

National Inventory of Active Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements

The Art of the Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (Alțiță) - an Element of Cultural Identity of Romania

I. Domain:

- knowledge of traditional crafts
- social practices, rituals and celebratory events

II. Intangible cultural heritage element:

- the art of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (traditional blouse with *alțiță*)
- cultural identity element in Romania

Standard term: Traditional Blouse with Embroidery on the Shoulder (traditional blouse with *alțiță*)

Local/regional names: *ciupag* (in Oltenia), *ie cu umăraș* (traditional blouse with shoulders in Southern Transylvania), *ie fetească* (traditional blouse in Transylvania), *spăcel* (traditional blouse in Arad), *zoroclie blouse* (traditional blouse for men made out of a thick cloth in Teleorman), *mânecar* (traditional short blouse in Loviște, Vâlcea), *traditional blouse with twisted sleeves* (in Vrancea), *traditional blouse with lăncez* (traditional blouse with smocking on its sleeves and at its collar in Neamț, Suceava).

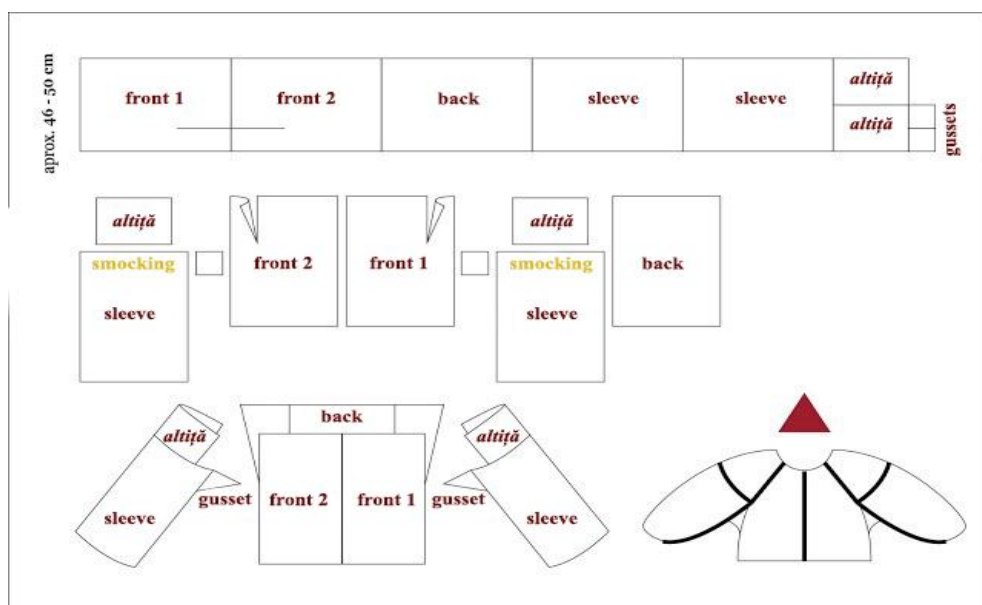
III. Area of occurrence

It is widely spread on both sides of the Carpathian Mountains, in Moldova, Bucovina, Muntenia, Oltenia and Southern Transylvania. The traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder is an important means of asserting the individual in the community and expressing his or her cultural identity in most ethnographic areas of Romania.

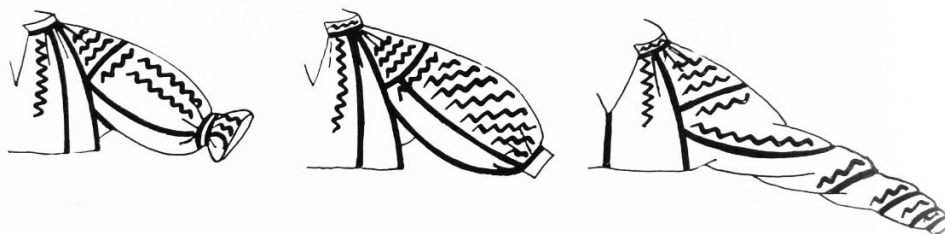
Like any Chancellery document is beautifully handwritten, the Carpathian shirt, a shirt that is crimped around the neck and with sleeves decorated with *alțiță*, is a type of visual and documentary testament of high artistic performance. Created by countrywomen generation after generation, the blouse not only protects their bodies from weather, but it also communicates to people through a dress code specific to the traditional Romanian mentality using non-verbal messages about the status of the wearers: where they come from, their age, their ethnicity, and their civil status.

The old form of the traditional blouse was the long chemise, the 'full shirt', which appeared as a result of the need to protect the entire body from weather, while meeting the criteria imposed by social norms. As a local variation, over time, the top part of the chemise was detached from the bottom, separating the short blouse (most often referred to by the term *ie*, derived from the Latin *tunicae lineae*, meaning thin tunic worn directly on the skin), from the bottom part, which was crimped around the waist or sewn to the top.

The preservation of the chemise can be observed in the Danube area and the predilection for separating it into two parts (*ie* and the bottom) in Transylvania, Banat and Moldavia. The name of ‘traditional blouse with *altiță*’ appears as a result of the differentiation based on technical and ornamentation criteria. *Alțiță* is the rectangular piece of cloth, placed on the shoulder, part of the structure of the blouse and not of the sleeves. It connects the front of the blouse to the back, and it is used as an element that widens the blouse. Technically integrated into Romanian folk material culture, the traditional blouse was perfectly adapted to the movement of the body, and the *altiță* appeared as a response to the need for free movement of the arm. Initially, the *altiță* was small (enough to fit the shoulder), and the wider sleeve was attached to it through a smocking. Over time, the *altiță* increased in size, becoming equal to the width of the sleeve, being attached to it stretched, and not crimped. In older traditional blouses, the *altiță* was detachable and it was removed for washing, so that it would not be subjected to wear.



The cut of the Carpathian - style blouse with *altiță*, author Ioana Corduneanu



The placement of motifs on the sleeve of the traditional blouse with *altiță* (a, b), including the twisted sleeve (c)

For Romanians, the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, combined with the other items of the traditional costume, was and still is a real *identity card* through which they can communicate their regional and ethnic background.

1. The spread of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder across Romania in the nineteenth and twentieth century

Alba County: Livezile, Pânade, Vălișoara, Izvoarele, Măgina, Poiana Aiudului, Lupșa, Poșaga, Sălciua, Ighiu, Șard, Cricău, Galda de Jos, Galda de Sus, Întregalde, Geoagiu de Sus, Ampoița, Sântimbru, Mihaiț, Coșlariu, Drâmbâr, Ciugud, Limba, Șeușa, Crăciunelu de Jos, Crăciunelu de Sus, Sâncel, Jidvei, Teiuș, Lopadea Nouă, Gârbova, Călnic, Cut, Daia Română, Bucerdea Grănoasă, Cenade, Cergău, Lancrăm, Recea, Laz, Șugag, Săsciori

Argeș County: Nucșoara, Lerești, Arefu, Ciocănești, Berevoiești, Albești, Mușătești, Godeni, Aninoasa, Tigveni, Băiculești, Bălilești, Poienari de Argeș, Dărmănești, Merișani, Cuca, Babana, Mărăcineni, Topoloveni, Vedea, Albota, Stolnici, Miroși, Slobozia, Mușcel, Mozăceni, Bogăți, Coștești

Arad County: Bata, Roșia Nouă, Săvârșin

Bacău County: Pustiana, Galbeni, Somușca, Făraoani, Gioseni, Ghimeș-Făget, Livezi, Mânăstirea Cașin, Sascut, Târgu Troțuș, Coțofenești

Botoșani County: Vorona, Corni, Vlădeni, Leorda, Tudora, Văculești

Brașov County: Rupea, Mateiaș, Paloș, Fântâna, Bogata Olteană, Dăișoara, Ticușu Vechi, Ticușu Nou, Boholț, Rucăr (Făgăraș), Calbor, Șona, Vlădeni, Râșnov, Ghimbav, Moieciu de Sus, Moieciu de Jos, Ungra, Crihalma, Feldioara de Făgăraș, Cristian, Dumbrăvița, Bran, Fundata, Fundățica, Șirnea, Poarta

Braïla County: Râmnicelu, Filipești, Ianca, Piscu, Vădeni

Buzău County: Bisoca, Berca, Chiojdu, Luncile, Mărăcineni, Râmnicu Sărat, Cochirleanca, Cislău, Glodeanu, Pătărlagele, Nehoiu, Pogoanele, Costești, Rușeu, Gura Teghii, Glodeanu Sărat

Călărași County: Belciugatele, Tămădău, Dor Mărunt

Covasna County: Întorsura Buzăului, Comandău, Brețcu, Zăbala

Dâmbovița County: Băleni, Cornești, Coțești, Runcu, Iedera, Bărbulețu

Dolj County: Dăbuleni, Desa, Plenița, Urzicuța, Fratoșița, Carpen, Celaru, Băilești, Afumați, Cernătești, Bârca, Segarcea, Galicea Mare, Melinești, Bechet, Cetate, Bratovoiești, Ghidici, Drăgotești

Galați County: Buciumeni, Munteni, Movileni, Drăgănești, Pechea, Vânători

Giurgiu County: Oinacu, Putineiu

Gorj County: Ciuperceni, Bălănești, Godinești, Cloșani, Pestișani, Hobița, Tismana, Motru, Novaci, Rovinari, Jupânești, Stănești, Săulești, Bălești, Bărbătești, Stejari, Crasna, Drăguțești, Polovragi, Văgiulești, Bălteni, Padeș, Turcinești, Florești, Lelești, Căpreni, Turceni, Săcelu, Albeni, Cătunele, Brănești, Slivilești, Călnic, Bumbesti-Pitic, Țicleni, Baia de Fier, Măceșu, Drăgotești, Văieni, Călugăreni, Orzești, Motru Sec

Harghita County: Bilbor, Tulgheș, Plăieșii de Jos, Lunca de Jos, Lunca de Sus, Voșlăbeni, Hodoșa, Livezi

Hunedoara County: Orăștie, Hațeg

Ialomița County: Scânteia, Jilavele, Bărcănești, Axintele, Gârbovi

Iași County: Ruginoasa, Moțca, Tătăruși

Mehedinți County: Bălăcița, Dălbocița, Ponoarele, Izverna, Podeni, Bala, Eșelnița, Cireșu, Sisești, Izvoru Bârzii

Mureș County: Rastolița, Stânceni, Lunca Bradului, Sovata

Neamț County: Farcașa, Ceahlău, Dulcești, Pipirig, Bicazu Ardelean, Bicz, Ghindăoani, Căndești, Crăcăoani, Girov, Grumăzești, Hangu, Horia, Poiana Teiului, Săbăoani, Tazlău, Vânători-Neamț, Băra, Borca, Roznov, Piatra Șoimului, Pângărați, Bodești, Negrești, Buhalnița

Olt County: Cornățelu, Cezieni, Coteniuța, Corabia, Vădăstrita, Vădastra, Vitomirești, Topana, Leleasca, Dobroteasa, Dobrosloveni, Vișina, Ianca, Colonești

Prahova County: Valea Doftanei, Izvoarele, Teișani, Brebu, Aluniș, Provița de Sus, Poiana Cămpina, Dumbrăvești, Lipănești, Ceptura, Drăgănești, Sălciile

Sibiu County: Poiana Sibiului, Rășinari, Poclaca, Gura Răului, Rod, Avrig, Săcădate, Tâlmăciu, Săsăuș, Arpașul de Jos, Arpașul de Sus, Porumbacul de Jos, Porumbacul de Sus, Cârța, Cârțișoara, Scorei, Sărata, Racovița, Sebeșul de Jos, Sebeșul de Sus, Turmu Roșu, Bradu, Colun, Glâmbocă, Nou Român, Boița, Tâlmăcel, Sadu, Râu Sadului, Orlat, Fântânele, Sibiel, Vale, Săliște, Galeș, Tilișca, Jina, Căsnădie, Căsnădioara, Mohu, Veștem, Bungard, Șelimbăr, Săcel, Cașolț, Cornățel, Nucet, Chirpăr, Țichindeal, Alțâna, Benești, Topârcea, Alămor, Armeni, Bogatu Român, Păuca, Broșteni, Axente Sever, Agârbiciu, Șeica Mică, Șeica Mare, Loamneș

Suceava County: Adâncata, Arbore, Baia, Bălăceana, Bălcăuți, Berchișești, Bilca, Bogdănești, Boroaia, Bosanci, Botoșana, Breaza, Brodina, Cacica, Calafindești, Capu Câmpului, Cărlibaba, Ciocănești, Ciprian Porumbescu, Cornu Luncii, Coșna, Crucea, Dolhești, Dorna-Arini, Dorna Candreni, Dumbrăveni, Fântâna

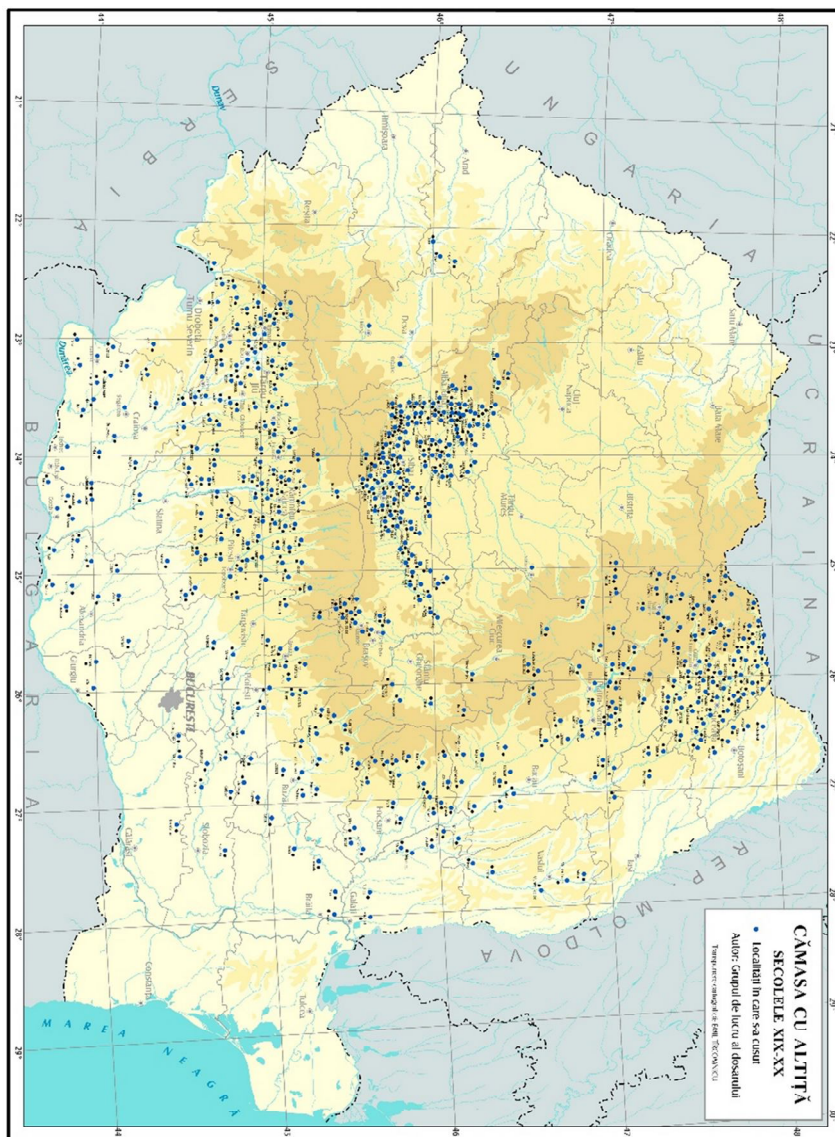
Mare, Fântânele, Frătăuții Noi, Frătăuții Vechi, Frumosu, Fundu Moldovei, Horodnic de Jos, Horodnic de Sus, Horodniceni, Iacobefni, Iaslovăț, Ilișești, Ipotești, Izvoarele Sucevei, Mălini, Mănăstirea Humorului, Gura Humorului, Marginea, Mîțocu Dragomirnei, Moara, Moldova-Sulița, Moldovița, Ostra, Păltinoasa, Panaci, Pârteștii de Jos, Pătrăuți, Poiana Stampei, Poieni-Solca, Pojorâta, Putna, Sadova, Satu-Mare, Slatina, Straja, Stroești, Stulpcani, Sucevița, Șcheia, Șerbăuți, Todirești, Udești, Ulma, Vadu Moldovei, Valea Moldovei, Vama, Vatra Dornei, Vatra Moldoviței, Vicovu de Jos, Voitinel, Volovăț

