г. [Report of the Bessarabian Zemstvo Museum for 1906], Chișinău, p. 15-22).



Fig. 7. Women from the Colicăuți village, Hotin county, Bessarabia, in traditional dress. The little girl in mother's arms also wears an ornamented blouse. 1906.



Fig. 8. Women wearing folk costume, while building the railroad Hotin-Malinți during the First World War, 1916.

The period between the two world wars, when Bessarabia was part of Great Romania, was positive for reasserting the ritual roles and social functions of the traditional costume, also called *national costume*, including the blouse with embroidery on the shoulder as the main component of the feast women's costume. The society started to manifest solidarity versus these symbolic clothes, to recover using old patterns and to display as an ethnic mark. Girls from rural area continued to stitch traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*), according to the tradition, because they were accustomed to do all the labours undertaken by women in the household, by means of socials and bees, as traditional forms of labour. School pupils, including those from urban area, learned during the educational process to practice different activities from the field of folk art, including how to sew traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*). They used as patterns examples of blouses from their mothers' and grandmothers' dowries, or published albums with various patterns. However, the school syllabus did not have enough hours so that girls might learn the great richness of artistic techniques that were traditionally used to sew these blouses. Women teachers insisted to teach them how to stitch "în cruciuliță, la fir, șinătae, lăntujel" [embroidery techniques], how to make "cheițe" [a kind of seams] for joining the elements of the blouse. During this period, spread more the blouse made of thin cotton, without laps, also called *ie* in several villages. In urban environment it had a short sleeve.

The Second World War caused a cultural breach in this continuity. During the 50-60s, because the population was poor, old blouses continued to be worn. However, the new ideology did not encourage the continuity of old dress practices. There were attempts to introduce the Ukrainian costume in the use of artistic formations that activated within clubs.



Fig. 9. A family from the Lozova village, 1940.



Fig. 10. The choir from the Lozova village, 1942.



Fig. 9. Girls pupils. Chișinău, 1934 (Photo from the collection of Mr. Iurie Cojocaru, lawyer).

Another stage in the development of the domain was accomplished by the Enterprise of the Ministry of Culture (1971-1991) that made at embroidery machines traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*) and the costumes in which they were integrated. Their beneficiaries were the artistic groups of amateurs and professionals. Because of this practice,

the size of motifs and ornamental groups changed; the “cusutul la fir” [sewing at thread] technique was mostly promoted; other techniques, having great artistic expressivity, were gradually marginalized. The Experimental Production Enterprise “Meşter-Faur” from Chişinău, a part of the Association of Artistic Folk Crafts “Artizana”, also produced traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță), following traditional patterns (cut, motifs, size, chromatics etc.). Its employees were women from several villages (districts of Călăraşi, Străşeni, Orhei, Soroca), who worked at home. The works of these craftswomen were demanded by folk singers, waitresses, university students, lovers of the folk creation. Nevertheless, the production capacities of the Enterprise of the Ministry of Culture were much greater than of traditionalist craftswomen. In the 1980s, one could clearly remark that there are visible differences between the blouses industrially produced and those handmade. Artistic groups started to search old costumes and the traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, rich from the perspective of tradition.

After the Republic of Moldova proclaimed its independence, in 1991, began a process of recovering the richness and diversity of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder. It was due to the involvement of old women who knew well the technical and artistic principles of making such blouses. Many folk groups emerged in villages, affiliated to schools or to cultural centres. They promoted the authentic folklore, the manner of singing and the traditional costume specific for a certain village, zone and region. The society had the opportunity to see, within cultural events, traditional costumes of a great artistic value, made from new materials. The acknowledgement of the utility of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder in social life stimulated many craftsmen to start weaving good fabric for sewing handmade blouses, learn the artistic sewing, practice old and complicated techniques, but having a great aesthetic impact. Together with new costumes, people also wore during events old blouses, inherited in families. Their public display stimulated the folk craftsmen’ works. They started to replicate them, to prefer increasingly more the original costume, the authentic one.

During the last decade, the results of this cultural reinforcement of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) can be noticed at different levels. Ateliers, communities, families and individual artisans are involved in its promotion. They form an important number of promoters who are aware of the implications of this emblematical dress. People weave good quality fabric for handmade sewing. They sew with great rigour, respecting the specific structures and proportions, the old ornamental motifs, their local diversity. Techniques, motifs, and artistic principles, that respect the character of this symbolic dress, return to the cultural network. The number of those willing to wear this emblematical cloth has increased. She has gained new social functions and society encourages the activity of artisans from this field.

About the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (“altiță”)

The blouse is called “cu altiță” [with embroidery on the shoulder] due to the very rich décor of the sleeve. It has three bands: “altița”, “încreţul” (or “creţisorii”) and “râurile”. The “altița” bears the greatest artistic expressivity. It is situated up, at the shoulder; its shape is

rectangular and is slightly bigger than the palm of a hand with stretched fingers. It consists of several horizontal lines having small ornamental motifs. More frequently, they are geometrical motifs, but there are also very stylized phytomorphic ones (from 2 to 9). They are bordered down and across by a network of straight lines that set in order and emphasize the “altița”. In old samples, this frame borders the rectangle only from three sides, leaving the upper side open. There are several consecrated techniques of making this frame, being always different from those used for horizontal lines (“șinătău, înainte sau în urma acului” [kinds of embroidery techniques]). In the documents from the 17-18th centuries is mentioned that the “altițe” were embroidered with metal threads. It means that they had a rich décor and could be cut up. They separated them from the remaining part of the blouse, before washing, like epaulettes; afterwards they were fastened back. Later, women started to sew blouses with separate embroideries on the shoulder, but which were fastened forever to the sleeve. Since late 19th century, because of the frequent use of cotton fabric and increase of the capacities of the horizontal loom, the fabric became wider and the sleeve was cut from a single piece.

Under “altiță” is situated “încrețul” (“crețișorii”) [pleat, smocking] – the second important band in the décor of the sleeve. It is three times narrower than “altița”, worked out in sewing techniques that imitate weaving, which are specific for this ornamental group (“la fir, bătut pe două fețe, aștepte, punct bătrânesc” etc.). As a rule, the colours of “încreț” vary from light yellow to orange. In this ornamental group, dominate rhomboidal motifs, triangular, or angular ones. During previous centuries, until early 20th century, they practised “încrețul funcțional”, which means that, through the techniques of making, the width of “încreț” was adjusted to the “altiță”; afterwards, it was sewn to the “altiță”. This type of “încrețul funcțional” was proper for traditional blouses with separable embroideries on the shoulder. Already in early 20th century, was most frequently spread the “încrețul decorativ” that accompanied both the blouse with separate shoulder embroidery and the sleeve made from a single sheet of fabric. The techniques in use determined its width, without the need to adjust it later.

Under the “încreț” are situated “râurile” [rivers, streams of ornaments] of the blouse. They are organised as linear ornamental groups having an oblique (for young women and girls) or perpendicular position (preferentially, for aged women) to the vertical axis of the sleeve. In this part of the sleeve, dominate geometrical and stylized vegetal ornamental motifs.

Other kinds of blouses, also having a great age, worn by Romanian women, do not comprise the same informational cultural richness. Each of these three ornamental bands has its name, more frequently used ornaments, semantic ornamental themes, techniques that are strictly defined by the cultural practice. The observance of all these aspects shapes the original character of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță), making it be the most important within identity strategies, in the past centuries, as well as nowadays.