Teleorman County: Mereni, Caravaneți, Furculești, Izlaz, Slobozia Mândra, Suhaia, Smârdioasa, Plosca, Stejaru, Vârtoape

Vaslui County: Muntenii de Sus, Muntenii de Jos, Ivești, Văleni, Perieni

Vâlcea County: Amărăști, Bărbătești, Boșoara, Bunești, Copăceni, Costești, Crețani, Dăești, Galicea, Glăvile, Lungești, Mălaia, Măciuca, Mihăești, Muereasca, Nicolae Bălcescu, Pesceana, Pietrari, Popești, Slătioara, Stoenesti, Sirineasa, Ștefănești, Tetoiu, Băbeni, Bălcești, Horezu

Vrancea County: Ruginești, Tănăsoaia, Păunești, Câmpuri, Soveja, Vrancea, Vrancea, Nistorești, Năruja, Paltin, Nereju, Bălești, Ciorăști, Măicănești, Movilița, Mera, Garoafa, Vidra, Bârsești



2. Localities where traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder are sewn and worn in the twenty-first century

Alba County: Alba-Iulia, Livezile, Ocna Mureș, Aiud, Pănade, Vălișoara, Izvoarele, Măgina, Poiana Aiudului, Lupșa, Poșaga, Sălciua, Ighiu, Teiuș, Valea Mănăstirii - Râmeț, Șugag, Cioara de Sus

Argeș County: Pitești, Curtea de Argeș, Coștești, Corbeni, Corbi, Topoloveni, Mușcel, Ștefan cel Mare

Bacău County: Bacău, Făraoani, Valea Seacă, Valea Mare, Nicolae Bălcescu, Berzunți, Pustiana, Poiana Negri, Prăjești, Bijghir, Văleni, Galbeni, Luizi-Călugăra, Lespezi, Gioseni, Mărgineni, Cleja, Asău

Botoșani County: Botoșani

Brașov County: Brașov, Rupea, Ungra, Mateiaș, Paloș, Fântâna, Bogata Olteană, Dăișoara, Ticușu Nou, Crihalma, Boholț, Rucăr (Făgăraș), Calbor, Feldioara (Făgăraș), Șona, Vlădeni, Râșnov, Cristian

Brăila County: Brăila

Bucharest: Bucharest

Buzău County: Bisoca, Cărpiniștea, Lopătari, Mânzălești, Pătârlagele, Nehoiu, Siriu, Gura Teghii, Colți

Dâmbovița County: Șelaru

Dolj County: Craiova, Mârșani, Amărăștii de Jos, Leu, Bârca, Dăbuleni, Desa, Plenița, Urzicuța, Fratoșița, Carpen, Celaru, Băilești, Afumați, Cernătești, Segarcea, Galicea Mare, Melinești, Bechet, Carpen, Bratovoiești, Ghidici, Drăgotești

Galați County: Galați

Giurgiu County: Putineiu, Gostinu, Oinacu

Gorj County: Tismana, Motru, Polovragi, Lelești, Baia de Fier, Arcani, Novaci, Ciuperceni, Bălănești, Godinești, Cloșani, Peștișani, Hobîța, Rovinari, Jupânești, Săulești, Bălești, Bărbătești, Bălcești, Stejari, Crasna, Drăguțești, Văgiulești, Bâlteni, Padeș, Turcinești, Florești-Țânțăreni, Căpreni, Turceni, Săcelu, Albeni, Cătunele, Brănești, Slivilești, Călnic, Bumbesti-Pițic, Urdari, Țicleni, Măceșu, Târgu Cărbunești, Drăgotești, Văieni, Călugăreni, Orzești, Motru Sec, Curtișoara, Stroiști

Harghita County: Bilbor, Corbu

Iași County: Iași, Iugani, Fântânele Vechi, Izvoarele, Broșteni, Heleșteni, Ruginoasa, Scânteia, Scobinți

Mehedinți County: Ponoarele, Isverna, Bala, Eșelnița, Breznița-Motru, Hinova, Bălăcița, Baia de Aramă, Podeni, Cireșu, Sisești, Izvorul Bârzii

Neamț County: Piatra-Neamț, Borlești, Târgu Neamț, Bicaz, Bodești, Borca, Farcașa, Pipirig, Buhalnița, Hangu, Poiana Teiului, Valea Siretului, Tămășeni, Săbăoani, Tașca, Pângărați, Piatra Șoimului, Roznov, Bicazul Ardelean

Olt County: Corabia, Cezieni, Coteana, Vădastra, Poboru, Cornățelu, Corlătești, Bondrea, Vitomirești, Topana, Leleasca, Dobroteasa, Câmpu Mare, Dobrosloveni, Vișina, Vădăstrița

Prahova County: Ploiești, Breaza, Valea Doftanei

Sibiu County: Rod, Poiana Sibiului, Gura Râului, Poplaca, Rășinari, Avrig, Săsăuș, Tilișca, Jina, Sadu, Arpașul de Sus, Boița, Porumbacul de Jos, Săliște, Ilimbav, Alțâna, Retiș

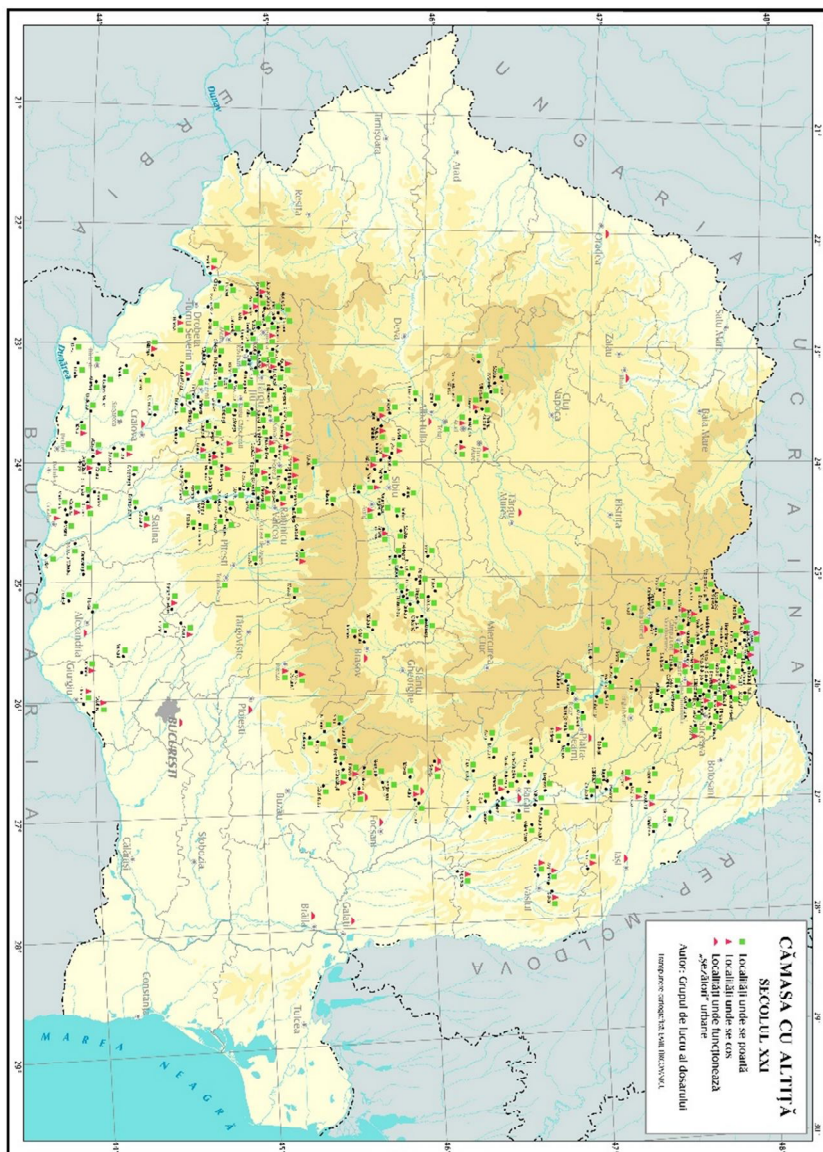
Suceava County: Gura Humorului, Mănăstirea Humor, Arbore, Bosanci, Pârteștii de Sus, Botoșana, Calafindești, Straja, Moldovița, Fundu Moldovei, Sadova, Ciocănești, Vatra Dornei, Forăști, Câmpulung Moldovenesc, Dorna Candreni, Doroteia, Șcheia, Iaslovăț, Putna, Suceava, Adâncata, Baia, Bălăceana, Bălcăuți, Berchiști, Bilca, Bogdănești, Breaza, Brodina, Capu Câmpului, Cărlibaba, Cornu Luncii, Coșna, Crucea, Dorna-Arini, Frătăuții Noi, Frătăuții Vechi, Frumosu, Horodnic de Jos, Horodnic de Sus, Iliești, Izvoarele Sucevei, Mălini, Moara, Moldova-Sulița, Panaci, Pârteștii de Jos, Pătrăuți, Stulpicani, Sucevița, Vama, Vatra Moldoviței, Voitineli, Volovăț, Vicovu de Jos, Vicovu de Sus, Frasin, Milișăuți, Todirești, Pojorâta

Teleorman County: Alexandria, Gratia, Mereiu, Caravaneți, Furculești, Izlaz, Slobozia Mândra, Plosca

Vaslui County: Laza, Pogonești, Solești, Zăpodeni

Vâlcea County: Bărbătești, Costești, Copăceni, Tetoiu, Grădiștea, Lădești, Ghioroiu, Păușești, Vlădești, Slătioara, Pietrari, Amărăști, Boișoara, Bunești, Crețani, Dăești, Galicea, Glăvile, Lungești, Malaia, Măciuca, Mihăiești, Muereasca, Pesceana, Horezu, Băbeni, Popești, Stoenеști, Ștefănești, Râmnicu Vâlcea

Vrancea County: Focșani, Jitia, Soveja, Vidra, Nereju, Andreiașu de Jos, Bârsești, Voloșcani, Vintileasca



3. Element Description — historiographic markers

The oldest testimony of the women's costume is the geometric drawing on the body of some idols, and it dates back to the period of the Vădastra culture, spanning from 5000-4800 BC (Oltenia). **Figure 1** shows the decor of a clay vessel from the same culture, and **Figure 2** shows clay vessels which reputable specialists have interpreted as corresponding to the decorative motifs on the garments of that period.



Figure 1. Idols, Vădastra culture, 5000-4850 BC, National Museum of Romanian History



Figure 2. Clay vessels, Vădastra culture, 5000-4850 BC, National Museum of Romanian History

The recent discovery of another neolithic idol, named by archaeologists *Venus from Craiova* and displayed in **Figure 3**, has the same suggestive geometrical elements on its garments.



Figure 3. Neolithic Figurine, Venus from Craiova, 5500-4250 BC, the collection from the History and Archaeology Section of the Museum of Oltenia, Craiova

Other iconographic testimonies relating to the clothing of Dacian ancestors come from the Roman Antiquity period via two famous monuments: *Tropaeum Traiani* (108-109 AC) in the Adamclisi locality, Dobrogea, and *Columna Traiani* (113 AC) in Rome. Each of them, as identified by the Romanian archaeologist Alexandru Odobescu, preserves the image of men and women's costumes in stone. The depictions have striking similarities to the contemporary garments of the peasants in Romania's mountain areas.

The costume worn by Dacian women, illustrated on the metopes 463, 464 and 465 of the Adamclisi monument, is specific to summer clothing. The pieces of cloth that tailor the front, back and sleeves of the traditional blouse are crimped around the neck with a simple thread called *brezărău*. This archaic cut can still be found in the Moldovan traditional costume, and this fashion of gathering the cloth sections together around the neck is called crinkle (a band) in Muntenia and Oltenia. The two technical processes demonstrate the continuity of the technological and artistic skills required to make the blouse.

Starting with the sixteenth century, other sources of information have been paired with ancient documentation of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder. The costumes of rulers, boyars, townsmen, merchants and peasants are depicted in illustrated chronicles in the votive paintings inside both Aulic churches and the churches in towns and villages, as seen in **Figures 4, 5**.



Figure 4. Ruler Neagoe Basarab's daughters wearing traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder, fragment of a votive painting fresco, in the Episcopal Church of the Curtea de Argeş Monastery, 1526, author Dobromir Zugravu (Dobromir the Painter)



Figure 5. Village founders, Ibănești Church, Olt County, nineteenth century

From the sixteenth century to the end of the nineteenth century, there were countless scholars, clerics and artists from Central and Western Europe and from the Orient who, impressed by the beauty and originality of the way in which the Romanians were clothed, depicted their costumes in admiring words, drawings, watercolours and engravings. These depictions of clothing from Transylvania, Crişana, Banat, Moldova, Muntenia, Oltenia and Dobrogea faithfully and evocatively emulate stylistic features that define the costume of various social categories from the historical provinces of Romania. Examples are provided in **Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9.**



Figure 6. Girls from Dolj, Carol Popp Szathmary, watercolour on paper, The Romanian Peasant Museum



Figure 7 Peasant woman from Făgăraş, Carol Popp Szathmary, watercolour on paper, the Graphic Arts Gallery, The National Museum of Art of Romania



Figure 8. Peasant woman from Căineni, Vâlcea, Carol Popp Szathmary, watercolour on paper, the Graphic Arts Gallery, The National Museum of Art of Romania



Figure 9. Peasant woman from Vrancea, Carol Popp Szathmary, watercolour on paper, the Graphic Arts Gallery, The National Museum of Art of Romania

The traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder was also used as an artistic metaphor by Romanian painters in various works, as seen in **Figures 10, 11, 12** and **13**.