Due to the names of its components and their décor, as inherited from previous centuries, the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder is a part of the mythic-poetical world model. The “altița” on the shoulders bears motifs that have mostly astral significances. It is argued by the ornamental motifs and its place within the structure of the sleeve. On the territory of the Republic of Moldova, having a marginal position within the Romanian area, this word also designates two realities that are relevant for the semantics of “altiță”. A frequently met item, in the funeral practice, is called “altiță”. It has the form of a new, white piece of fabric, made of hemp, linen or cotton; they hang it at the eaves of the house, as a sign

that a man died; in our sense, it is a kind of dead one's flag. The "altița" is kept outside 3 or 40 days. Old persons say that the deceased's soul rests on it and uses it as wings to raise to heaven (Buzilă Varvara. Cămașa femeiască cu altiță – brand românesc [The Traditional Women's Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder – a Romanian Brand]. În: Studiul artelor și culturologie: istorie, teorie, practică [Art and Cultural Studies: history, theory, practice], nr. 2 (22), Chișinău, 2014, p. 124-132). The funerary „altița” links earth and heaven. In the Lower Nistru Valley is situated a high plateau called *Altiță*, meaning a high place, higher than other landscape forms. The “încreț” under the “altiță”, as comprising geometrical forms, hints to the symbolism of earth fertility. The “râuri” on the sleeve, like those in front and on the back, suggest the connection with waters. Thus, stitching this blouse, according to old patterns, women participate in a cosmogonic act of ordering everything that exists in a single image of the world (*imago mundi*). By wearing the blouse, women carry with them the essential symbols of the universe, concentrated in the mythic-poetic model of the world, like a defining link that connects humans, Cosmos, and nature. In addition, because they are worn during great feasts, blouses address these important messages also to groups and communities, with whom they are interrelated.

In the case of this important element from the sleeve of the blouse, in *Dicționarul etimologic al limbii române* [Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian Language] (The Publishing House of the Romanian Academy, 2001), Alexandru Ciorănescu indicates the origin from the Latin word *altitia*, formed from the Latin *altus*, -a, -um, adj. = “high”; in classical Latin, it has the form *altissima*, at the superlative degree, meaning in Romanian “highest”. The word “cămașă” too has Latin origin (from Latin *camisia*), and *ia* – from the Latin *linea* (Zamfira Mihail, *Terminologia portului popular românesc în perspectivă etnolingvistică comparată sud-est europeană* [The Terminology of the Romanian Folk Costume in ethno-linguistic comparative perspective in South-Eastern Europe], Publishing House of the R.S.R. Academy, Bucharest, 1978). These linguistic characteristics, along with the imagistic, artistic and technical ones, with the ritual functions, emphasize, on one hand, the old age of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (“altiță”) and, on the other hand, its importance in the traditional and contemporary society.

The presentation of the element in the Republic of Moldova

Raw materials

Until mid-19th century, the fabric for blouses was weaved at home, on horizontal loom, in two threads, from hemp and linen threads, processed in household, or from cotton threads bought from trade. After the Second World War, the Moldovan society experienced economic, social and politic hardships, which diminished the social functions of this cloth. Until 60-70s, women dressed in pre-war blouses. Others continued to stitch more simple blouses for girl pupils that participated in cultural practices. Craftswomen from villages, employed at the Experimental Production Enterprise “Meșter Faur” from the Association of Folk Artistic Crafts “Artizana”, also wove fabric. However, the producers from the Enterprise of the Ministry of Culture, who manufactured costumes for artistic groups, used industrial fabric and embroidered with machines. During 1989-1994, women from the Bardar and Văsieni villages, Ialoveni

district, wove manually cotton fabric, aiming to provide a more adequate fabric for handmade sewing. Periodically, depending on the necessity, wove homemade fabric craftswomen from the villages of Lozova and Vorniceni, district of Strășeni, Vălcineț and Sadova, district of Călărași. In recent years, in the context of an increased social interest for authenticity and originality, weave a fabric of good quality Veaceslav Filimon from Chișinău and the *Bojescu Atelier* from the commune of Mereni, district of Anenii Noi, led by Lidia Bojescu. The demands of those who sew manually traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*), towards the quality of fabric and of sewing threads, have considerably increased nowadays. Because they practise old sewing techniques, based on counting the threads of the fabric and on the symmetry of modules, elements and motifs, people ask for a fabric that has the same width of the warp and weft threads (a density of 16×16 or 16×18 threads). All types of fabric are recovered: from hemp, linen, and cotton. Sometimes, people use fabrics from mixed threads, made of hemp and cotton, linen and cotton.

For the decoration of blouses were used cotton and woollen threads, dyed with natural pigments, “arnic” [dyed cotton], “mouliné”, silk or cotton threads of different width. Rich women used to decorate clothes with golden and silver threads, later – metallic threads having golden or silver colour. In northern villages and those near Nistru, in late 19th century, were used “paiete” (“fluturașii”) [metal ornamental disks] and coloured beads.

During recent decades, although the commercial offer of sewing threads is quite rich, craftswomen search for and use those materials that are specific for the art of needlework, observing as well the local traditions of using them.



Fig. 10. Veaceslav Filimon weaves fabric for sewing blouses. He also weaves belts and “catrințe” [peasant skirts], as well as sews blouses.

Work tools

As work tools, there were and still are in use needles of various sizes and thickness; scissors (in the past, local craftsmen produced them); tambour or circle on which the fabric is

taut and fixed, in order to embroider more efficiently. More recently, women use, during the work, either spectacles or special magnifying glasses, fixed on the forehead.

Cut

All the traditional blouses are made of white fabric, which provides the bodily hygiene. The traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*) is cut out according to old practices, sparingly using both the width and the length of fabric. The parts of the cloth are very keenly adapted to the dimensions of the fabric, so that there are not left any unused pieces of fabric. When the fabric was narrower, they used two sheets for the front and the third for the back; other two sheets were for sleeves, having fastened up the rectangle of “*altiță*”. In case women were stouter, they added gussets under the armpit, to adjust the cloth. The tradition to cut out the “*altiță*” from a separate piece of fabric survived a longer time in the villages from the north of the Republic of Moldova and in those around Camenca town, beyond Nistru. In central and southern villages, the sleeve is cut out from a single fabric. In this case, they use two sheets for the front and back, and other two – for the sleeve. The oldest blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, that reached until nowadays, have laps tightened to the body. To sew laps, they used a fabric of poorer quality; for instance, if the upper part consisted of thin hemp fabric, spun on tow, the laps were sewn from a thicker fabric, woven from “*buși*” [hemp of poorer quality]. At other times, the upper part was sewn from cotton or linen fabric, while the laps – from three sheets of fabric made from coarse hemp. Such a fabric massaged well feet during the walk.

Under the armpit, in the place where the fabric of sleeves joins the sheet of the body, they add a rhombus-shaped piece of fabric. The latter facilitates the integration of these units in the cloth ensemble, enabling the woman who wears it to gesticulate and perform certain actions.

The way of structuring the décor, ornamental motifs and the manner of their plastic treatment

The ornamental motifs are not loose, but they always appear within linear groups (bands). These groups are situated in the places of best visibility, to emphasize the beauty of women’s body. There is a strict logic of arranging the bands within the composition, on the white field of the blouse (vertically, horizontally or obliquely). This logic is subject to certain relationships that highlight the artistic effect of component pieces within the whole blouse. Thus, the ribbon from the neck and the one from the lower side of the sleeve, alike the rows of the “*altiță*”, including its frame, have small proportions and are horizontally oriented. The “*încreț*” [pleat, smocking] also belongs to this artistic formula, except that it has bigger motifs, with colour hues ranging from yellow to orange. It separates visually the “*altiță*” and “*râuri*” [rivers], which are arranged either obliquely or perpendicularly on the sleeve. In front and backwards, the rivers are always perpendicular in respect of the ribbons. There is a harmonious relationship between these ornamental groups. For instance, the “*altiță*” is three times higher than the “*încreț*”, while the “*încreț*”, together with the “*altiță*”, form the third part of the sleeve length.

In northern regions, to complete the margins of the blouse at the neckline and sleeves was more frequently used “brezărâu” (they festooned the margins of the neck opening with coloured threads and tightened it with a drawstring that ended with tassels). The same principle applies to complete the lower part of the sleeve. Blouses have four rivers in front (two of them are larger and the other two are narrower), while in the back there are two narrower rivers. Their dominant form tends to take the shape of a circle (rosette), square (“prescură” [communion bread]), or chains of geometrical elements. In central and southern villages, over the small folds, formed at stitching the upper parts of the blouse, or in the lower part of the sleeves, they fixed a narrow band of fabric, called “margine” [margin] or “bentiță” [ribbon]; it was embroidered too. In many villages, rivers are middle-sized and repeat 4 or 6 times, both in front and in the back. The cut from the neck opening is situated symmetrically on the vertical axis. When 5 rows are stitched, it is situated near the shoulder, on the right side. In the villages near Camenca (beyond Nistru), blouses have a flounce that makes pleats under the same narrow embroidered ribbon; the blouse also lacks rivers in front and in the back.

The blouse with embroidery on the shoulder from the Republic of Moldova makes use of the same principles for the cut, assembling and décor, which are specific for the Romanian general fund. Nevertheless, due to specific social and economic circumstances, it has certain local features. Its décor is looser; the ornamental groups are more distinct; the graphics of elements and motifs is more visible and preserves a distinct relationship among the ornamental groups and the generous white spaces. The ornamental bands are narrower and more dynamic. Although they use the same ornamental fund characteristic for all Romanians, creators prefer vegetal motifs alike geometrical ones.

Embroidery techniques

All the techniques used to decorate blouses are accomplished “pe fire numărate” [by counting threads], i.e. using two, three or, more rarely, four threads of fabric; this fact grants equilibrium and elegance to the embroidered elements, including the ornamental motifs, while compositions acquire symmetry and rhythmicity. The less threads contains a module, the more elegant becomes the ornamental motif. During the Socialist period, the stitch division was extremely big, consequently the proportion of motifs and, accordingly, of ornamental bands was 15-20 times bigger than of the traditional ones. Folk craftsmen, who earn their living producing and selling blouses and other items of folk costume, tend to make the stitch division bigger. Contrariwise, ladies and girls, while embroidering blouses for themselves or their relatives, stitch at two-three threads. The needle art, being oriented to accomplish more technical and artistic principles, using the richness of tradition, requires a great concentration from craftsmen and a considerable time. For instance, during the last five years, the women who had involved in stitching blouses, for the sake of this art, worked out an item during 5 or 9 months, because they continued to do their job and they stitched during free time. Beside the inherent difficulties, during the last decade, one can remark the tendency to recover old embroidery techniques, who were abandoned exactly for the reason that they were rather difficult to execute and needed more insistence to learn how to apply them. But because they also possess an evident artistic potential, girls and women have gradually mastered them and now they use a big variety of techniques.

To embroider certain old blouses, nowadays preserved in the “Thesaurus” collection of museums, were used 5-8 techniques of stitching. “Brezărăul” [the ornaments around the neckline] and the cut of the neck opening are worked out using different kinds of festoon (straight line, zigzag, and shaped, various colours); the framing lines (like the frame of the “altița”) are stitched in “șinătău” [a kind of embroidery technique]. This frame, also known as “scrânciobel” in northern villages, is stitched in techniques that differ from the motifs of the “altița”, aiming to facilitate their visual perception. “Încrețul funcțional” [functional smocking] was stitched “în urma acului” [“after the needle”; a type of needlepoint stitch] or “ațește”, following various schemes, more simple or more complex ones (with threads drawn in the end). The decorative smocking is stitched “la fir” [needlepoint stitch], “în urma acului”, embroidered on two sides, in both cases preserving closeness to the woven structures. For embroidering rivers, two or three techniques are used: “ațește”, “la fir” [needlepoint stitch], “lanț simplu sau lat” [simple or wide chain], “punct bătrânesc” [old stitch] or “rumanescuri”, “cruciulițe” [tiny crosses] or “butuci”, “jumătăți de cruci” [half-crosses], “cusătură înfoiată” [puffed stitch], “găurele/șabacul”, etc. Metal threads, “paiete” [metal ornamental disks] and beads are most often fastened among the seams of “altița” to increase its artistic expressivity.

After stitching all the parts of the blouse, they are joined in a whole by means of “cheițe” [decorative seams]: simple or double holes, “cu puricei”, “picioruș dublu”, “păianjenul” etc., made with needle or crochet, from coloured threads, in order to grant the item new decorative accents.

Chromatics

Old blouses from museum collections, made of linen or hemp fabric, were embroidered with woollen threads that had been dyed at home; they have a soft colour range, in which green, brown or red hues dominate. In early 20th century, they used red and black threads, because their price was more accessible in fairs and towns. During the two world wars, for embroidering these blouses, they used mostly the colours of the tricolour Romanian flag. Later, thanks to the increasing access of population to “mouliné” threads, cotton and “lâniță” [soft wool, of superior quality], the chromatic range of clothes was enriched. Creators from northern and central regions of the Republic of Moldova made more efficient use of the chromatic richness. Nowadays, teenager girls, young ladies and madams interested in this art, although they can buy various threads of industrial origin, prefer to use the colour range specific for each ornamental group; sometimes they dye threads at home with the necessary colour.

Girls and young women have preferred and continue to prefer a richer and merrier chromatic range. Older ones embroider their blouses in two colours: one for the smocking and another one for the remaining décor (as a rule, it is darker).

The ornamental set of motifs

The ornamental motifs of blouses can be easily adapted to the specific techniques of embroidery, to the size of the blouse, to its practical, ritual and symbolic meaning. In old samples, geometrical motifs dominate. Some of them were frequently repeated: *S* – vertically, horizontally, separated by a rectangle or joined in a chain resembling water wave; *δ* made with

an oblique axis, resembling the symbol of endless time, together with birds in different configurations; both frequently appear on the “altiță”; *trees of life* (very tiny within the “altiță”) or developed ones, covering the entire space allotted to the rivers on sleeves (the tradition of villages from northern Moldova); *fir tree* or *ear* have the same role in the blouses from the Camenca region (motifs embroidered “la fir” [needlepoint stitch], with metal insertions); *rivers of flowers and leaves* illustrate the most creative stylization and configuration. The collective memory preserved the names and significances for some of them. In the case of these ornamental motifs too, all of them are interpreted as beneficial ones, protective (the cruciform ones, *the wolfangs*), auspicious (“*prescurile*” [communion breads], “*șinătăele*”, *water waves*), meaning plenty and fertility (*ram horns, rhomboidal motifs*), astral motifs (*stars, S-shaped, birds, 9-shaped, suns, rosettes, fire wheels*).

Social and cultural meanings assigned to the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder

At an early age, girls learnt how to stitch from their mothers and grandmothers. They made blouses for themselves and for the other sisters and brothers. On each great feast, like Christmas, New Year, Easter, Pentecost, the family members had to wear a new blouse, in order to be healthy and lucky. When they reached the age when they were allowed to participate in “hora” [traditional ring-dance], girls already had their own blouses, very keenly stitched, so that they might be noticed among other girls. Later, they used the occasion to go to “hora”, to church or to the Patron’s Day feast, to show the costumes made by them. In the 18-19th centuries, brides wore at weddings a traditional costume and the most beautiful blouse with embroidery on the shoulder. They kept this blouse their entire life and requested to be buried in wedding clothes (*After they had washed the dead woman, they dressed her in a blouse with embroideries on sleeves*, Peresecina village, 1947). Before wedding, during socials and bees, the bride, together with her girlfriends, stitched blouses for the bridegroom’s parents and for the bridegroom. Thus, the bridegroom’s mother received a traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, excellently worked out, in order to get on well with her future daughter-in-law. During the great feasts linked to human life (birth, marriage, burial), women continued to wear traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, that were specific for their age and social statute.