Figure 10. Revolutionary Romania (1850), Constantin Daniel Rosenthal (1820-1851);
Romanian Modern Art Gallery, The National Museum of Art of Romania



Figure 11. Hand spinning peasant woman (1884), Mărginimea Sibiului, Transylvania, Sava Henția (1848-1904), Romanian Modern Art Gallery, The National Museum of Art of Romania

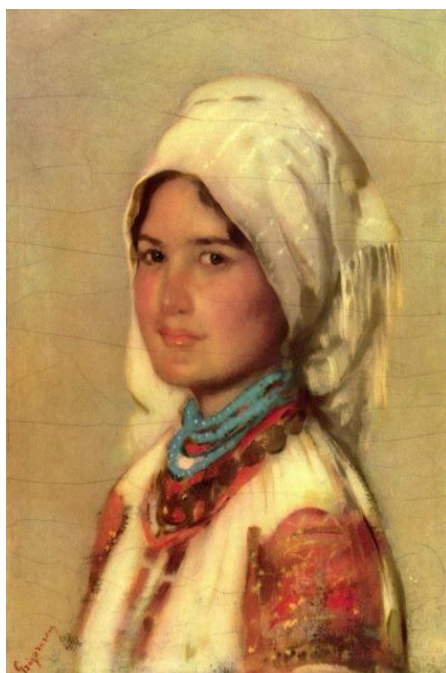


Figure 12. Peasant woman from Muscel (1874-1875), Nicolae Grigorescu (1838-1907), Romanian Modern Art Gallery, The National Museum of Art of Romania



Figure 13. Peasant woman sewing (1923), Camil Ressu (1880-1962), Romanian Modern Art Gallery, The National Museum of Art of Romania

Written information on the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder can be found in dowry papers from the end of the seventeenth century. Similarly, in an inventory of the belongings found after the death of the mother of the Moldovan boyar Neculai Murguleț, a red *fotă* (long traditional skirt), two towels and a pair of *altițe* with metal thread are also mentioned (Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu, 2013, *The Historical Archive of Romania*, vol.1, 1864-1865, edited by I. Opreșan, SAECULUM I.O publishing house, 2013, p. 71).

In the second part of the nineteenth century, a new category of eyewitnesses is added to the historiography of the traditional costume and hence, of the traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder.

A faithful depiction of reality, the photograph opens doors to an impressive system for archiving the memory of local communities and the specific forms of cultural identity assertion. Passionate with the universe of the Romanian village, the photographers from the beginning of the twentieth century captured countless portraits of peasants at work, at the hora, at the Easter and Christmas celebrations. In the Saxon, Hungarian or Romanian photographic studios across Romanian cities, thousands of peasants were captured in their festive garments. In addition, there are the hundreds of negatives made by Carol Popp Szathmary, the painter and

photographer of the Royal House of Romania, who left behind a real encyclopedia of the traditional Romanian costume from all ethnographic areas of the country.

A consistent promoter of the women's folk costume was also the Royal House of Romania. As early as 1885, at various events, Queen Elisabeta dressed in folk costumes, particularly the ones from Argeş and Muscel, appreciating the richness and refinement of the embroidery, the elegance and the preciousness of the fabrics. Subsequently, Queen Maria adopted the folk costume as the official attire at the nation's celebrations and thus, under the patronage of the Royal House, a real trend was launched among the Romanian ladies and the costume was adopted as an identity brand at various national receptions and events. - **Figures 14, 15, 16.**



Figure 14. Queen Elisabeta of Romania in the folk costume from Argeş, 1872, Healy George Peter Alexander (1813-1894), oil on canvas, Peleş National Museum



Figure 15. Queen Maria of Romania wearing a traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, cca. 1896, Peleş Castle, Peleş National Museum collection, photo A. Brand



Figure 16. Royal family: in the front: King Carol I and the Archduke Franz Ferdinand; in the background, from left to right: Princess Elisabeta, Prince Carol, Princess Mărioara, Prince Nicolae, Crown Princess Maria, Crown Prince Ferdinand. Photograph made in Sinaia, June 1909, Peleş National Museum Collection

The folk costumes from Muscel and Argeş were real messengers for Romanian national identity and were gradually entering intellectuals' circles. Regardless of the ethnographic area, the intellectuals of the villages, such as teachers, professors, mayors, notaries, priests and their wives — have adopted these garments to affirm their ethnic identity. The intensity of this phenomenon explains why the costume from Muscel is considered to be a national emblem in Muntenia, Oltenia and even in southern Moldova. The same phenomenon of vesting the women's folk costume as an identity brand also occurs in southeastern Transylvania. The Reunion of Romanian Ladies, established in 1850 in Braşov, and the ASTRA Association, established by Andrei Şaguna in 1861, have a particular merit in promoting the folk costume from Sălişte and preserving the cultural identity of Romanians in Transylvania. They crystallized the cultural movement of Transylvanians and helped to strengthen the belief of ethnocultural unity, to contribute to the long awaited 1918 Unification. At the 1906 exhibition in Bucharest, on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of King Carol's accession to the throne, the folk costume from Sălişte became more visible and prestigious thanks to Maria Peligrad, who was awarded the title of Miss Romania while wearing this costume. Through its elegance and artistic refinement, this costume became a model to be followed in southeastern Transylvania for many generations of women in

villages and cities. Her portrait was reproduced by Emil Fischer from Sibiu, and postcards were printed at the publishing house Dumitru B. Comşa from Sălişte, as displayed in **Figure 17**.



Figure 17. Maria Peligrad from Sălişte, Sibiu, the winner of the Miss Romania title in 1906, photograph taken at Emil Fischer's workshop in Sibiu and printed on postcards at Dumitru B. Comşa from Sălişte, Collection of the National Museum Complex ASTRA, Sibiu

According to the archaeological testimonies, ancient monuments, chronicles, votive paintings, watercolours, drawings, photographs and ethnographic heritage preserved in relevant museums, the basic structure of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder has been maintained with incredible constancy over several centuries.

4. Etymology of the word ‘altiță’

According to the dictionaries, *altița* is ‘the part of the sleeve on the shoulders of traditional blouses (...) when it has embroidery stitches’ (*The Dictionary of the Academy*, 1907) or ‘wide embroidery, made with cotton or silk thread on the shoulders’ (*Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian language*, 1958). In the *Etymological Dictionary of the Romanian language* (the publishing house of the Romanian Academy, Alexandru Ciorănescu), *altiță* refers to the upper part of the sleeve when it is embroidered, and the etymon proposed by the author is the Latin word *altitia*. The *altitia* form is based on the Latin *altus-a-um*, adj. = ‘high’, with the superlative form from classical Latin, *altissima*, meaning ‘the highest’.

The Latin origin of the terms for the *blouses* worn across the Romanian area is also confirmed by linguistic researchers, who agree with the origin of the word *cămașă* (blouse) from the Latin *camisia*, and of *ie* (traditional Romanian blouse) from the Latin *linea* (Zamfira Mihail, *The Terminology of the Romanian People’s Garments in a comparable South-East European ethnolinguistic perspective*, the publishing house of the Academy R.S.R., Bucharest, 1978).

In addition, the term is preserved in the Aromanian dialect: *analt* = ‘high’ (Lat. *in-altus*) confirms the existence of the etymon in both Protoromanian dialects (Tache Papahagi, *The Dictionary of the Aromanian Dialect*, the publishing house of the Romanian Academy, Bucharest, 2013).

In the context of the traditional Romanian rurality, the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder was perceived as a richly decorated blouse, mainly on the shoulders, and was worn by young women, brides and married women in their first years after their wedding to be as beautiful as possible. In other words, the blouses indicated they were *mândre* (the proud ones), a title often found in traditional folk circles across Romania.

Initially, the *altiță* served as a symbolic portrayal of the wearer. However, the blouse served a decorative function over time, mainly in the nineteenth century in Muntenia and Moldova. In these regions, cotton and floss silk fabrics were used, which are more suitable for artistic embroidery. In Southern Transylvania and in the Apuseni mountains, it can be concluded that the *altiță* was minimalistic due to the type of cloth used, which had a thicker and harsher texture that is not suitable for stitching needlepoints together for a decorative effect.

5. Folk costume and national costume

In the Romanian consciousness, the ‘folk costume’ and ‘the national costume’ hint to the historical realities of the nineteenth century in Transylvania and the Kingdom of Romania.

The costume worn by the peasantry throughout the territories inhabited by Romanians has always been the folk costume, which belongs to the people who created and worn them. In this respect, the garments and the costume were and remain a distinctive brand of the wearer by which he or she identifies as an individual and also by nation, ethnicity and region. In this respect, Dimitrie Cantemir, in *The Moldovan Description*, states that ‘he who does not speak his language and does not

wear his clothes' could be punished by the law of the land or by customary law. The feeling of respect for the costume in each area has been and still is very much alive in the consciousness of Romanians and explains the viability of this type of costume over the centuries, according to historic and iconographic references. It could be said that there is a revival of this sense of respect for the folk costume and of ownership of its identity and cultural value.

The national costume is the response of the Romanian intellectuals to historical factors since the middle of the nineteenth century.

In Transylvania, as part of the Habsburg Empire and then under the Hungarian administration after the completion of the Austro-Hungarian Compromise in 1867, the Romanian elites met in various cultural associations, such as the Romanian Ladies and ASTRA. These associations advocated for the promotion of the values of Romanian folk culture and, implicitly, of national consciousness. The women's folk costume played an important role in this endeavour. The folk costume worn by the peasantry in southern Transylvania, particularly the somber, elegant and refined costume from Mărginimea Sibiului. This costume was promoted as a specific Romanian garment and was worn at most of the cultural events organised. The wives of the local representatives of rural communities, such as the wives of the mayor, teacher, notary, priest who were invited to celebrations, wore the costume from Mărginimea Sibiului as a national emblem. This costume was gradually adopted by the other villagers, but it was worn only during the public holidays of the communities. Otherwise, the peasantry was wearing costumes specific to their region. In cities, Romanian intellectuals also wore the costume from Mărginimea Sibiului at various cultural events in order to express their national identity.

In Romania, the women's national costume was established by the Royal House of Romania. As early as 1885 Queen Elisabeta dressed in folk costumes, particularly the ones from Argeş and Muscel, at various events. By wearing the garments, the Queen demonstrated appreciation of the richness and refinement of the embroidery and the elegance and the preciousness of the fabrics. Subsequently, Queen Maria adopted the folk costume as the official attire at national celebrations. Under the patronage of the Royal House, a real trend was launched among Romanian women and the costume was adopted as a brand of identity at various national receptions and events. The establishment of the Royal Workshops, which employed regional women to manufacture traditional costumes and carpets, helped to meet the growing demands of boyars, the bourgeoisie and intellectuals. Under the prestige of the Royal House, the costumes from Muscel and Argeş became national emblems, and they were likewise adopted by notable people in rural areas. It was easy to acquire these costumes because there were traders selling them in peasant fairs. Today, the women's costume from Muscel continues to be called a national costume, simultaneously perpetuating the emblem in the consciousness of Romanians and the prestige of the Royal House and of the folk culture.

IV. Presentation of the item in the historical regions

1. OLTENIA

The main item of the festive folk costume for women in Oltenia is the blouse. The traditional blouse is combined with a pair of *catrințe* (an embroidered waist apron worn over a chemise, for the front and the back) or *vâlnic* (a woven wool pleated skirt), as well as *pieptar* (embroidered fur vest) or vests made of felted wool and velvet. Married women cover their heads with *maramă* (a headscarf) made of floss silk fabric or a *tulpan* (headwrap) hemmed with lace and beads.

Raw materials

The fabric used for the older items made between the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century was exclusively hand-woven in the household from hemp yarns, linen, cotton, and floss silk. Today, the fabric is no longer woven in households, except in cases when the pattern and the fabric can be woven simultaneously on the loom. Contemporary craftswomen and family associations acquire their fabrics from suppliers. After 1990, suppliers specialised in manufacturing fabrics with different densities that were suitable for the demands of craftswomen from the villages of Oltenia. For example, in Romanăți, the cotton fabric manufactured in Ploiești and Covasna is preferred. In Mehedinți, linen and seersucker purchased from Sighișoara are used, and in Gorj, industrially processed cotton fabrics from the factories in Bucharest are used. Embroidery yarns made of dyed cotton thread, floss silk, natural silk from silkworms, vegetable silk, beads, metal thread and sequins were all commercially purchased. In Romanăți, at the end of the nineteenth century, natural silk was dyed in households or at specialised dyeing workshops in the towns of the area. Currently, all categories of embroidery yarns (silk, dyed cotton thread, thrown silk, PAN synthetic fibres) are purchased from specialised shops and haberdashery suppliers in Bucharest, Craiova, Slatina and Târgu-Jiu.

The Toolkit

To manufacture the blouses, people in Oltenia used simple sewing needles of different sizes, threads, and eventually scissors. Initially, the cloth was not cut but instead burned with a candle at one edge and then torn. Proficiency and dexterity guide the woman's hands: they are the key to success. From this point of view, the making of the blouse is also called 'the art of the needle'. Today, the embroidery hoop, which keeps the fabric taut, is added to the ancient needle. The needle was also used for finishing touches, the decorative edge stitching, and the lace on sleeves, hemlines, collar and binding. Today, these actions are carried out with a crochet needle as it is faster.

The cut of the Oltenian blouse falls under the most common type of blouse in Romania: the Carpathian type. These blouses are made out of several pieces of cloth - one for the front, one for the back, one for each sleeve - that are crimped around the neck on a narrow band called a collar. It should be noted that only this type of cut supports the *altiță*, and this element is representative of all ethnographic areas of Oltenia (Mehedinți, Plaiul Cloșanilor, Gorj, Dolj, North Olt, Câmpia Boian, Romanăți,

Vâlcea) and Romania's other historic provinces (Muntenia, Moldova, Southern Transylvania), attesting to the continuous presence of the Romanian population.

In older blouses from the nineteenth century to the first part of the twentieth century, the *altiță* was tailored separately. It was a piece of cloth of approximately 20 centimeters long, depending on the length of the woman's arm. In Oltenia, the *altiță* is stitched into the upper part of the sleeve with an additional piece of cloth known as a patch, which connects the *altiță* to the collar. The function of this patch is to prevent the cloth from crimping too much under the collar and creating discomfort when worn. Attaching the patch to the *altiță*, on the top of the shoulder, is possible through a row of embroidery similar to those in the *altiță*. The sleeve itself is connected to the *altiță* through the smocking, an embroidery band designed to bring the sleeve to the same size as the *altiță* by crimping the cloth. This cut of the blouse's sleeve is an archaic form of making the item, allowing the embroidery to be sewn in sections. The blouse made in this manner is called a blouse with a separate *altiță* and a functional smocking.

As the width of the cloth used to make the sleeves became wider over 35-40 centimeters, the smocking of the sleeve lost its original function and became a decorative pattern. At present, the sleeve of the blouse is sewn from the collar to the cuff from the same piece of cloth. Only in Romanai the patch still connects the embroidery on the sleeve to the collar itself.