Girls were the main promoters of enriching and developing the set of motifs on blouses, because among them was a competition of skilfulness, undeclared in advance, but manifested during great feasts: who stitches more beautifully, who discovers more artistic principles in shaping the same motifs. Old women supervised the right way of stitching and of wearing blouses. The “hore”, Patron’s Saint Dais and going to church were occasions to verify the way in which the tradition was observed. Thus, all women participated, directly or indirectly, in maintaining the viability of the blouse and enriching it.

The traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder is a perfect creation. Many generations of women contributed to its transmission and improvement. They used accessible fabrics of hemp, linen and cotton, a cut that is brilliantly simple and archaic (linear cut and stitching entirely sheets), ornamental bands that are skilfully shaped, so as to emphasize the beauty of body, to highlight memorable aspects and to diminish the less spectacular ones.

Blouses were stitched to reveal each woman's personality, her diligence, and the capacity to feel and create nice things that were addressed to others, within a continuous communication through artistic and affective means.

Nowadays, the blouse is worn during performances, great national feasts, calendrical and family feasts. Special attention is paid to handmade production of blouses, following its most representative patterns.

The traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder has a national value. It is considered a very important identity hint of Romanians. On it is woven and embroidered the ideal of beauty of women who have constantly recreated and worn it, enjoying, sharing joy with other people through this superb clothes. For more than one century long, the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder has got a world value due to the contribution of ladies from the royal suite (who wore it with big respect), of great painters (who immortalized it on memorable canvases), of cinema men from different studios (who presented it in movies), and of big fashion houses from Europe and USA (who created remarkable collections, drawing inspiration from this blouse).

Practitioners

In the transmission of the art of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder are nowadays involved groups of bearers from all the villages and towns of the Republic of Moldova. The blouse is worn during all social practices when society wants to exploit the fund of the cultural heritage, inclusively through identity marks. These cloth items are manufactured in domestic conditions, like many centuries ago, in smaller or greater communities, assembled with this aim, as well as in ateliers or craftsmanship centres, their main activities being weaving fabric and creating a greater number of blouses.

The creators that had been active in this field several decades, gained the title of "Folk Craftsmen". It means the acknowledgement of their abilities by the Union of Folk Craftsmen from the Republic of Moldova (a profile voluntary association), or/and the Honorific Title "Meşter-Faur", as an esteem of the special contributions in this field from the side of the state administration of the Republic of Moldova.

In all villages, girls and women stitch different items, thus developing and training their abilities, so that later, after acquiring more skills, they may stitch their traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder or other items of folk dress. They often make one or two blouses, wearing them afterwards; having granted the dress of group identity, they focus on other activities. These heritage bearers did not enter the list presented further, because they are very many and it is impossible to mention all of them.

However, in this list entered those ladies that have stitched more blouses and continue to be active in this respect, transforming this activity in a passion, a vocation and a source of income, to complete the family budget. They are strongly motivated creators, searching for interesting blouses or patterns consecrated by tradition, to draw inspiration from them. They study techniques, try fabrics, sewing threads, always experiment, update original motifs from old cloth items, discuss with old persons who are heritage bearers, in order to learn more information about the specific of the blouse. In their turn, they create small collections of art objects, in order to have a motivating atmosphere during the creation process. The works of

these craftswomen are searched by personalities who know and esteem the originality of the costume, its technical and artistic qualities, and want to assume its potential of expression, aiming to experience it inclusively as a means of communication with the environments in which they wear it. Among them are artists, folklore singers, writers, managers in the field of culture, teachers, university students, youngsters that provide services in the field of rural tourism etc.

In some cases, these craftsmen are joined in groups of interest on the principle of kinship (family) or on territorial one; they have as reference the local tradition, the relationship with the community to which they belong. There also are more numerous communities, called “șezători” [socials], like in old times, always open to accept new members (“Șezătoare Basarabia”, “Măiestria Basarabiei”, “Măiestria”, “Șezătoare Mereni”, “Rustic Art” etc.). They assemble in public spaces, such as: libraries, cultural centres, schools, and museums. They use both the facilities provided by these institutions and modern means of communication. They manage thus to get information operatively, to communicate, to have access to valuable collections of folk dress and book collections, to benefit from master-classes or exchanges of experiences offered by very competent craftsmen, from whom they learn more efficiently. In these spaces, they organize exhibitions of traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, completed by the community members. The creations are discussed here, beginners are stimulated and assisted. All those willing to communicate or stitch are welcome. The chairpersons of sessions and the guiding craftsmen are volunteers. They perform this activity out of love for this art and to offer it new chances in the present and future, through what they know and can. These communities are also active outside the Romanian cultural area, joining representatives from both states (Brussels, Bologna).

The ateliers and craftsmanship centres have, in the epicentre of their activity, one or several craftsmen. They maintain the high levels of the stitching art and develop them easily. They are also in charge with producing blouses according to the cultural rigours that ensure their identity, as well as with the training of youngsters, aiming to help them enter the work processes. These economic units produce many costumes for folk music or dance groups. For this reason, they are periodically accredited by the National Centre for the Conservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Young women, who had the possibility to attend thematic classes at the discipline “technological education” or specialised courses, manage easier to advance in the field of creating traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder. It is the case of girl pupils from the upper classes of the “M. Eminescu” High School from the Făleşti town. Or there are other young women from vocational schools, where the school curriculum includes this discipline – artistic embroidery. They complete the ranks of producers employed in ateliers or who work individually, while taking care of their children during the maternity leave.

Periodically, once in two years, the National Centre for the Conservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, together with the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, organise exhibitions-contests of creators of folk dress. They have in epicentre the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, as a touchstone for the authors’ skilfulness. The exhibition-contests provide encouragement awards both for well-known craftsmen in this field and for youngsters who have manifested with the first successful works. The aims of these activities are to show the trends in this field, to offer the creators the

possibility to display their most recent creations, to highlight the youngsters' competences and to appreciate the contribution of groups, communities, ateliers, inclusively of craftsmen who work individually.

The public can enjoy the richness and beauty of these creations also during personal exhibitions of folk craftsmen specialised in making blouses. They are organised on certain anniversaries (for instance, at 30, 40, 45, 50... years old).

The list of groups of competence bearers of the art of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) as an element of cultural identity of the Republic of Moldova

1. Maria Ciobanu (works in the village of Catranic, district of Făleşti), folk craftswoman, member of the Union of Folk Craftsmen since 1995; for 25 years she has been teaching in the village school *Technological Education* comprising also the needle art. For three years she has supported also the group *Needle Art* within the Craftsmanship Centre "Zestrea neamului" [Nation's Dowry] from the town of Bălți. She has several disciples among young women who previously were her pupils. They continue together the tradition of the folk costume from the Soroca Field. She prefers to make the stitch division very small.



Fig. 11. The folk craftswoman Maria Ciobanu from the Catranic village, Făleşti district, at the Ie Festival 2014.

2. The group of women that assemble at the Mereni village Library, Anenii Noi district, and in the Bojescu Atelier, led by Lidia Bojescu, accountant by profession, from the same village. They weave fabric for blouses on two looms. 7 women and 6 girl pupils stitch traditional blouses using patterns discovered in the Mereni village and in the villages for which they execute orders for costume. The atelier counts among the most recently founded, being active for 5 years. It managed to produce costumes for countrymen and for other 3 villages

from the same district. They have recovered characteristic techniques for making blouses from their community, being rather representative for the cultural heritage.



Fig. 12. Lidia Bojescu, head of the “Bojescu Atelier” from the Mereni village, Anenii Noi district.