Design structure, motifs and their artistic rendition

Regardless of the area, the tripartite grouping of motifs is upheld: *altiță*, smocking and rivers (rows of embroidery extending from the smocking to the cuffs). These features represent the diversity in each ethnographic area, and the stylistic details depend on the creative capacity, imagination and competence of each woman. The diversity of patterns was also dictated by the civil status of the wearer: unmarried girls, young wives, old women. The blouse of each category used motifs as a distinctive sign in the three segments of the sleeves (i.e. the *altiță*, the smocking and the rivers). From this perspective, it can be observed that in the *altiță* of blouses from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, geometrical motifs grouped in five, six, or even seven transversal registers with diamonds, rosette ('the sun'), spirals ('the snail'), horizontal S's, Xs, winding lines ('the wave'), zig-zags ('wolf fangs'), and squares ('cases'). Geometrically stylised representations of symbolic and astral motifs are associated with patterns of the cross, stars, the eye ('little eyes').

Since the middle of the twentieth century, this decorative repertoire has become increasingly diverse, bringing vegetal and floral patterns to the composition of the *altiță*, smocking and rivers of blouses. The motifs are stylised and reproduced with naturalist decorations, such as roses, carnations, poppies, chicory, peonies, daisies, four-leaf clover, sprigs with flowers, bouquets, various flower arrangements (the middle of the flower), and buds. A prominent context for these motifs is the tree of life, reproduced as a potted plant or a tree with three branches or twigs). Until the interwar period, each of these motifs was reproduced in a geometrical manner that incorporated embroidery techniques. Gradually, women and craftsmen started appreciating more natural representations.

Specifically, the Oltenian blouse included a densely embroidered *altiță* with five, seven or nine rows of patterns ('A beautiful *altiță* is a rich *altiță*', said Olga Alexandrina Filip, Cezieni, Olt), the colourful smocking and rivers. The rivers were either vertically parallel or intersecting in a network known locally as *blană* (fur) in Mehedinți, Northern Olt, and Vâlcea.

The embroidery techniques used in Oltenia, both by the women of the past and by contemporary craftswomen, are extremely fastidious and characterised by stitching by counting threads. The design is made directly on the blouse's cloth without a template or pattern. The most common embroidery stitches are the needlepoint stitch (thread by thread, the pattern covers the fabric), *tighel* (a fine stitch for the contouring of patterns), festoon, stitching over threads, and 'the fly' (cross-stitch).

The preferred colour for the Oltenian blouses is dictated by the age and civil status of its wearer, and it is consistent with the other complementary parts, namely the *catrințe* (waisted aprons), pleated skirts, waistcoats, and vests, to describe the wearer. Red, in various shades, is specific to young women, such as girls and young wives. Burgundy and blue in different tones, from sky-blue to ultramarine, are preferred by mature and older women. In this dominant colour range, the smocking on the sleeves (sewn right under the *altiță*) of these blouses is sewn in a different colour, ranging from white, ivory and yellow for blouses made from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century to more lively colours such as orange, green from the interwar period to the present. In Gorj, Romanați, Câmpia Boianului, and southern Dolj, the smocking of the blouses is made using the openwork technique called *șabac* (stitch on the drawn out yarns of the fabric) with an ivory white thread, thus preserving the ivory white colour of the cloth and smocking.

2. MUNTENIA

The blouses from Muntenia also belong to the Carpathian type; they are crimped around the neck on a band, and include the distribution of motifs according to tradition on the breast, on the *altiță*, and along the sleeves.

Raw materials

The blouse from Teleorman is made out of either plain double weave cloth or with a border made of groups of white or yellow cotton stripes. The cloth was sometimes made of cotton with linen or with floss silk, and the cloth pieces were 35 to 45 centimeters wide. In the Vlașca region, silk and dyed cotton threads. In the Muscel area, the most commonly used fabric in old traditional blouses was cotton cloth with coloured edges. The bottoms of the skirt were made using either the same type of cloth or linen and, from the second half of the twentieth century, the so-called 'America' industrial cloth was used. After the Second World War, seersucker, marquisette and, more rarely, voile became widely available. In the nineteenth century, fine wool, floss silk and gold or silver threads have been used for decor. In the twentieth century, dyed cotton thread, artificial silk, the lamé thread and, in recent decades, lurex. According to the craftswoman Anda Mănescu, in Prahova, the blouses from Breaza in the nineteenth century and in the first half of the twentieth century were made out of home-woven

fabrics. These fabrics were a double weave of cotton or a mix with flax called ‘fishing cloth’. Industrial cloth is used today. In Breaza, a very active centre for this clothing item, the craftswomen work with cloth purchased from factories from Timișoara and from Întorsura Buzăului because it is very delicate. The yarn twist is usually 70/1 or 100/1. This type of cloth is the key to the elegance of the traditional blouse with *altiță* worked in Breaza. For example, Iulia Goran works with a 100/1 fabric, also known as ‘ant cloth’, which she described as ‘light as steam’.

The Toolkit

In the Prahova area, long and thin sewing needles are currently used for embroidery ‘so that they won’t tear the fabric’, explained Iulia Goran. According to craftswoman Caterina Oboaru, the needles should have ‘large eyes, so that the thread goes in on the first try’. Before, when craftswomen were making a blouse, they burned the cloth at its edges with the candle flame, and then they would tear it. Today, they use the scissors and cut the cloth alongside a run in the fabric from a pulled thread. For motifs, they use dyed cotton threads and thrown silk, the embroidery stitch is called ‘the fly’ and is stitched counting four threads. When sewing with silk, the stitch is carried out counting two threads (Iulia Goran). The craftswoman Anda Mănescu considers that ‘the place for the *altiță* is on the shoulder, in full view. This is what is made for, so that the person wearing it could flaunt it’.

The cut

The traditional blouse from Muntenia falls within the Carpathian type that is crimped on a band around the neck and found all across Romania.

In Teleorman, the sleeve of the old blouses consists of two or three pieces of cloth, forming the *altiță*, smocking and sleeve itself. In Teleorman, the old chemises are cut from long pieces of cloth from the neck, down to the ankles without a cut at the waist and with two gussets on the sides. For the costumes with a separate traditional blouse, the bottoms of the skirt are fashioned out of three canvas widths: two for the front and the back, and two side gussets. Newer blouses maintain this cut, with the exception of the sleeves that lose the usual cut with a separate *altiță*.

In the Muscel area, the fashion of the items differs based on factors like the width of the cloth and the age and the girth of the wearer. The Romanian blouse has two parts: the body is the upper part of the blouse and the *poale* are the bottom parts. The different parts of the traditional blouse have specific names in this area: *ciupag* for the front cloth sheet, *altoaie* for the gussets, *obinzică* or *brețară* for the collar, *băgătură* for the underarm gusset, *bantă* for the cuff, and *fodor* for the ruffle of the sleeve. The simplest type of blouse in Muscel is constructed from four or five straight cloth sheets: one or two sheets form the sleeves, and the remaining sheets form the front and the back of the blouse. It should be noted that the sleeves of the old blouses are large and made of two cloth sheets while those of the first decades of the twentieth century can be made out of a sheet and a half. Sleeves of blouses from the second half of the twentieth century are usually made out of a single sheet. The bottoms of the blouses from the late nineteenth century and those of the early decades of the twentieth century extend down to the ankle, similar to the hems of a chemise. As we approach our modern times, the bottoms of the blouse shorten, changing the

monumental appearance of the women's costume from Muscel. The very wide sleeve, tightened on a cuff and the chemise down to the ankles are common between the eleventh and the sixteenth centuries in Wallachia, as evidenced by the costumes worn by the daughters of the ruler Neagoe Basarab, as seen in Figure 4.

In the Prahova area, for one traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder, about three metres of cloth were used, and the cloth was tailored by counting threads. The front and back, sleeves and *pava* (square piece of fabric, sewn under the underarm to give volume to the blouse) are tailored for one blouse with *altiță*. For the cut of the sleeve, they measured 12 centimeters downwards from the shoulder, so that the embroidery of the *altiță* would be wide as a *șchioapă*, an old folk measurement equal to the maximum distance between the thumb and the index finger, which was equal to five to six rows of embroidery and spanned about 25 to 30 centimeters.

The old blouses from the Vlașca region were sewn from long cloth sheets, almost down to the ankles, with two side gussets and a sleeve divided into three sections: the *altiță*, the smocking, continued with a floss silk cloth, which was often left without the rivers.

Design structure, motifs and their artistic rendition

In the Teleorman area, the decor is located in three places: on the *altiță* in horizontal lines, stitched with polychromatic silk; the monochromatic smocking, which was slightly narrower, placed right under the *altiță*, and usually decorated with diamond-shaped motifs; and the last part having several vertical ornamental lines. A square piece of cloth called the 'underarm' or '*altoi*' is sewn under the arm and gives volume to the sleeve. The embroidery is found on the collar and neckline, on the breast in the form of vertical lines with geometric motifs framing the neckline, on the back, and on the large sleeves that end with a cuff or with a ruffle. *Bagatele* (fine lace) or 'fangs' were crocheted on the hemlines of the blouse and sleeves.

In the Vlașca region, a distinct mark is the high collar, made up of pleated cloth held on by a band on the inside and hemmed on its edges with red stitches. Another particularity of the blouse's embroidery is the structure of the composition, grouped in lines divided into squares, each with a different oblique motif and framed by golden scale-shaped sequins. The sleeve is wide with a row of motifs on its edge or crimped on a cuff with similar motifs. There are vertical lines on the breast, similar to the ones on the *altiță*. The style of the motifs, the sewing technique, and the subtle colours are all characteristic of these blouses. A row of people dancing in a *hora* emerges on the pattern found on the bottoms of the blouse, complementing the design of the blouse.

A relic was found during research around the Snagov Lake in Ilfov, a traditional blouse with embroidery that had been worn only in the Buriăș commune. The distinction between this blouse and the one described above is in the opening. This has an opening between the breast and the sleeve on the left side instead of down the center of the cloth. It also had embroidery on the creases under the neckline band. The sleeve ends in a group of small circles, forming a cuff with a small ruffle. The bottoms of the blouse, tailored from three cloth widths, have crocheted lace on the hemline.

As in other regions, the motifs on blouses in Muscel follow the straight line: vertical lines on the breast, back and sleeves, or series of squares and rectangles with geometric patterns on the breast and less decoration on the back. When there are floral patterns, they are highly geometrised. Pieces of blouses found in graves of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, as well as some portraits of various church founders, prove that the areas for motifs were and remain the collar, the neckline of the blouse, the breast and the sleeves. The patterns are placed on the visible areas that are not subject to wear and tear, such as the front of the sleeve, the breast, the collar and the bottoms. The traditional blouses from Muscel belong to the *altiță* type, with motifs grouped in three registers: the *altiță*, the smocking and the sleeve. The *altiță* is a horizontal band of varying sizes, approximately 10 cm from the collar. It consists of a few galloons (three to nine rows) stitched in the shapes of crosses, chains and squares that follow one another. They are stitched together by a narrow pattern that also frames them with motifs of different colours. In some blouses, the *altiță* is sewn separately. In the newer blouses, the *altiță* is larger and forms a dense, homogeneous embroidery. The *altiță* is followed by the smocking, a narrower band attained by crimping the cloth with a very old special stitch in white, yellow or orange. Three or four vertical lines (rivers) with motifs similar to those on the *altiță* extend down from the smocking to the cuff. However, sometimes the rivers on the sleeve extend over the smocking and reach the *altiță*, such that the embroidery is limited to the spaces between the rivers. The embroidery repertoire is predominantly geometric. On the breast of the blouse the motifs are arranged in vertical lines on either side of the neckline. The characteristic mark of the composition is the sequence of squares and rectangles, or unfoldings of geometrical patterns called “fuști”, which are all vertically aligned. Small motifs are present on the collar, depending on the size of the collar.

In the Argeș area, specific elements for the blouse are the coloured smocking, typically orange, and the *pomneata*, a sleeve that was tightened on a cuff and folded back to form a ruffle. In this case, the decorative compositions also follow the traditional pattern and are spread on the sleeves, around the neck to frame the neck opening, and on the bottoms. The embroidery is further enriched with sequins and beads.

In Buzău, the blouse with a ‘wolly *altiță*’, smocking and rivers on the sleeves has two distinct types: the old type, with a narrow *altiță*, white smocking and narrow rivers; and the more recent mountain blouse, a replica of the old blouses but with simpler and fewer elements in the stitching technique and the size. The embroidery was made using a looped stitch with wool dyed in homes. The *altiță* is divided separately into two portions and both are individually framed by *dusura* (embroidered frame).

The old blouse of Prahova, worn at the beginning of the nineteenth century, does not resemble the one worn today. It had two horizontal bands on the sleeve: the first one was wider (‘as four fingers’) and extended over the shoulder, and another narrower band (‘as three fingers’) embroidered with stitches referred to as the ‘old stitch’ by craftswoman Iulia Goran. The old stitch is a thick dense stitch sewn with black and/or red dyed cotton thread. Another particularity of this old blouse is the embroidery under the collar, similar to the *ciupag* (traditional blouse with embroidered breast) in Transylvania that was later adopted in Prahova. The modern

blouse with *altiță*, smocking (also ‘openwork’ or ‘white’, according to Iulia Goran) and *șinătău* (three vertical rivers on the sleeve) has evolved from this type of blouse.

In Breaza, the sleeve is stitched out of ‘a whole piece of cloth’, and the size of the blouse dictates the size of the *altiță*. For example, large blouses have an *altiță* spanning about five or six rows of embroidery. Under the *altiță*, the rivers are arranged vertically. The blouses are tailored from the cloth, starting with the sleeves which are more difficult to make. The piece of cloth for the sleeve will be divided into the *altiță* and the portion for the three rivers. Between the *altiță* and the rivers, the openwork or white smocking is stitched with white or pale yellow thread. Before finishing the blouse, the sleeve is folded in two and the finishing is done. Five to eight centimeters are cut for the gusset, which is an important piece that helps the wearer to roll up the sleeves. In Breaza, the *altiță* is sewn directly on the sleeve and not separately. Towards the end of the 1920s, with the public appearances of Queen Maria wearing the traditional costume from Wallachia, the Romanian blouse and its colours gained a new meaning. Because Queen Maria established Royal Workshops in the Breaza area, new decorative motifs emerged, such as the ‘Queen’s Star’ in purple, golden and white, and are still being used to this day.

Embroidery techniques

In Teleorman, the stitches of the blouses from the first half of the twentieth century are less refined due to the introduction of techniques that are easier to perform yet less spectacular, as well as the introduction of lively colours. For the mountain blouse, the motif is placed around the neckline, on the breast, and on the sleeves in the form of lines from the shoulders downwards. In the motifs, there are șabac stitches in white, arranged around the neck opening and along the seamlines. The ruffles (‘the cabbage’) end with crocheted fine lace.

In the Vlașca region, the techniques are similar to those in Teleorman, namely the chain stitch, the backstitch, the cross-stitch. Sequins are added, one under another, to form a string of scales to help the ‘old stitch’ last longer.

Chromatics

In Teleorman, *vieux rose*, blue, white, light yellow, sometimes black and golden metal thread are used, but this type of blouse has exceptional decorative value and has not been worn in almost a hundred years.

In the Ilfov area, the seamline chromaticity is typically bicolour in red with black or green with black, and the seamline is decorated with stylised floral patterns.

The chromaticity of the traditional blouses from Muscel is characterised by the use of a relatively limited number of shades. Against a white background, the basic colours of the Muscel blouses are red and black. Golden and silver thread, small sequins, and in later blouses small, round, polychrome or tubular orange beads are added to diversify the harmony. Among other colours, yellow, green and violet were later added in moderation to these colours without ruining the balance with the contrast.

In Prahova, the motifs are stitched with dyed cotton thread or thrown silk in red, black, or in the preferred colour of the client ordering the blouse. Old blouses also used sequins, but today, they are stitched in only if requested as they oxidize easily and could degrade the blouse.

3. MOLDOVA and BUKOVINA

Raw materials

In the areas of Moldova where traditional blouses were sewn in the nineteenth century and in the first decades of the twentieth century, the predominantly used cloth was a double weave cloth of either flax or both cotton and flax. The warp was either of flax or cotton, and the weft was of flax. The cloth width ranged from 40 to 45 centimeters in the eastern and southern parts of Moldova, and it ranged from 50 to 60 centimeters in Bukovina and the mountainous area of Neamț County and Bacău. In the mountainous area of Bukovina, the cloth exceptionally reached 80 centimeters in some cases. The homemade cloth was woven in a double weave using a horizontal loom. Depending on the width of the cloth, the thickness of the warp thread, and the thickness of the finished product, this warp could range from 12 to 26 *jirebi*, a unit of measurement for the warp that consists of the grouping of 30 consecutive yarns.

During the interwar period, homemade cloth was abandoned in favour of seersucker in Neamț, Vaslui, Vrancea, and of marquisette in the mountainous area of Bukovina, namely Dorna, Câmpulung Moldovenesc and Humor.

In the lowlands of Bukovina, homemade cloth is still used today, made either of cotton and flax or only of cotton in the Communist period. The mountainous area of Bukovina returned to the homemade cloth made of cotton in the 1980s.

The vast majority of women who sew blouses in the villages of Bukovina use homemade cloth woven by women specialised in using the horizontal loom, called a 'stand' in this area. The cotton used for the warp is called 'Sibiu' in this area because this cotton is manufactured in Tâlmăciu in Sibiu County, and it is commercially bought. Only a few women in the area sew blouses with beads using a rare industrial cotton cloth that allows the patterns to be stitched with ease. The motifs are dense, thus the stitches in the cloth are not visible.

For the period of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century, cotton, fine wool and natural silk bought from German or Jewish haberdashery suppliers were used to embroider the blouses throughout Moldova and Bukovina. Other raw materials bought from suppliers were also used for embroidery depending on the area. Metallic thread, wires, and sequins were used in Vrancea County. Metallic thread and beads were used in Bacău and Neamț counties. Metal thread, sequins, and beads brought from Vienna were used in Bukovina. During this period, women were rarely using threads processed in households. In the area of Bukovina, spun hemp threads were boiled in milk in order to embroider the smocking area. In Bukovina, Neamț, Bacău and Vrancea, the wool threads were spun in households and then chemically dyed.

The interwar period brought new materials. Mercerized cotton threads, viscose and vegetable silk replaced the fine wool and natural silk because they were much cheaper and easier to obtain. During the Communist period, metal threads and sequins were replaced by lamé threads and plastic or gelatine sequins. Beads brought from Czechia were increasingly used in embroidery.

Today, vegetable silk from Bicz is used for stitching motifs in most areas, as well as imported beads from hobby shops, cotton from Tâlmăciu and lamé threads.

The Toolkit

The working tools remained practically unchanged over the last 200 years. In the past, the needles were bought from shops and were made by Roma blacksmiths, and the needles were known as *gypsy needles*. The scissors made by the villages' blacksmiths were used to cut the materials for the blouse. Special attention was paid to the very fine needles for the beads, which were purchased at the same time with the beads, as well as needles for the metal ribbon that were also purchased from shops.

The Cut

The blouses that are crimped around the neck take several forms: the blouse with smocking, the blouse with *ciupag* (embroidered front), and the blouse with *lăcez* (embroidery on the sleeve and on the collar). The blouse with smocking, also known as 'traditional blouse with *altiță*', 'traditional blouse with *brezărău*' (the drawstring around the neckline), and more rarely 'traditional blouse with *țatură* (another term for the drawstring around the neckline)', is made from five pieces of cloth widths: three for the bottoms of the blouse and two for the sleeves. The neck opening of the blouse is formed by the simple crimping of these five cloth pieces and the *altiță*, held together with the help of a flax or hemp thread called *spacmă* or *brezărău* (pronounced in some areas as 'brizărău').

The sleeves of these traditional blouses were usually made from a single cloth sheet. It should be noted that, especially at the end of the nineteenth century, a special aspect of the cut was that the *altiță* part of the sleeve was sewn separately. Embroidering the *altiță* took longer, and by working on the *altiță* portion of the sleeve separately, the women avoided carrying around the whole sleeve with them. For some blouses, the part above the *altiță* was sewn separately, which probably contributed to naming the sleeve 'an empty piece'. Since the middle of the twentieth century, this feature has disappeared, and the *altiță* became part of the width of the sleeve. During the intermediate period of these two types of cuts, the widths of the sleeves and neck were reduced.

Bucovina is the only area to preserve the functional role of the *brezărău*. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Iași, Neamț, Bacău and Vrancea abandoned this special cut in favour of simply gathering the cloth portions of the blouse's body and the *altiță* in one collar.

With regard to special cuts, the 'traditional blouses with twisted sleeves' in the Vrancea area should be noted, and they are also considered to be traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder. The cut of the body and of the *altiță* is typical, but the innovation consists of a long cloth triangle wrapped around an axle. The longest side of the cloth triangle spanned between 1.80 to 2.80 meters. These pieces disappeared from use in the third decade of the last century. The same category includes the blouses with *chirușcă* (a triangle shaped *altiță*). They are found in Bacău and Vrancea.

The blouses are finished by attaching the bottoms, which are made of several cloth sections. In most cases, three cloth sections comprise the bottom of the blouse. In the old blouses, the sections are sewn together by 'little holes' made with the needle. In the newer blouses, the bottoms have a small row of motifs,

either made by *şabac* or stitching. Sometimes the bottoms consist of four cloth widths, and they appear slightly flared due to the gussets of the blouse.

Design structure, motifs and their artistic rendition

The motifs of the blouses with *altiţă* needed to be as visible as possible, especially on the sleeves and on the front, which are the largest areas of a blouse. The *altiţă* and the smocking had the most important motifs of a blouse. On the *altiţă*, there were usually five to six rows of *pui* (motifs), a dense pattern, or small flowers and figures placed side by side. The pattern on the *altiţă* is the same on all rivers which are separated by narrow stripes that include dots called *măscăţele* that were stitched on the inside with either yellow and orange or red and black thread. These stripes were occasionally sewn with golden or silver thread, especially for bridal blouses or blouses for godmothers. Another row of stripes circles the entire *altiţă*, and the only unembroidered part is the one towards the *brezărău*. The *altiţă* seam is usually made with cross stitches or half stitches. Among these, there is also a more complicated seam called the '*lanţujel*' (chain-stitch).

The smocking was stitched on the outside with several colours, typically using the half cross-stitch. The patterns of the smocking are generally geometrical motifs, almost as wide as the width of a palm (approximately 10 centimeters). This motif is generally referred to as 'the horns of the ram', 'the key', or 'the rose'. From the smocking downward, the pattern on the sleeve can be observed. It is typically *cotişet* (zigzagged), and made with motifs that cross the sleeve diagonally. These motifs are very different and made with the cross-stitch, the half stitch or needlepoint stitches in the same colours as the *altiţă*. Another old tradition is to divide the sleeve with a pillar and include vegetal motifs on both sides. This pillar usually has a geometric pattern stitched on the inside with the same colours as the *altiţă*. The motifs on the sides are made using the cross stitch or half stitch in darker colours, usually divided into three major parts on each side of the pillar.

Embroidery techniques

The stitches also change, moving from the cross stitch and the half stitch to a much finer and more difficult needlepoint stitch. The blouses at the beginning of the twentieth century became almost monochromatic, and the only splashes of colour were the smocking and the small dots in the *altiţă*. This is found geographically in Iaşi, Vaslui, Neamţ, Vrancea, and the plains of Bukovina.

When interpreting motifs, the embroidery technique plays an important role, but the fabric dictates a set of rules. The double weave fabric creates a perfect canvas for the counted thread embroidery. Of the stitches that can be counted on threads, the most common ones are the cross-stitch, the half stitch, and the 'old stitch' or needlepoint stitch. Another method involved sewing over the pleats of the embroidery by counting the fine embroidery lines instead of the threads. The chain needlepoint stitch is used to frame or shape motifs or groups of motifs. It is often the case that the entire *altiţă* is made only from coloured stripes - stripes made only using the chain-stitch - forming equal and tightly clustered sequences. The blouses were finished with the needle, without motifs, or with 'little keys' (narrow lace) made with the needle or crochet hook.

Chromatics

In the middle of the nineteenth century throughout the entire area, the preferred colours for embroidery were orange, bright red and burgundy. Between 1870 and 1890, the colour range was red, black, orange, blue, white, and yellow. A radical change occurred in Moldova and Bukovina in the early years of the twentieth century when the colour range underwent a transformation. Strong colours were abandoned, and the blouses had a sober cut. Black was increasingly used for both the *altiță* and the rivers.

4. SOUTHERN TRANSYLVANIA

In the south of Transylvania — the areas of Orăștie, Blaj, Mărginimea Sibiului, Târnave and the Jiu Valley — the Carpathian type of blouse is worn. The blouses' cloth sections were crimped around the neck on a band-like collar. From a decorative point of view, the blouse in these areas is called the 'Romanian blouse with shoulders and lines on the sleeve (with patterns over the shoulder)', as shown in **Figure 18**. This decorative type of blouse with *altiță* draws attention to a refined composition that respects the structure of the blouse in Moldova, Muntenia and Oltenia. The colours are dominated by burgundy with black accents.



Figure 18. A bridal blouse with *altiță* and *ciocănele* (small hammers) on the sleeves, 1832 in Rășinari, Sibiu, the collection of the National Museum Complex ASTRA, photo Silviu Popa

In Mărginimea Sibiului, there are three to five short lines descending from the diagonal line of embroidery on the shoulders. The lines have small vegetal motifs, stitched by counting threads and include leaves and stylised flowers, as seen in **Figure 19**. The colours of these blouses are sober, dominated by black and golden metal thread.



Figure 19. Romanian blouse with shoulders/*altiță*, *ciocănele* (small hammers) and *șare* (vertical lines) on the sleeves, embroidered with vegetal and floral motifs - bine with leaves and buds, Tilișca, Sibiu, the Collection of the Ethnography Museum Brașov, photo Arpad Udvardi

The old Romanian blouses from Săsăuș, Hârtibaciu Valley have functional and decorative *altiță* and/or shoulders stitched with dyed cotton thread and dyed wool thread (crewel wool) in a narrow, rectangular decorative register with polychromatic geometric patterns such as ‘mountains’, ‘three chicks into one’, and ‘the yarn swift’. These are followed by a smocking under the collar, embroidered on the edges of the ruffle or crease with the *luncețu* (chain) motif. An example of this type of blouse can be seen in **Figure 20**.



Figure 20. Bridal blouse with shoulders/with *altiță*, Săsăuș village, Hârtibaciu Valley area, Sibiu, the Collection of the National Museum Complex ASTRA, photo Silviu Popa

In Mărginimea Sibiului, as an element of continuity, the ‘traditional blouse with shoulders’ is still worn today, although the *altiță* is minimalistic as a result of the old version on the shoulder. From old photographs from the end of the nineteenth century, it can be observed that women in Mărginimea Sibiului were wearing this type of blouses with a subtle, very fine and narrow embroidery spanning 0.5 to 1.00 centimeters in width. This embroidery was meticulously stitched with a single black dyed cotton thread. Maria Ciucă, a craftswoman famous for sewing ‘traditional blouses with shoulders’, noted that this colour had become ubiquitous for the blouses from Mărginimea Sibiului after the First World War when women mourned their spouses, children and brothers who died in the war. The most common motifs stitched on the shoulder are geometrical and stylised flowers, which are also found alongside the *ciocănele*. The motifs include ‘hearts’, ‘motif from the village of Rod’, ‘little star’ stitched in needlepoint, the ‘small fly’ and the ‘bigfly’. The motifs of the ‘glass with flowers’, ‘little rose’, ‘marjoram’, and ‘clover’ are cross-stitched over two or three threads, as seen in **Figure 21**.



Figure 21. Traditional blouse with ‘shoulders’ and *ciocănele*, sewn by the craftswoman Maria Ciucă from Poiana Sibiului commune, Mărginimea Sibiului area, photo Arpad Udvardi, 2020

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the blouse of Săliște-Sibiu evolved from this blouse. The blouse initially kept the pattern lines over the shoulder but

intersected a row of ‘mounds’ (densely stitched black stripes) between the lines on the sleeve. Later on, the ‘mounds’ were replaced with *ciocănele* and stripes of tight stitches extending over the entire length of the sleeves from the neck to the *fodori* (cuffs), framed by small vegetal motifs. In turn, the *ciocănele* are replaced by black ribbons of velvet or silk. The expansion of this type of blouse in the southwest of Transylvania, including in the villages of Transylvanian immigrants in the Oltenia region, was due in part, to the manufacturing facilities. The workshop in Săliște used industrial raw materials such as *giolgi* (industrial cloth) and velvet ribbons. The expansion was also due to the The Reunion of Romanian Ladies and the ASTRA Association that promoted these blouses as an ‘*emblem of the Romanian identity*’, resulting in the prestige it still enjoys today and the perception of the blouse as the national costume in Transylvania, similar to the Muscel costume in Muntenia.

V. General principles for making the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder

1. *Raw materials and fabrics used to make traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder* have historically been the dynamic element that led to the development and regional diversity of the blouse with *altiță*.

The ancient flax and hemp double weave fabric, as seen in **Figure 22**, is present in all ethnographic areas of the country as the sole fabric for blouses. It was first replaced by handwoven cotton cloth and later on by commercial cloth. The circumstances of the handwoven cotton cloth are very diverse and can serve as trademarks for areas: cloth with coloured edges/orange strips is a trademark of Muscel and Argeș, checkered cloth/ with squares is particular to Teleorman, cloth with small creases/with grouped thicker threads is a signature of Romanaiți, crinkled cloth is particular to Muntenia and Oltenia, and ant cloth is a trademark of Prahova.



Figure 22. Piece of cloth for blouses, handwoven out of flax, the Collection of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant

The term *giolgi* has been used in southern Transylvania to mean ‘commercial cotton cloth’, and when it is very fine, it is called seersucker in both Muntenia and Oltenia and marquisette in Oltenia. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the floss silk fabric reached the villages, mainly in Muntenia, Oltenia, Dobruja and Southern Moldova. The fineness, transparency and the flowing and sheer effect of the floss silk fabric has led to its use in bridal blouses in the Siret Valley, Teleorman, and Romanaiți. An example of floss silk fabric can be seen in **Figure 23**.