3. The House of Folk Dress “Casa Cristea”, led by Maria Cristea, folk craftswoman, member of the Union of Folk Craftsmen (1995), holder of the Honorific Title “Meşter-Faur” (2005), works in Chişinău. Nevertheless, her employees are groups of craftswomen from the villages of Temeleuţi and Vălcineţ, district of Călăraşi, Bardar, district of Ialoveni, Ulmu, district of Hânceşti, Işnovăţ, district of Orhei, Grimăncăuţi, district of Briceni. She distributes among craftsmen orders that are connected with their places of residence. They have stitched together over 580 traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, extremely elaborate ones, for famous artistic bands: the “Lăutarii” Orchestra, the National Academic Dance Ensemble “Joc” (5 series of costumes), the “Fluieraş” Orchestra, the “Moştenitorii” Ethno-folkloric Ensemble, the “Comoara” Ensemble etc. Maria Cristea counts among the most experienced folk craftswomen in this field; she has stitched blouses for over 30 years. She inherited this passion from her mother and grandmother. She studied at the Faculty of Mathematics and Cybernetics of the Moldova State University. However, she has gradually focused her activity on the recovery of folk costume values. She periodically rescues a blouse from those worn out, who lost their exhibition aspect before becoming museum heritage. She owns a rich database that comprises addresses and creations of folk craftsmen from the republic, descriptions of folk dress and images of blouses from the entire territory of the Republic of Moldova. This fact helps her encourage groups of craftsmen in village to make use of the local tradition and offer them the possibility to work at home.



Fig. 13. Maria Cristea, director of the House of Folk Dress “Casa Cristea”.

4. The Craftsmanship Centre “Rustic Art” from the Clișova Nouă village, Orhei district, led by the folk craftswoman Ecaterina Popescu, holder of the Honorific Title “Meșter Faur”. She works together with 10 folk craftswomen interested in the art of artistic stitching. She makes use of the tradition of the blouse with embroidery on the shoulder from Central Woodlands. She proposes to those who wish learning courses at the *Study Centre in Artistic Crafts* from the village. She has created costumes and several blouses for her countrymen and for many neighbour villages with whom they have tightened cultural relationships. They own a museum with many old blouses that serve as sources of inspiration. They also recover parts of old blouses and borrow their motifs and ornamental groups to make new items. She is well placed within the community life and the cultural life of the district. She has participated in local exhibitions, district, republican and international ones.



Fig. 14. Traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder stitched at the Craftsmanship Centre “Rustic Art”, Clișova Nouă village, Orhei district.

5. Sisters Cristina, Maria, Valentina and Olga Baci from Gura Galbenei village, Cimișlia district, stitched 12 blouses specific for the tradition from the Centre of the Republic of Moldova, for the folk singer Silvia Zagoreanu.



Fig. 15. The collection of costumes of the folk singer Silvia Zagoreanu. Blouses stitched by sisters Baciú from Gura Galbenei, Cimişlia district.

6. Antonina Rusu (works in Chişinău) is a folk craftswoman, member of the Union of Folk Craftsmen from the Republic of Moldova (1995) and member of the Academy of Traditional Arts from Romania, Sibiu (1999); nowadays, a retired pedagogue. She taught the courses *Needle Art* and the *Art of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder*; author of scientific and methodological, as well as curricular works, destined for the field of education; she stitched blouses for teachers. She uses all the characteristic techniques of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder.



Fig. 16. The folk craftswoman Antonina Rusu with blouses stitched by her.

7. Tatiana Popa from the “Casa Părintească” Museum, Palanca village, Călărași district, cooperates with the Group of women doctors from the “Codru” Sanatorium from the Hârjauca village. Each of them stitched her own blouse, in order to be able to participate in cultural events from the native village and from those situated in the neighbourhood. The “Casa Părintească” Museum organized and hosted four practical seminars for teachers of technological education and village craftsmen. The seminars were dedicated to learning and practising the richness of traditional embroidery techniques and to the exploit of the ornamental motifs range (2017-2020). She continues to reintroduce in the cultural circuit embroidery techniques that have been forgotten, but are expressive from artistic perspective.

8. Valentina Guțu, folk craftswoman from the Gordineștii Noi village, Edineț district, is a medical worker and a member of the Union of Folk Craftsmen from Moldova. She has started to stitch at 14 years old; she made the first blouses for her daughters, afterwards for herself. Together with several women neighbours, she weaves fabric for blouses, belts, “catrințe” [peasant skirts], and stitches blouses. She made costumes for 74 groups of local artists from her village and from villages of Edineț, Briceni, Ocnîța, Râșcani, Glodeni districts. She has 14 disciples who continue to stitch. She uses a lot of techniques specific for the blouse.

9. The Craftsmanship Centre “Fantezie” from the Vădeni village, Soroca district, led by Simion Lungu. He is one of the few men who practise the needle art. He learnt how to stitch from his mother. He has stitched blouses for 15 years. Together with other 8 craftswomen, they stitch blouses using fabric bought from trade; they also weave belts and “catrințe” [peasant skirts], thus completing the folk costume. He has instructed several pupils from the village and 7 women; nowadays, he instructs 7 pupils. He continues the tradition of northern blouses. In 2017, he helped a group of 23 women from the Băhrinești village, Florești district, rediscover their local costume and stitch their own blouses. He works preferentially “în cruciulițe” [cross-shaped stitches], half crosses, needlepoint stitches, “lănțișoare” [chains].



Fig. 17. Costumes from the Craftsmanship Centre “Fantezie” from the Vădeni village, Soroca district.

10. Olga Chiriac, folk craftswoman and teacher of French language, works in the Strășeni town. She has learnt the needle art from her grandmothers who had stitched and worn traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder in the period between the two world wars. She has promoted this art for over 30 years; had trained 15 women disciples who stitched their own blouse. For 10 years she led a group for embroidery in the Strășeni town. She has stitched over 120 traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder. She prefers to work “în cruciulițe” [cross-shaped stitches] and “bătut pe două fețe”. She is an active participant in the cultural life of the town by means of exhibitions, master-classes, meetings with pupils in schools and museums.

11. Ecaterina Negru, folk craftswoman, member of the Union of Folk Craftsmen (2019), works in the Vălcineț village, Călărași district. She is one of the youngest craftswomen who manifested themselves in this domain. The Vălcineț village is a very active community from cultural perspective; has a rich artistic heritage, 5 ensembles of amateur artists of different ages. The folk craftswoman made for them costumes, together with her mother who weaves belts and “catrințe” [peasant skirts]. She makes discoveries in the blouses worn in the past, then she applies techniques and motifs well consecrated by tradition. Has a good relationship with the school and community.

12. The group of teachers from the school from the Zărnești village, Cahul district, led by Mrs. Ecaterina Danilișin Stângă, support the continuity of the needle art, cooperating with aged women from the village, who wore blouses and folk costumes until 70-80s of the 20th century. From heritage bearers they have learnt to stitch patterns characteristic for the villages

from the Lower Prut Valley. They engaged as well in this activity girl pupils from the high school. During village feasts, they wear blouses associated to the traditional costume.

13. The group of women that work next to the library from the Molovata Nouă village, Dubăsari district, on the left bank of Nistru, led by Valentina Verlan, a librarian. They activate for four years. They had stitched for each of them, then they stitched for the artistic band from the village. They participate in cultural events from the village and from the nearby, presenting exhibitions and artistic programmes.