Figure 23. Piece of cloth for blouses, handwoven out of silk floss fabric, with cotton stripes, the Collection of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant

The same substitution of raw materials also occurs in the case of the yarns dedicated for embroidering blouses with *altiță*. At first, wool was spun and dyed in households. Gradually, wool processed at home was replaced by fine wool threads processed in workshops and bought from country fairs. Later, the dyed cotton threads and mercerized cotton threads were preferred to the fine wool threads. In turn, they were replaced by the hand-dyed bright floss silk threads, and later by vegetable silk. Golden and silver metal threads on spools, porcelain beads, and golden and silver sequins have increased the decorative effect of the embroidery, adding an additional glow, elegance and refinement to the blouses. These materials can be seen in **Figures 24 and 25**.



Figure 24. Embroidery yarn for blouses with *altiță*: wool, fine wool, cotton, thrown silk, the collection of Silviu Horațiu Ilea, Bucharest, photo Silviu Horațiu Ilea, 2020



Figure 25. Metal threads used for the embroidery of blouses, the collection of Silviu Horațiu Ilea, Bucharest, photo Silviu Horațiu Ilea, 2020

2. The embroidery techniques of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder are very diverse across Romania, and the combination of stitches bears the imprint of patience, expertise and talent shown by thousands of women who have worked on and are still working on blouses. Without having a printed source or other

patterns, the embroidery is executed with undeniable accuracy, directly on the cloth by counting the fabric threads. The motif is designed mentally and rendered onto the cloth, millimetre by millimetre, in a similar manner as the sculptor chisels stone to reveal the work.

Of the embroidery techniques used to stitch the *altiță* and the other embroideries on the breast, sleeves and back, the following techniques should be mentioned: before the needle, straight stitch, whip stitch, zigzag stitch, needlepoint (thread by thread, depending on the quality of the cloth), on the inside out, chain, necklace/strump, the doll's mouth, festoon, logs/old point (looped and thick), the puffed stitch, the Romanian needlepoint/the fly/crosses, the wrapped up fly, halves of crosses, spider stitch (openwork by pulling threads and uniting four of them in the middle), *șabac* with the needle/openwork.

Subaltiță or smocking is a band with functional and artistic embroidery which was designed to crimp the sleeve cloth in order to reduce it to the same size as the *altiță*. The embroidery of the smocking is completely different from the rest of the embroidery in terms of technique, design and colour. Usually, threads in colours contrasting with the embroidery of the *altiță* are used, such as white, beige, yellow, and ochre. In later blouses, the smocking loses its functional role of joining the *altiță* with the sleeve, but it continues to be a decorative element that separates the motifs on the *altiță* from those on the sleeve (the rivers). In Prahova, women stitch the smocking with motifs found on the *altiță* with white thread or through an openwork stitch pattern, and the smocking is called the 'white of the blouse'. An example of the smocking can be seen in **Figure 26**.



Figure 26. The White/the smocking of a traditional blouse stitched by the craftswoman Anda Mănescu, Breaza, Prahova County, photo Anda Mănescu, 2020

In Suceava and Neamț, the embroidery of the smocking may be ochre or orange, but yellow is common in Gorj and Mehedinți.

The rivers or diagonal rows of embroidery run down the sleeves from under the smocking. Typically, there are three rivers on the sleeve. When a single river, also referred to as a ‘tree’ or a ‘pillar’, is stitched, it acts as an axis of symmetry from the middle of the *altiță*, and each side of the river features sprigs with buds and flowers. This can be seen in a blouse from Suceava in **Figure 27**.



Figure 27. Blouse sleeve decorated with the *pillar* motif (‘rivers’ in the axis of symmetry of the *altiță*), from Gura Humorului, Suceava, photo Silviu Horațiu Ilea, 2020

The smocking at the opening of the blouse and the *ciupag*, which gathers the cloth sheets around the neck, represents a new challenge for illustrating the functional and decorative stitches sewn on the edges. The most common are: smocking with 21 to 24 fangs, with the neck of the crayfish, with fangs and flowers, honeycomb, chicken skin, duck beak, and cow belly. **Figures 28** and **29** demonstrate this portion of the blouse and the stitches used.



Figure 28. Crimping the cloth around the neck of the blouse with motif fangs with flowers, craftswoman Olga Alexandrina Filip, Cezieni, Olt, photo Doina Ișfănoni, 2020



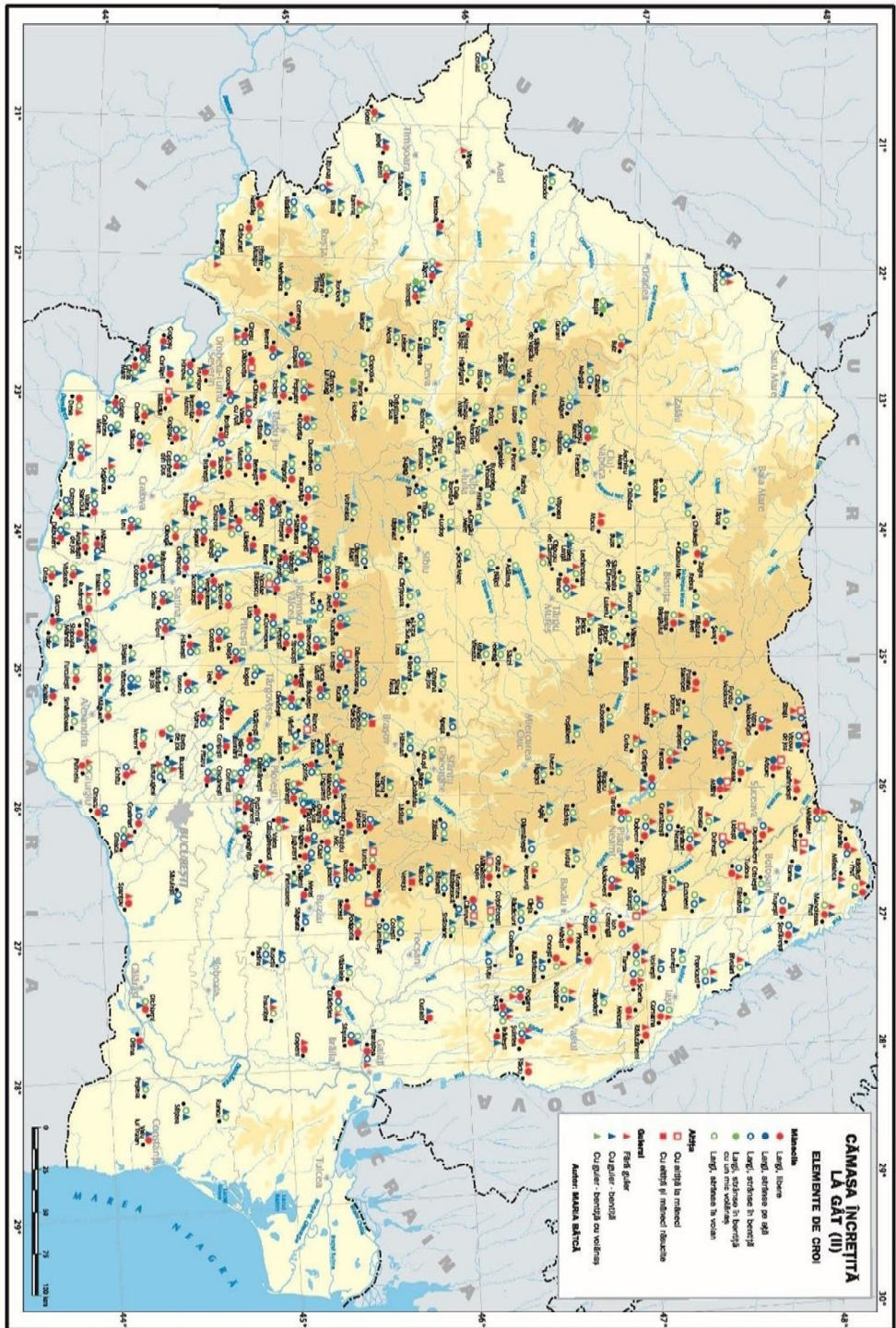
Figure 29. Ways of crimping the cloth around the neck of the blouses from Oltenia: smocking with the neck of the crayfish/triangle and duck beak/wave, craftswoman Olguța Alexandrina Filip, Cezieni, Olt, photo Doina Ișfănoni, 2020.

The artistic value of the blouse with *altiță* is complemented by the finishing techniques of the hemlines of the sleeves and the bottoms. Typically, the edges or the long strips of lace are finished with the needle.

For connecting the cloth sheets that form the *altiță*, there are other functional and decorative sewing techniques that look like small laces made with the needle. These techniques include single and double holes, little keys with a double shaft, with little fleas, with little hammers, and the spider.

3. The embroidery of the blouse with *altiță* embodies the women's work, granting the item artistic value and communicative power. In all areas inhabited by Romanians, the embroidery on the sleeves is the messenger of the assembly, organized in the same tripartite formula — the *altiță*, the smocking, and the rivers — with two or four other vertical patterns or 'rivers' on the front and back highlighting the cut of the item and framing the neck opening.

4. The ornamental repertoire of the motifs has evolved since the nineteenth and early twentieth century from a rigorous geometry with numerous references to the symbolic value of the motifs to a stylised series of vegetal and floral patterns during the interwar period, due to the access to manufactured fabrics, cloth, and embroidery yarns by farmers. Amongst the most beloved geometrical motifs used in all areas are: wheels, fangs or triangle, honeycomb/diamond, snail/spiral, square, little chain links or horizontal S, *dusurica* or zigzag, and water wave or wave. They are accompanied by astral motifs — stars with a different number of corners — and symbolic patterns such as the cross, the church, the tree of life, ram horns, the hora, the chine, the walnut, yarn winder, and loom shuttle. These motifs can be seen in **Figures 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, and 36.**



Map 'The crimped blouse' (Carpathian type), author Maria Bătcă, *Romanian Ethnographic Atlas, Vol. 4, Folk costumes and folk art*, coord. Ion Ghinoiu, The Romanian Academy publishing house, 2011, page 87



Figure 30. Board with various types of altiță, Mateiaș locality, Racoș commune, Brașov County, Târnava Mare area, 1934-1935, Collection of the Museum of Ethnography Brașov, photo Arpad Udvardi



Figure 31. Blouse, embroidered with the honeycomb motif and hemstitched smocking, by Olguța Alexandrina Filip, Cezieni, Olt, the Ethnographic Collection of the Olt County Museum, photo Doina Ișfarnoni, 2020



Figure 32. The Queen's Star motif stitched on the *altiță*, by Anda Mănescu, Breaza, Prahova County, photo Georgeta Roșu, 2020



Figure 33. Traditional blouses from Oltenia and Wallachia, the Collection of the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant



Figure 34. The chamomile motif on the *altiță*, by the craftswoman Ecaterina Oproiu, Breaza, Prahova County, photo Georgeta Roșu, 2020



Figure 35. Blouse embroidered with the flower core motif, Olt area, the Ethnographic Collection of the Olt County Museum, photo Doina Ișfaroni, 2020



Figure 36. Romanian blouse with *altiță* embroidered with the sprigs motif, by Oana Nicoleta Pârvan, Ponoare commune, Mehedinți County, photo Video Art Studio, 2020

5. The Circulation of Motifs

In Moldova and Bukovina, the motifs were sought after everywhere, copied, and hidden. It was common when the weft was washed and pressed in the watermill shaft, to stitch motifs from an old blouse on the edge of a cloth. The cloth was recognised using another identical motif, after being done in the weft straightener. This resulted in both the spread and replication of many motifs from different villages as many women took their cloth, needle and thread from home to copy motifs from the cloths in the weft straightener. The process is known as ‘stealing’ the design. In the same way, until the end of the interwar period, ambulant sellers of old clothes, spoons, dyes were traveling through villages and took old blouses in exchange for spoons and sold them in other villages only for their motifs, unknown in those communities. It is also reported that the stolen motifs, particularly in church, in the *hora*, at weddings, were often sewn on common blouses to discredit the motif. This was an offense like no other to spite a competitor. In such cases, the owner of this festive blouse could no longer wear it, and she exchanged the blouse for skirts or spoons with pedlars instead.

A similar phenomenon occurred in Oltenia, which also explains the differences from one family to the other. According to Constantina Pistol, a craftswoman from Cezieni, Olt, the Easter blouses were made hiding, during the night by lamplight and with covered windows, so that the neighbours could not see the motifs on the blouse. ‘Even two blouses were sewn: one during the day that could be seen by everyone, and the other during the night in secret.’

VI. Socio-cultural elements associated with blouses with *altiță*

Alongside the technological performance, and artistic and decorative excellence, the blouse with *altiță* includes in its functional artistic structure messages based on ancient precepts of magic and religious beliefs regarding the apotropaic and protective value of the motifs and their ability to protect humans from evil forces. In traditional spirituality, the diamond, spiral, circle, rosette, stars, cross, ram horns, wolf fangs, hora, and tree of life are not just decorative patterns. In the belief of the peasants, they are intended to protect the bearer by providing physical and mental wholeness, prosperity and fecundity.

The primordial symbols of humanity, expressed through the rigour of geometrical forms such as the line, circle, diamond, square, triangle, spiral, and cross, represent the sun and the stars, the land and the water, the stages of human existence, and the spiritual universe of a people in constant dialogue with the natural environment and divinity. From the symbolism of the motifs on traditional costumes, we can learn about people's occupations, about birds and animals, flowers and plants, about the people's dances, the choices and beliefs of each generation. Through the composition and the motifs of the blouses and the other items of the women's costume, such as the *catrințe*, *fote* (traditional skirts), *marame* (headscarves), *pieptare* (embroidered vests), shearling coats, *șube* (long men's fur coats with large collars), and *sumane* (traditional knee-length coat), the traditional costume becomes a fascinating visual materialisation of the Romanian cosmogony and mythology.

The colours of the motifs enhance the communicative power of the embroidery, most often linked to the symbolic value given to different colours and tones in the traditional mentality. From this point of view, the bride always wore a blouse embroidered with red for protection from any evil attacks of unseen forces or to avoid the gaze of evil and bewitched eyes of other girls. Black or ultramarine blue were considered to be the colours of old age and acted as visual signs of the pain caused by death. The blouse with black embroidery is worn during funerals and also throughout the mourning period, regardless of age. In Prahova, the burial blouse sewn by the oldest women was embroidered with a specific pattern for this passing. The 'Great Passage' was embroidered on blouses prepared for old women for their 'Great Passing'. In most cases, the embroidery was stitched with red and black, which are colours symbolising life and death. If some younger women cherished the pattern, they could stitch it on blouse but in different colours, such as dark and light blue. This pattern was never stitched on a girl's blouse. One version of this pattern is the 'small passage', which was found on the blouses of girls and young wives. The pattern symbolised the transition from one status to another: from a girl to a married woman. The stitch is carried out with red and black or red and maroon thread. According to Prof. Vasile Focșeneanu of Breaza, these motifs are connected with the real world through the symbol of the pattern's seam line, called the *urzeala* or *dusura*, as a bridge that helps to move from one property or household to another. In Gorj, a village in Tismana, women used to leave something unfinished on the blouse as an act of meekness towards God because 'only the Lord's work is perfect'.