The list of initiative groups playing roles in acknowledging the value of the element and its promotion

14. The “Șezătoare Basarabia” Community is active from 2016 next to the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History from Chișinău; it has a cooperation agreement with the mentioned museum, aiming to sensitize the society and persuade it acquire a better knowledge about the history, richness and values of the traditional blouse by means of involvement in rescuing some old items, ensuring its transmission to the young generation. The chairpersons of its sessions are Olesea Enache, Natalia Andreea Rusnac and Veaceslav Filimon, scientific coordinator – PhD., Assoc. Prof. Varvara Buzilă. At the meetings of the community participate over 230 ladies, students, pupils and men, from different villages of the Republic of Moldova. They learn firstly different techniques of stitching and their function in making different parts of the composition of the blouse; they get acquainted with aspects from the history of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, its specific in Moldova and in the entire Romanian area. During the second stage, participant women gain support to draw out a project of their future creation which should make use of the tradition from their native village. The participant builds a portfolio with photos, sketches, drawings that help establish the dimensions of the work. Then, after having learnt how to cut the parts of the blouse and to hemstitch, being assisted by chairpersons, they start to make stitch specimens of the parts of the décor, in order to appreciate a better repartition of motifs in the allotted space. The ornamental fields are marked through stitching, with coloured threads, in order to be able to execute better each ornamental group, afterwards they start stitching truly. The guidance of beginners helps them much surpass some unavoidable tasks, consequently some ladies manage to stitch with confidence and make successful works. In 2020, they organised socials in small groups, travelling in the native villages of participants (Țigănești, Strășeni district, Molovata, Dubăsari district, Pelinia, Drochia district, Mereni, Anenii Noi district, Strășeni town, Ciobalaccia village, Cimișlia district, Negrea village, Hâncești district etc.). They participated with 78 new and original blouses at the Exhibition “100 Bessarabian blouses rescued from loss”, on the occasion of the Centenary of the Great Union, organised by the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History together with the Ethnological Society (16.01.2019-27.03.2019). At the National Day of the Folk Costume, on the 24th of June 2020, they presented 30 costumes, comprising traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, at the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova; in October they presented an exhibition at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova.



Fig. 18. “Șezătoare Basarabia” wearing blouses stitched by its members. 24.08.2020.

15. The Community “Mândria Basarabiei”, next to the Art Centre and the District Library from the Strășeni town, coordinators Liliana Calancea and Dina Voloc, reintroduces in cultural circuit the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder from Central Woodlands villages. It comprises 19 members and provides methodological and practical support for groups of women from the Strășeni and Călărași districts, willing to stitch traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder. They stitched blouses for their families and for artistic groups from their native villages. They exploited, within stitches, patterns of blouses found in families and in museum collections. They prefer to stitch at 2 or 3 threads of fabric, respecting the cut, ornamental structures and chromatics of blouses from this region of the country. The youngest member of the group is 12, the oldest – 82 years old. Among the members of the “Mândria Basarabiei” Community there are medical workers, teachers, economists, accountants, housewives, mothers during childcare leave, students, pupils. They promote the values of the traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder of heritage bearers from the Republic of Moldova.



Fig. 19. The Social “Mândria Basarabiei”, Strășeni district library, February 2019.

16. The group of pupils from the 8-9th forms of the course “The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder”, “Mihai Eminescu” High School, town of Făleşti. Teacher Silvia Antohi, folk craftswoman, member of the Union of Folk Craftsmen of Moldova (1996), head of the Department Folk Costume of this Union, has taught the course for 5 years. Nowadays she has 18 pupils who study this art. She exploits the tradition of the blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) from villages situated on the middle course of river Prut. Each pupil made her own blouse and the most diligent ones stitched blouses for their relatives who participate in artistic activities. 6 blouses, stitched according to old patterns that were in physical degradation, but valuable as cultural message, the most interesting works from artistic perspective, were displayed at the Exhibition “100 Bessarabian blouses rescued from loss”, presented at the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History (2019). Other 5 blouses were shown at the Online Exhibition-contest “The most representative traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) from the Republic of Moldova”, organised by the aforementioned museum and the Romanian Cultural Institute “Mihai Eminescu” from Chișinău, during 24.06.2020-04.07.2020.



Fig. 20. After a lesson of “The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (Alțiță)” at the “M. Eminescu” High School from Florești. In the centre – the folk craftswoman Silvia Antohi (March 2020).

17. The “MăiestrIA” Community is active next to the MolDeco Hall, Chișinău, is led by Stela Moldovanu and gathers young women from different cultural environments. It promotes the values of the Romanian traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder. Its creations were exhibited in the Republic of Moldova and beyond its borders. It helps young women learn the needle art and prize the intangible cultural heritage.

Other centres that have started to stitch traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, but who need more schooling and time to reach the value matrix of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder

1. The “Broderie Art” group, led by Elena Lupașcu, from Chișinău, owns a workshop that makes sales. Among other items, it produces also traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder. They promote the tradition of blouses from central and northern regions of the Republic of Moldova. In 2002, she devised and proposed educational kits for stitching the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder.

2. The craftsmanship centre from the Pelinia village, Drochia district, operates in the village Cultural club, together with the local museum. Fellow countrymen have donated to the museum different fabrics, woven in early 20th century. Nowadays, folk craftsmen make experiments with them to produce the necessary fabric for sewing blouses. They possess as well a collection of blouses from the 19-20th centuries. During the classes of technological education, girl pupils learn through them about embroidery techniques and motifs. At the same time, they learn how to use modern means of producing the folk costume. The village hall supports the interests of the community.

3. The Craftsmanship centre from the Edineț town, led by Marcel and Mariana Ostrovschi, has been opened in 2017. They assimilate the traditions of blouses from the northern part of the Republic of Moldova. At first, they produce traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder for children from kindergarten and for pupils from elementary school. They use fabric bought in the commercial chain. They promote the values of the folk costume in the schools from the Edineț district.

4. The atelier led by Liliana Starciuc from the Ungheni town. It has started more recently to produce traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder. Its employees are several craftswomen from villages of the Ungheni district, who work manually the blouses. They learn how to operate with traditional motifs and their proportions on the blouse. They propose blouses for wedding ceremonies. They experiment by exploiting the artistic wealth of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder.

5. The craftsmanship atelier from the Cultural club of the Cahul town. Was founded in 2019. It joins passionate women from the town and villages from the neighbourhood. Girls and women discover here and learn about the specific of the southern folk costume. They test different techniques, how to stitch on different fabrics. They have stitched the first blouses for their daughters and granddaughters; nowadays they work at their own traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder.

The actual state of the element. Viability, threats

During the last three decades, the interest of society for the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder has increased much. More and more women, especially young ones, wish to have in their wardrobe one or several such clothes. An important number consists of persons engaged in artistic activities of professionals and amateurs. One finds among them children, pupils, students, and groups of adult and old persons, employees from the field of culture and volunteers that support certain mutual aims. Folk craftsmen wear it, together with their children and grandchildren, during fairs, exhibitions and other events with many participants willing to communicate with the universe of the traditional culture. Persons from among the public use this occasion to wear either just the blouse, or the entire folk costume. Bridegrooms, godfathers and other guests wear it increasingly frequent, during the wedding ceremony, to give new meanings to this event. Citizens who have left to work abroad buy blouses or make them manually, feeling the necessity to wear them. Representatives of the diplomatic corps prefer them, for officiating national holidays.

The National Centre for the Conservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (CNCPPCI) organises a series of cultural activities aiming to ensure the conservation and exploit of the authentic folk costume, in the context of the folk treasure, of our forefathers' traditions and customs. During all the cultural events organized by CNCPPCI is required the presence of the authentic folk costume, accordingly, of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder.

Once in 4 years, are accredited the artistic groups of amateurs from the entire republic. It concerns the promoted repertoire, the folk costume and their relationship with heritage bearer communities. During 2019-2020, the groups from the following districts were accredited: Leova, Bălți, Briceni, Dondușeni, Glodeni, Cahul, Strășeni, Căușeni, Nisporeni, Cimișlia,

Râșcani, Drochia, Soroca, Călărași, Ungheni, Rezina, Șoldănești, Telenești, Orhei. During the accreditation, an increased attention is paid to over 200 folk groups bearing the Title “Model”. According to the regulation of accreditation, they are the most faithful representatives of local communities and of the tradition of the costume.

There have been accredited craftsmanship centres, ateliers and craftsmen that produce the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, as well as other components of the folk costume. There have been recorded new economic units that aim to produce items pertaining to the folk costume.

During periodic national and local events (anniversary feasts of villages, craftsmanship fairs, folk festivals), the organizers and participants wear folk dress or parts of it. Craftsmen, ateliers, craftsmanship centres and collectors exhibit valuable works regarding the folk costume.

From 2012 until 2014, the *Ie Festival/Festival of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder* was organized. It has solidarized communities, has stimulated groups and women to show their “ii” [Romanian blouses] and blouses, in order to be prized for their diversity.

Since 2015, annually, in the last Sunday of June, is celebrated the National Day of the Folk Costume. During it take place parades of traditional costumes, fairs, contests and exhibitions of costumes. Within these events, the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder bears the main place. These events take place both in villages and in towns.

During the last decades, a systematic character has acquired the cooperation of cultural institutions from the Republic of Moldova and from Romania. Thus, folk ensembles, singers and folk craftsmen participate in fairs, contests, holiday camps and folk festivals from both countries (e.g., The Fair of Folk Creators at the “Astra” Museum from Sibiu; several craftswomen from the Republic of Moldova are members of the Academy of Traditional Arts from Romania; Days of Bessarabians in Timișoara, Prahova etc.; The ASTRA Folk Festival “Se-ntâlnește dor cu dor”, organized in Strășeni, Republic of Moldova; The International Folk Festival “Nufărul alb” [White water lily], Cahul etc.). These meetings facilitate the mutual acknowledgement of the intangible cultural heritage, the means to protect it, sharing experience concerning the good practices for making use of it. In this context, is best noticed the specific and unity of the Romanian folk costume, including the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder. This communication helps the promoters of the folk culture to acknowledge more clearly their role as exponents of folk bearers from their native villages.



Fig. 21. The meeting of socials from the Republic of Moldova and Romania (February 2019).

In this context, has become more intense the exchange of exhibitions of folk costumes between Romania and the Republic of Moldova. They belong to museum and private collections, a fact that enables the interested public to learn about the regional specific of Romanian blouses. At the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History and at the Palace of the Republic, at the International Exhibition Centre “MoldExpo” from Chişinău were presented collections of Romanian folk costumes: the Collections of Sebastian Paic (Cluj-Napoca). Laura Diaconu (Banat), Gabriel Boriceanu (Transylvania, Braşov). At the National Museum of Fine Arts of Moldova and the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History was presented the Exhibition “Matricea sufletului românesc. Costume tradiţionale de sărbătoare din colecţia Dianei Toma” [The Matrix of the Romanian Soul. Traditional Holiday Costumes from the Collection of Diana Toma] (26.04-30.05.2018). Later followed the Exhibition “Basarabia şi Crişana. Perenitatea artei populare româneşti” [Bessarabia and Crişana. The Continuity of the Romanian Folk Art] (28.11.2018-17.03.2019).



Fig. 22. The Exhibition “100 Bessarabian Blouses Rescued from Loss”, in the context of the Great Union Centenary (February-March 2019).

Among the most recent events, we mention “The online contest of the most authentic and representative “ii” and Romanian blouses from Bessarabia, created in recent years”, supported by the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History and by the “M. Eminescu” Romanian Cultural Institute from Chişinău (24.06.2019-04.07.2019).

In recent years, there took place several scientific conferences and seminars, under the generic *The Folk Costume – a Mark of National Identity*. Here participated researchers and promoters of this heritage from the Republic of Moldova and Romania.

There were issued stamps with pictures of traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, to promote its values.



Fig. 23. Stamps with pictures of traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, issued by the Moldovan Post.

In order to answer the interest regarding this representative cloth, several producers have started to manufacture it and the entire folk costume. Each of them understands in a different way the specific of this cloth. The number of those who sew independently their own traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder is greater than that of craftsmen that sew on request. An important fact is that, in the meantime with the return of individual sewing, in social practice have reentered the traditional forms of transmitting knowledge about this element, of acquiring abilities and collective authentication of the artistic act. There were founded several communities called with a traditional name “șezători” [socials]. Within workshops and centres that have big requests, they organize bees to learn and practice the sewing techniques, the artistic principles for designing the décor, to decipher the forms and significances of ornamental motifs, as well as of the compositions of ornamental groups. There is a strong interest for learning and practising, by learning from ladies with greater experience, using different means provided by the technical and informational realities, including the Internet, online socials and master-classes. The efficiency of these means proved useful during the period of COVID-19 pandemics, when they organised webinars and online courses to learn and master the specific of this blouse. In these activities involved several ladies that have a childcare leave (the legislation of the Republic of Moldova stipulates a time-span of childcare from one to three years). For some young mommies, acquiring these new abilities has become a source of income to complete the family budget. In big trade centres, were opened

departments of folk dress items; among them are sold as well traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder. There appeared specialized boutiques in selling these clothes, sought by local inhabitants and tourists.

Some craftsmen that have established economic activities based on producing the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, are not always loyal to traditional patterns, that were consecrated as a social practice. Either they use an inadequate fabric and, after washing many times the cloth, it loses its qualities, or they make it at the sewing machine and less manually, thus altering the features of the blouse, according to the technical possibilities of the sewing machines.

The social prestige of this item has increased, but also the economic interests of producing and selling it. The austere economic conditions in recent years persuade the leaders of folk bands to pursue their activity within insufficient budgets. Sometimes they decide to adjust the process of manufacturing blouses depending on the available financial sources. They try to simplify the ornamental groups, to render uniform the same motifs on the entire surface of the blouse or to exclude certain groups, so that the cloth would need a less work amount and become cheaper.

Because they sew many blouses, of different quality, there have simultaneously increased the exigencies concerning manufacturing them, especially when the customers are local communities that insist to preserve the specific of their costume.

The public that is consumer of cultural values is largely informed in respect of the qualities of the blouse, its artistic specific and the significances it bears. During many holidays, owners show more frequently blouses made in excellent conditions of artistic execution. Women aspire to reach these beauty etalons, made with great rigour.

The blouse is mostly requested by ethno-groups that promote the folk culture. Their costume is a part of the local culture, like the artistic repertoire they promote. It becomes gradually the cloth that is worn and admired by all the age groups, from the smallest children to old persons. The representatives of other cultures wear it gladly too, as a way of experiencing its values.

The mentioned events, that make a retrospect of heritage, have revealed out of local anonymity true valuable costumes, skilful creators and communities that are eager to create costumes also for other customers. In the meantime, they have provided examples of excellent creativity, counteracting the trends to sew blouses with the sewing machine, changing unduly the sizes of ornaments. Because of the increase of requests for traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, there have increased the dangers caused by some producers of blouses who use sewing machines and who can affect the integrity of this valuable item.

Risks in relation to the element and practitioners:

- Bringing back on stage and on the commercial market of inappropriate forms of the traditional women's blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*), made in the Soviet period, that are used as a model to create further replicas in series. These inappropriate models were strongly stylized by the painters at the demand of the state before 1990s, during the existence of the Moldovan Soviet Socialistic Republic.

- The invasion of the consumer market with items of folk costume, inclusively traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță), in national style, originating in other countries; for example, blouses manufactured in Ukraine and which penetrate the autochthonous market.
- The excessive attention payed by mass media to the subject of traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță), consequently being produced opposite effects of misinformation and alteration of the taste among public.
- Promotion of the art of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) by media institutions in a superficial way, without a complex and consequent approach, only on feasts, thus being altered the values and the compositional structure of the blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță).
- The scarcity of publications as handbooks and guides dedicated to “The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (altiță)”, containing photos, explanations and technical drawings regarding the history of this element of the folk costume in our area, of the cut, of the specific structure, of ornamental compositions, of sewing techniques and that should be integrated in the costume. The absence of plates for making several traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță), destined for schools and the general public.
- Because of the economical shortage, the scarcity of finances possessed by local communities for producing handmade folk costumes by folk craftsmen.