It was custom that at every existential threshold — childhood, adolescence, marriage, death — new pieces of garment, in particular blouses, were sewn to be worn and displayed as a sign of age, gender, civil status, the prestige of kin, and community affiliation. This explains the large number of folk costumes in every Romanian family. In addition to these customs, there is a belief that every Easter, each person must wear a new blouse or blouse because a spirit born again with the Resurrection of Christ also deserves new clothes for the body.

Arranged in formal structures and artistic codes of high originality, knowledge and beliefs, the Romanian traditional costume gained a huge social prestige and an undeniably fascinating force. The Romanian blouse holds great spiritual wealth that is born out of people's particular interest to present themselves in front of their peers and to the world with dignity and elegance. This mentality is not related to vanity but instead stems from the awareness of one's own value.

Henri Matisse, one of the most significant painters of the 20th century, was charmed by the beauty of the Romanian embroidery and was inspired by his Romanian friends Elena Văcărescu, Ana de Noilles, Martha Bibescu, Elvira Popescu, and the painter Theodor Pallady, who gifted him a few Romanian blouses. In April 1940, Matisse created a series of paintings inspired by the legendary traditional blouse with *altiță* with the theme *La blouse roumaine*. One of these paintings can be viewed in **Figure 37**.



Figure 37 Henri Matisse (1869-1954), *La blouse roumaine*, 1940

VII. The Communicative Function of the Traditional Blouse With Embroidery on the Shoulder

In addition to its artistic excellence, the *altiță*, always on the shoulders as the most visible area of the blouse, has important communicative functions. Analysing the functional and artistic structure, we discover valuable information about:

- The skill and talent of the woman, namely the technical excellence of the needlepoints used (ranging from seven-eight types to ten-twelve) is a criterion for standing out in the community. In Olt, it is said that ‘at the Sunday horas, future mothers-in-law chose their daughters-in-law according to the technical and artistic features of the *altiță*. In Prahova, it is said that ‘the *altiță* is the pride of women’, and in Suceava, it is said that ‘the one who knows how to sew the *altiță* will be able to dress the family and the house.’
- The financial situation and social standing of the wearer. The quality of the fabrics used to make the blouse — floss silk fabric, giolgi (industrial cloth) and marquisette — and the embroidery yarns — wool, cotton or floss silk yarns, handspun or purchased — highlights the economic potential and family prestige. A craftswoman in Olt said that ‘not everybody had gold and silver thread, metal ribbon and sequins, they were expensive’, and another in Vâlcea said that ‘the one who had a blouses with metal thread and beads came from a good family’ (Vâlcea). The number of rows of *ciocănele* in the pattern on the sleeves of the blouses from Mărginimea Sibiului showed the woman’s financial situation. A craftswoman from Poiana Sibiului explained that the pattern runs ‘from one “small hammer” on the sleeves of the less wealthy or elderly women, to up to three, four “hammers” and even five for the rich ones’.
- Civil status and age. The size and colours of the *altiță* are different for girls, marriage able young women, young wives, and old women, and the colours follow the code of life’s development. The *altiță* for girls is only framed by lively and light colours, while marriageable young women stitch rich embroideries with five to seven rows using ‘fiery red’, ‘cherry red’, and ‘red as the blood of a strapping young man.’ Young wives wear blouses in a dominant colour, usually red, with polychromatic accents, and elderly women prefer the monochromy of somber colours like ultramarine blue or black.
- Ceremonial status. The bridal blouse, blouse for the mother-in-law, mourning blouse, and the blouse against the evil eye each follow the cut and the type of composition specific to geographic areas, but blouses are distinguished by the categories of patterns used. In Olt, ‘at weddings, the brides have blouses with trees for goodluck or spirals to have a long life.’ In Săsăuș-Sibiu in Rupea-Brașov, ‘the *altiță* of the brides is stitched with the pattern *sute întregi* (‘ram horns pattern’ used to represent fertility) as the symbol of marriage.’ In Apuseni, marriage is represented ‘with walnuts, the symbol of fertility.’ In Prahova, ‘when young women danced at the hora for the first time, they wore blouses against the evil eye sewn by their mothers or grandmothers that sang songs against the evil eye while

sewing.’ In Săsăuș, Sibiu County, there are patterns that signify who are the girls not eligible for marriage yet, the upside down *sutele* pattern (upside down ram horns).

Characterised by a large morphological unity between the fabrics, the cut, and the ornamental sections, the blouse with *altiță* has a wide artistic and decorative variety from one ethnographic area to another and sometimes even within the same territorial unit. This phenomenon illustrates one of the basic principles of folk culture: unity in diversity. The decorative options of the blouses are born from an imperative need to adapt this basic piece of the traditional costume, to environmental and weather conditions, as well as the customary and moral rigours required by age and civil status. The psychological need of each generation to impose its own artistic preferences and to respond to the echo of fashion that reached the countryside was the main reasons for the evolution of the blouse with *altiță*. The desire to express, through garments, the personality and sensitivity of the historical period in which they lived in has generated a very close dialectic between ‘what you must’ and ‘what you want’ to wear in the Romanian villages. The relationship between canon and freedom has been particularly dynamic in most areas, helping to boost creativity and develop this important element of Romanian cultural heritage. For decades and even centuries, the capability and virtuosity of the thousands of women in the villages of Romania polished, generation after generation, the same jewel — the traditional blouse — to perfect the cut, the embroidery techniques and the decorative repertoire. Beyond its functionality and the respect for the tradition of the region, the emergence of specific area features has benefited from the desire of women to be unique and beautiful.

The art of the Romanian blouse is based on handcrafting all operations and ingeniously blending the main means of expression: fabrics, sewing/embroidery types of decorative composition, motifs and stylisation. Following the basic principles of art — rhythm, symmetry, repetition, and colour balance — the traditional blouse with *altiță* and, consequently, the whole women’s traditional costume has acquired enormous social prestige. It is an attire with an emblematic and fascinating status, a real visual witness of traditional spirituality.

VIII. Age groups

Girls learn from the young age of five or six years old to sew. Close to adolescence, they manage to acquire all of the skills to make a blouse, starting with cutting the cloth and ending with rich and complex embroidery.

Early skill sets are nurtured throughout their lives, so it can be said that people between the ages of seven and eighty hold this heritage value. The act of passing on the heritage of blouse-making can be seen in **Figures 38** and **39**.

1. Practitioners

Please find below the list of skilled professionals in Romanian localities:

Alba County: Pănade commune: Cucui Maria; Livezile commune: Anca Maria
Argeș County: Ștefan cel Mare commune: Zgâria Florența, Stan Ioana, Manea Nicoleta, Stan G. Ioana

Buzău County: Mânzălești commune: Leu Rica, Copăcel Victoria

Dolj County: Craiova municipality: Crețu Zorița; Bârca commune: Pariș Tudora

Giurgiu County: Gostinu commune: Țicu Maria; Oinacu commune: Țâru Elena

Gorj County: Stroești commune: Pleșa Bianca Elena; Tismana commune: Tantan Marioara, Pleșa Cristina, Motorga Florentina, Tantan Liana, Marin Mimi, Geagu Oana, Tantan Crina, Motorga Violeta, Bîrsan Aneta, Lala Lavinia, Zală Georgiana, Petcu Mirabela, Lala Corina, Geagu Elena (Nuța), Bobîrci Dochia

Iași County: the city of Iași: Săcăleanu Silvia; Oboroceni village, Heleşteni commune: Alexa Floriana, Coțobea Eugenia; Ruginoasa commune: Țibulcă Elena; Scânteia commune: Andrei Gabriela; Sticlăria village, Scobinți commune: Amoldovencei Mihaela

Mehedinți County: Cracu Muntelui village, Ponoarele commune: Dumitrescu Dorina, Cazacu Mihaela, Răduică Cristina, Pîrvan Oana Nicoleta, Pîrvan Oana Ștefania, Martinescu Ioana, Lăpădătescu Dumitrescu Mirela, Barbu Elvira; Băluța village, Ponoarele commune: Răduică Camelia; Bârâiacu village, Ponoarele commune: Toargă Domnica; Selișteea village, Isverna commune: Triță Răescu Silvia Berta; Turtaba village, Isverna commune: Predescu Marina Loredana; Busești village, Isverna commune: Delurîntu Bălănescu Viorica

Olt County: Cezieni commune: Filip Olguța Alexandrina, Avram Stela, Țicu Ioana, Pârgulescu Constantina, Țene Ana, Preda Mariana, Pistol Constantina, Moga Mariana, Dulgheru Niculina, Dulgheru Elena, Țonea Mioara, Dicu Maria, Popa Ioana, Rotaru Elena, Florică Carolina, Lazăr Constanța, Țicu Ioana, Andronache Mirela

Prahova County: the city of Breaza: Goran Iulia, Voicu Maria, Motoroiu Maria, Oproiu Ecaterina, Oproiu Mihaela, Oproiu Steliana, Oproiu Violeta, Cofaru Elena, Mănescu Anda, Voinea Mareș Rodica, Fulga Aurelia, Cristea Elena, Roșca Cristina Claudia

Sibiu County: the city of Avrig: Ispas Rodica; Arpașu de Sus village: Dobrilă Aurelia, Scutaru Antonia Eliza; Poiana Sibiului commune: Ciucă Maria

Suceava County: Bosanci commune: Curic Elena, Mirăuți Elena, Alexa Diana Ionela; Botoșana commune: Slevoacă Eva; Bucșoia commune: Sahlean Virginia, Venin Areta, Ciofu Elena; Câmpulung Moldovenesc municipality: Lehaci Maria, Piticar Cocuța Elisabeta, Dogaru Viorica; Colacu commune, Fundu Moldovei commune: Chiticaru Rodica; Doroteia village, the city of Frasin: Nuțescu Valița, Gemănar Maria; Humoreni village, Comănești commune: Constantinescu Geta; Iaslovăț commune: Coajă Marinela, Cociorvan Florița, Solovăstru Ileana, Solovăstru Mihaela, Pahomi Rodica; the city of Milișăuți: Levițchi Rahira (known as Hargheau's), Levițchi Mihaela (known as Hargheau's), Voiașciuc Nelia (known as Nicuța's), Slusar Angela (known as Biserica's), Pascariu Domnica (known as Bordianci's), Poleac Dana (known as Feadiuc's), Poleac Vituria (also Mihai), Sauciu Mariana (known as Iurco's), Sauciu Domnica (known as Goian's), Ruban Veronica (also Margaleha), Levițchi Domnica (known as Vighet's), Daniliuc Domnica (also Niția), Țical Viorica (known as Solcan's), Daniliuc Mariana, Prisăcaru Raluca Mihaela (known as Ilarie's), Bodnariuc Daria (also Darția), Slusar Adela (known as Leaga's); Părhăuți village, Todirești commune: Ciorba Alina Maria; Pojorâta commune: Lucău Doina, Lucău Marcela; Sadova commune: Erhan Sânzâiana, Lateș Maria; Straja commune: Fedorovici Viorica, Ursaciuc Maria (also

Cârligu), Pintescu Maria, Pătrăceanu Maria (also Andriuța), Bodnar Doina (also Bilica), Pintescu Viorica (also Bârlan), Bodnar Silvia (also Ițcu), Popescu Ana (known as Gavril's), Cotos Maricica (also Costanel), Cotos Maricica (also Zâna, the Fairy); Vama commune: Iosep Valeria; Vicovu commune: Pîrghie Ana Maria; Remezău hamlet, Vicovu de Jos commune: Roșca Viorica; Bivolărie locality, the city of Vicovu de Sus: Mandici Eudochia; the south-east district of Vicovu, the city of Vicovu de Sus: Cornea Maria, Bujdei Ecaterina; Vicovu de Sus (Laura district), the city of Vicovu de Sus: Schipor Elena, Ilaș Ileana; Vicovu de Sus (Plai district), the city of Vicovu de Sus: Pitic Ileana, Parasca Maria

Vaslui County: Laza commune: Ailioaei Adriana; Pogonești commune: Timofte Elena; Solești commune: Bujor Victoria; Zăpodeni commune: Baron Maria, Baron Lina, Deicu Anișoara

Vâlcea County: Copăceni commune: Enea Adriana; Costești commune: Crăcana Rodica, Niculescu Cristina; Bărbătești commune: Vasilescu Maria; Râmnicu Vâlcea municipality: Cazacu Maria.



Figure 38. Passing on the craftsmanship in the community: the girls Aida Maria Țicu (nine years old) and Erica Jerdoiu (11 years old) learn the embroidery needlepoints for the traditional blouse with *altiță* under the guidance of the craftswoman Constantina Pistol. Cezieni, Olt County County, photo Doina Ișfănoni, 2020

In Cezieni, in Olt County, sewing traditional blouses with *altiță* continues to be a pleasurable pastime beloved by women. Almost every family has someone who knows how to sew a traditional blouse with *altiță* using an ancestral pattern passed on from generation to generation that respects the fabric, the cut, the composition and motifs.

In the commune of Ponoarele, the blouses are sewn in families and the skills are transferred from grandmother, mother to daughter, as they have been in the past. Alongside this approach, skilled women in this craft came together since 1990 in for-profit associations: e.g. *Acul și Ața* (The Needle and the Thread).



Figure 39. Passing on the craftsmanship in the village community: from the grandmother Maria Dumitrescu to Camelia Răduică, Ponoarele commune, Mehedinți County, photo Video Art Studio, 2020

In Breaza, Prahova County, the craft is alive and very active. The blouses are sewn in accordance with the archetype and traditional motifs specific to the area, as shown in **Figures 40** and **41**.



Figure 40. The craftswoman Iulia Goran, Breaza, Prahova County, photo Georgeta Roșu, 2020



Figure 41. The craftswoman Ecaterina Oproiu, Breaza, Prahova County, photo Georgeta Roșu, 2020

The traditional blouse sewn here is appreciated for the beauty and elegance of the embroidery and the fineness of the cloth. According to craftswoman Anda Mănescu, women make blouses with *altiță* ‘to preserve their identity’ and boost family income and well-being. Anda Mănescu and her work can be seen in **Figures 42** and **43**.

Craftswomen work all year round, especially during the tourist season, selling blouses with *altiță* both inside the country and to tourists from abroad. The beauty of the traditional blouse with *altiță* from Breaza inspired the world’s great fashion designers. Celebrities like Sophia Loren, Brigitte Bardot, Adele and Kate Moss wore them on various occasions.



Figure 42. The craftswoman Anda Mănescu, Breaza, Prahova County, photo Video Art Studio, 2020



Figure 42. The craftswoman Anda Mănescu, Breaza, Prahova County, photo Video Art Studio, 2020

In Gorj County and the border areas with Mehedinți and Vâlcea, a number of craftswomen sew the blouse with *altiță*, both individually and under the coordination of family associations, in order to boost access to orders and working materials. Craftswomen from Gorj County can be seen in **Figures 44** and **45**.