The general framework for the protection, conservation and safeguarding of the element

The intangible cultural heritage from the territory of the Republic of Moldova possesses a legal and normative framework, which provides its protection, conservation, safeguarding, promotion, and transmission to the young generation. This framework is periodically updated according to the provisions of the “UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” (Paris, 2003). The general framework of protection consists of the legislation in force in field of intangible cultural heritage and connected domains:

- Law on the protection of intangible cultural heritage (no. 58 from 29.03.2012);
- The decision no. 194 of the Parliament, from 19 November 2015, concerning the establishment of the National Day of the Folk Costume, at the initiative of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, aiming the promotion of the traditional authentic costume and ensuring its continuity as an identity symbol;
- The State Program on the safeguarding of the “Christmas-time ritual Carolling in male group” (Colindatul de ceată bărbătească) provides in the action plan for the period 2016-2020, inclusively the protection of other elements of intangible cultural heritage;
- In the personal staff of district and town sections and departments for culture are persons in charge with the protection of intangible cultural heritage, who contribute to the implementation of cultural policies in this domain, contributing to a better promotion of the UNESCO provisions, making link with communities bearers of intangible cultural heritage, ensuring the reverse communication, from communities to competent institutions of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research;

- Drawing up and publication of the *National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Moldova* (vol. A, Chişinău, Lumina Publishing House, 2012; second edition, 2013, 224 p., ISBN 978-9975-65-353-4, ISBN 978-9975-65-354-1), published under the auspices of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Moldova, of the National Commission for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and of the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History;
- Elaboration and presentation for examination of the Local Inventory of UTA Găgăuzia, record no. 7 of the session of the National ICH Commission from 23.10.2020. The paper is in process of finalization, taking into consideration the observations of the members of the National Commission for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- The Order no. 385 of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, from 30.12.2016, regarding the approval of normative acts: *Regulation on bestowing the Honorary Title Living Human Treasure; Regulation on the National Inventory and Local Inventories of the Intangible Cultural Heritage* etc.;
- The Order no. 1678 of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, from 18.12.2019, on the approval of the Regulation on Organization and Functioning of the National Commission for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- The Order no. 610 from 30.06.2020 on the approval of the Norms for Accreditation of Experts in the Field of Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- Law no. 135-XV from 20 of March 2003 on traditional artistic crafts;

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research collaborates with internal and international organisms from this field: National Commission of the Republic of Moldova for UNESCO; Regional Centre of 2nd category from Sofia; UNESCO Office in Venice (BRESCE); but also research and educational institutions having attributions in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

Through the National Commission for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, a specialized consultative organism, subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, and with the participation of local communities, of the scientific community, is updated the National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Moldova. The updates are posted on the website www.mecc.gov.md.

In accordance with the specific of culture, historically constituted, the state applies measures for the conservation of the intangible cultural heritage by means of policies of decentralization, implementing programs with the help of institutions with representation in territory:

- The National Centre for the Conservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage develops cultural politics that are adequate for the protection of elements of this heritage in communities, in order to support heritage bearers and raise their social prestige;
- The “Ion Creangă” State Pedagogical University, the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts have educational programs, specialized courses on cultural heritage and intangible cultural heritage inclusively. They promote the elaboration of BA, MA and PhD theses in this field. They train specialists which complete the ranks of profile institutions with responsibilities for the protection of the intangible cultural heritage;

- The Institute of Cultural Heritage carries out institutional and state projects on the research of communities bearers of intangible cultural heritage, the elaboration of publications in this domain, ensures the dissemination of knowledge in society;
- Every 4 years, the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History carries out new institutional research projects, approved by state, on the study of the viability of the elements of intangible cultural heritage in the heritage bearer communities, archives in its collections the testimonies of these processes in the form of video and audio recordings, objects, and historical photographs. Organizes cultural events addressed to the educational environment, supports business activities in this domain.

Concrete measures for the protection, conservation, safeguarding and promotion of the element

There were established agreements and framework protocols of cooperation between the institutions with decisional and strategical role: specialized ones, administrative, educational, NGOs, mass media:

- The National Commission for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the National Centre for the Conservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, – with bearer communities, active in making the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*);
 - The National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History – with other museums, with research institutions, universities, village and town halls, NGOs and socials of women that embroider, on the exploit of the museum heritage with the aim of fortification of the tradition, enhancing the access of youngsters to heritage values;
 - The Institute of Cultural Heritage established partnerships with other research institutions from the republic and from abroad, concerning the integration of researches in a larger European context, of exchange of scientific standards;
 - The “Ion Creangă” State Pedagogical University, the Academy of Music, Theatre and Fine Arts established partnerships with other educational institutions, with museums and research institutions, in order to offer students an educational framework more open towards cultural realities;
 - The civil society, represented by many communities/“șezători” [socials] which activate in the villages and cities of the Republic of Moldova, by the Ethnological Society from the Republic of Moldova, Eco Resort Butuceni, as well as ethno-folkloric groups (*Alțița, Osoianu Sisters, Nemurelele*), established a program of cooperation for the study and promotion of local traditional blouses in those localities where they are less promoted. The communities expressed their wish to recover them entirely.

Safeguarding measures for short, medium and long term:

- Establishment of agreements and protocols of collaboration among institutions with competences in the field of protection of intangible cultural heritage, local public authorities, heritage bearer communities;
- Updating the national strategy of safeguarding in this domain;

- Improving the mechanism of inventorying the elements for the completion of the National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- Providing necessary resources for the continuous research and monitoring of the element and of its practitioners;
- Establishment of measures of prevention of inadequate or abusive treatment of the element and of its practitioners;
- Development of partnerships with economical unities and NGOs concerned about stable, ecologic and sustainable development;
- Elaboration of guides for learning about good practices in the domain of protection of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță).

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Collection of data, implication of communities and consent

At the realization of this inventory file contributed with useful information the following researchers:

Mariana Dobzeu, chief Department of Crafts and Diana Dicusarî, general director of the National Centre for the Conservation and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage – they intermediated the completion of questionnaires in territory on inventorying of craftsmen which activate in this domain, local cultural practices in which is promoted the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță). Together with the researchers Corina Rezneac, PhD student, and Andrei Prohin, PhD, they contributed to the signing of the agreements by the bearers of heritage, craftsmen, ateliers, local communities on the support for the inscription of “The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (Altiță) – an Element of

Cultural Identity of Romania and the Republic of Moldova” on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Other contributors:

With information about the actions of the Institute of Cultural Heritage in the research and promotion of the traditional women’s blouse with embroidery on the shoulder: dr. Natalia Grădinaru, scientific secretary, Institute of Cultural Heritage;

With old photos from the interwar period, that regard bearers of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder: the lawyer Iurie Cojocaru, București;

With photos regarding the activity and works of nowadays creators of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță): the photographer Constantin Plugari.

With photos of high resolution regarding the activity of the “Crenguță de iederă” Ensemble, from the State University of Moldova, stage manager Marin Iliuț, Chișinău.

For the realization of the documentary film that will accompany the file for the UNESCO, the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History offered old-time photographic images, with bearers of this heritage, and ensured the realization of films in many localities of the republic. The film recordings were realized by the operator Ghenadie Popescu.

The Ministry of Education, Culture and Research posted on its site the electronic version of the inventory dedicated to the art of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (altiță) and the specific techniques of making it.

Representatives of communities, groups and individuals bearers of the values preserved by this item supported the nomination; participated at the inventorying of the element, offering old photos, blouses or parts of them, preserved in local collections, information on the techniques of making old blouses, accounts about their usage in different social contexts, life stories about the transmission of blouses from mother to daughter. Thus we managed to have a better knowledge of the element on the field. They guided the specialists in villages, to acquaintances, in order to complete the documentary basis of the inventorying. Local public authorities, communities, ateliers and creators sustained the nomination, elaborated and signed the official consents, assuming thus the responsibility to protect in future this element in the plenitude of its manifestation.

Observations

“The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (Altiță) – an Element of Cultural Identity of Romania and the Republic of Moldova” is proposed for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, to be submitted at the UNESCO secretariat until 31 of March 2021, within a multinational file of Romania and the Republic of Moldova.

Completed

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English translation

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Date: 4 January 2021