Figure 44. The Association *La Tismana într-o grădină* (‘In a garden in Tismana’), Gorj County, photo Video Art Studio, 2020



Figure 45. The craftswoman Mărioara Tantan, Tismană, Gorj County, photo Roxana Deca, 2020

In Cezieni in Olt County, regardless of age, women put a lot of soul in the making of every blouse. As craftswoman Olguța Alexandrina Filip explained, ‘if you don’t respect what you have inherited, either nothing comes out of it or the blouse is something that you cannot be proud of. It is also going to put you to shame!’ Olguța Alexandrina Filip and her fellow craftswomen can be seen in **Figures 46** and **47**.

Hand-stitched contemporary blouses with *altiță* continue to be worn to church on Sundays, during religious holidays throughout the year, for important events in one’s life like births, weddings, or funerals, and, in particular, on the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse.



Figure 46. Craftswomen Olguța Alexandrina Filip and Mariana Preda, Cezieni, Olt County, photo Doina Ișfănoni, 2020



Figure 47. Craftswoman Constantina Pistol, Cezieni, Olt County,
photo Doina Işfănoni, 2020

The mountain area of Moldova has had an ancient tradition to both wear blouses with *altiță* for holidays and also to make these items.

Today, the area where traditional blouses are sewn is much narrower than at the beginning of the last century. Bukovina stands out for continuing the craftsmanship of making these items. In almost every community, there are women who sew these festive blouses for their family and also take orders, mainly for brides and mothers-in-law. Today, at many weddings, the bride, the groom, the godparents, the parents-in-law, and the maids of honor wear the traditional costume at the marriage ceremony as a sign of their social status.- **Figure 48** and **49**.

Most items are sewn from hand-woven cotton cloth. In the mountain area, the embroidery is made with cotton thread or vegetable silk in dark colours, and geometrical motifs are preferred. In the lowlands, multicoloured glass beads are used, and the vegetal patterns are cherished.



Figure 48. Craftswoman Veronica Hojbota, Gura Humorului, Suceava County, photo Silviu Horațiu Ilea, 2020



Figure 49. Craftswomen Elena and Lina Jucan, Gura Humorului, Suceava County, photo Silviu Horațiu Ilea, 2020

In Transylvania, in Mărginimea Sibiului and the foothills of the Apuseni Mountains, there are women who sew blouses with *altiță*, locally called *ie cu umăraș* (blouse with shoulders), and they are traditions bearers in terms of preserving the patterns from this area, passing them on and promoting them. **Figures 50** and **51** show some of the craftswomen from the area.



Figure 50 The craftswoman Anca Maria, dressed in a *ie cu umăraș* (blouse with shoulders), sewn by herself; Livezi, Alba County, photo Arpad Udvardi, 2020



Figure 51 Maria Ciucă, a craftswoman who sews *ie cu umăraș* and ‘small hammers’, Poiana Sibiului, Sibiu County, photo Arpad Udvardi, 2020

In the post-war period, crafts cooperatives operated in Romania, in which women with skills in the manufacturing of blouses with *altiță* were involved while working from home. These workers formed a network coordinated by the National Union of the Crafts Cooperatives or UCCECOM. After 1990, some of these people continued to practise the craft individually while others came together in family and crafts associations specialised in making the blouses.

IX. Gender: predominantly female craftsmanship (sewing, embroidering, finishing), occasionally performed by men

X. Socio-professional categories: housewives, intellectuals, farmers, weavers, dressmakers.

XI. Nationality: Romanian

XII. Current status of the element, sustainability and risks

The main item of the traditional Romanian costume, the blouse with *altiță* has now become an emblematic object with an important emotional and heritage value as a brand for Romanian cultural identity. The blouse with *altiță* has been handed down from generation to generation in families, in sewing bees, and by observing it or ‘stealing’ it and sewing it in secret. The blouse continues to be worn in the countryside on Sunday church, as well as at family, ceremonial, and festive events, such as weddings, christenings, funerals, religious festivals, and cultural events. *Altiță* gradually lost its basic role, becoming a decorative surface integrated in the structure of the sleeve of the blouse. As result of the changes dictated by fashion, the blouses are currently sewn with the top part separated from the bottom. The chemise is out of use, remaining a traditional garment worn on various festive occasions.

In cities, the blouse with *altiță* has been adopted and worn at various social, cultural, festive, religious, regional and national events by girls, adolescents, mature women, and elderly women from different social, professional and cultural backgrounds in order to reveal their affiliation to a particular community and ethnographic area, as well as to show their ethnic identity and national pride.

Considering these multiple factors, the blouse with *altiță* continues to be sewn today by female craftspeople¹, known as craftswomen, needlewomen, creators, and workwomen, who sew both for themselves and for family members or when requested by other women of different ages from inside the country, from Romanian communities abroad, or for tourists. For the Romanian immigrants, the blouse with *altiță* turned into a messenger for their own identity. Recently, the blouse has been integrated in sport, casual or elegant attires, it is ordered or bought in small shops and specialized workshops, and it can be purchased by both Romanians and people from abroad. There are several categories of individuals and groups that practice this artistic craftsmanship.

¹ Men who sew blouses are exceptions when compared to the number of women who practice this artistic craft in the past and present. From available data, there are few craftsmen making traditional blouses with *altiță* and/or other items of the folk costume because men do not generally practice this craft due to community stigma. Men wish ‘not to be ridiculed’ and do not want to ‘embarrass themselves’ and be labeled by the community as acting outside their gender role. The cases of craftsmen as practitioners who assume this status are recent. A special example is Constantin Nițu from Cornățelu village in Poboru commune, Olt County. He had sewn blouses, towels, pillow cushions, belts and *maramă* made out of floss silk, all woven in the loom or embroidered with a needle. The craftsman mastered the art of the weaving loom, and he learned the craft from his grandmother and mother. However, he no longer sews. As a result of trends in combating gender discrimination, changes in men’s role in society, and openness to more diverse areas of culture, especially in urban areas, there may be an increase in the number of men interested in learning or (re)discovering this artistic craft in the future.

1. People from the ethnographic regions of Romania with a tradition in sewing this type of blouse and who have **acquired the craftsmanship from their family, mothers and grandmothers** practice blouse making. They pass on their skills to women in their own family, as well as the interested women from their group and close community (please see chapters *Practitioners*, which contains the list of the bearers of blouse-making skills in Romania, and *Localities where the blouses are sewn and worn in the twenty-first century*). These people and groups sew blouses that:

- respect local/areal particularity, sewing different types of blouses with *altiță*: bridal, festive, for girls or young women, respecting the chromatic rigour and traditional motifs, using traditional and modern tools and raw materials;
 - customised, depending on the requirements, thus having greater or lesser freedom of innovation compared to the traditional motifs (chromaticity, patterns, richness of ornamentation). The blouse is made entirely by one person or who sometimes receives help from family members (assembly of parts, embroidery, etc.).
- People from villages who work in **family associations** (groups of craftspeople) who have acquired craftsmanship from their family or from the community. The blouse is made by one person or in conjunction with other family members.
- People from villages who occasionally take part in **locally organised sewing bees** and who have acquired craftsmanship from their family or community. The blouse is made entirely or in conjunction with the members of the sewing bee group.

The categories of people described above are familiar with and comply with the rigour of the blouse's style specific to their locality or ethnographic area, including the blouses that are custom-made for people in Romania and abroad.

2. In addition, there are categories of:

- **People from rural, small urban and urban areas** who have established: **associations, bees, non-formal learning schools, and small workshops** in the form of NGOs, small businesses and other forms of legal organisation that are aimed at producing traditional costumes. They have acquired craftsmanship both from their family and from other people in their community or close localities. These people generally assign their roles, which include weaving, assembling the blouses, and the embroidery if the motif is not woven on the loom². The people working in these workshops know the particularities of the area and occasionally of other

² Some of these activities, such as opening small workshops for weaving, sewing, embroidery, and making traditional costumes, were developed using external funding or financial support for small entrepreneurs, local initiatives and sustainable development. Some workshops also intended to produce natural raw materials by investing in sericulture, either using only floss silk as raw material or using floss silk in combination with fabrics purchased from Romanian factories or imported.

ethnographic regions. They sew blouses for themselves and especially for other people in the country and abroad, and they are directly motivated to stitch these costumes in order to secure their income. Such associations, bees, schools, and small workshops organised in a legal form are subject to taxes and levies.

- **Individuals and groups from rural and urban areas sewing under a specialist's guidance.** These individuals are girls, teenage girls, young and mature women who take part in non-formal education programmes organised in ethnographic museums across the country and acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to produce the traditional blouse with *altiță*. These people already have some knowledge and skills from their family, namely their mother and grandmother, or they discover this craftsmanship for their personal cultural interest, identity and aesthetics and learn to work alongside people in their community and museum specialists. They sew for themselves and close relatives, and if they manage to gain the expertise to a certain degree, they can also take orders.

In addition to the categories of persons and groups listed above, there are people and civil society groups who are interested in the rediscovery of this item of the traditional costume. There are now multiple categories of people and groups, generally comprised of the cultural elites³ and based mostly in urban areas, that make Romanian blouses out of passion, as a hobby or for the purpose of strengthening the identity value and the meaning and symbolism of traditional blouses. These types of practitioners are making traditional blouses locally and regionally, with or without a legal form of organization, and turning this craft into an income without distorting the element for commercial reasons. The craftspeople have been categorised as follows:

- **Individuals personally interested in this item, without being part of associations, non-governmental organisations** (with a legal form of organisation);
- **Individuals who are part of revitalisation groups (also known as 'urban bees'⁴) and NGOs focused on the Romanian blouse.** This includes members of 'urban bees' who meet both in person and online via social media (e.g. Facebook, blogs on the Romanian blouse, blogs of NGOs). They meet regularly, acquire skills and knowledge, and they regularly conduct research under the guidance of museum specialists. They share knowledge and skills with each other through face-to-face meetings

³The mentioned persons have studied in the field of arts, architecture, or other fields related to the area of cultural heritage. They may even have studied in other fields not directly related to the topic at hand.

⁴ The phrase 'urban bee' is proposed in this context to refer to groups of people from urban areas who meet physically and online in connection with this element. In this document, they are also called revitalization communities. The mentioned terms are not recognized and validated as such by specialists. This is the title under which these urban communities present themselves, and some of them alternate between 'bee' and 'hive'. The use of the phrase 'urban bee' in the present document refers to the term 'sewing bee' found in literature and adopted by practitioners, especially in the past. However, there is not a total semantic equivalence between the term and phrase we refer to.

and learn craftsmanship. They are interested in sewing blouses from all ethnographic areas using documentary sources, including albums, photographs, and collectors' pieces. Some groups have a female leader or influencers in certain segments of the social, cultural, political and general online public. People in this category share information, knowledge and skills with each other and in large communities by being active online.

The categories of persons and groups described above **aim to:**

- rediscover the traditional blouse with *altiță*⁵ by researching this item;
- acquire knowledge and skills related to it;
- commit to raising awareness of the value of the blouses as an identity element, a standard of traditional culture, and a factor for social cohesion and sustainable development among the concerned individuals and groups;
- advance the dissemination of information on the item;
- commit to the promotion of the item in domestic and foreign interest groups and among the general public;
- support the revitalisation of the item where it is inactive.

The categories of persons and groups considered to be practitioners by professional craftspeople play a fundamental role in safeguarding the blouses with *altiță* and Romanian heritage. These practitioners maintain, preserve, recreate, innovate and disseminate the Romanian blouse with means, instrumentation, materials, techniques that are unaltered to the greatest extent possible. These individuals and groups are maintaining, owning, wearing, creating and passing on heritage. In their case, the transmission and inheritance of the craftsmanship still happens mainly within the family and a small group of people in the community. **The traditional blouse with *altiță*, with all its local and regional names and variations, serves as an identity trademark, ensures group and social cohesion, and gives its wearers a sense of pride and belonging to an area and culture specific to their region.** Current practitioners, together with the blouse and the craftsmanship behind its creation, are drivers of sustainable development, increased quality of life and social integration.

The categories of individuals and groups with functions and roles complementary to those held by practitioners, organised in various forms of legal expression, predominantly have **a societal role** in raising awareness of the value held by the element among craftspeople and various stakeholders. These individuals and groups play an important role in disseminating information about the element to the general public and among audiences with various interests. They promote, showcase and, where appropriate, mediate between professionals and amateurs, sometimes collaborating with them or becoming self-taught craftspeople. They also develop projects and small businesses for the promotion, revitalization and resemantization of the element.

⁵The traditional blouse with *altiță* (*cămașă cu altiță*) is also known under the Romanian generic term 'ie', either as a result of the term becoming more popular or from the desire to address a larger non-specialized general public. Specialists recommend distinguishing the two terms.

XIII. Risks related to the sustainability of the element and the craftspeople include:

- excessive dissemination of information regarding the element, the craftspeople and other interested groups, which may give rise to difficulties in tracking the phenomenon and combating its adverse effects;
- invasion of the consumer market with replicas and imitations of Romanian traditional blouses, manufactured as serial products with different technical means and materials than the original ones, including replicas coming from the Far East.
- the dominance of replicas, which could trigger the element's withdrawal from the representative List;
- excessive media attention;
- turning the element into a country brand in the absence of policies, strategies, mechanisms and resources to address adverse consequences;
- affecting craftspeople from the impact of excessive attention from broader interested groups;
- inadequate promotion of the element;
- national programmes predominantly featuring the element only as a festive component instead of a living intangible heritage;
- losing the possibility of identifying and passing on appropriate best practices of the element;
- creating unfair competition between craftspeople and other groups that bring the item back into circulation or resemantize it;
- the creation of certain businesses or business development frameworks that may shift the focus towards marketing and commercial interests and/or mix and over-integrate current fashion trends with traditional patterns to the detriment of the preservation of the element;
- involvement of craftspeople in actions outside their scope;
- creating inaccurate and unrepresentative representations of the item.

XIV. General framework for the protection, conservation and safeguarding of the element

In Romania, intangible cultural heritage benefits from regularly updated protection, conservation and safeguard measures. The general protection framework is provided by Romanian legislation in the field of intangible cultural heritage and related areas. Elements of the framework include:

- Law No. 410/2005 adopting the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- Law No. 26/2008 on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage;
- OMCPN (Ministerial Order) No. 2436/8.07.2008 approving the *National Programme for Safeguarding, Protecting and Promoting Intangible Cultural Heritage*. This provides the legal framework for a database of intangible cultural heritage in Romania. Thus, *the List of intangible cultural heritage in Romania* includes in the chapter *Artistic crafts* (page 77), the sub-chapter

Folk Costumes and Jewels (page 78), and *The Traditional Blouse*⁶ (page 101-103);

- OMCIN (Ministerial Order) No. 2634/24.06.2019 on the Functioning and Organisation Rules of the National Commission for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- OMC (Ministerial Order) No. 2609/10.02.2020 on awarding the title of 'Living Human Treasures';
- Law 1/2005 on the functioning of cooperatives;
- Law 300/2004 on authorising natural persons and family associations to perform economic activities independently;
- ODIMMAT (Ministerial Order) 545/2014 on supporting crafts and craftsmanship;
- The National Cultural Heritage Code (in progress), which will incorporate and specify new arrangements relating to national and intangible cultural heritage;
- Law 102/2015 establishing the *National Day of the Traditional Costume in Romania*.

The Ministry of Culture, directly or through the afore mentioned institutions, collaborates with internal and international bodies, including the National Commission of Romania for UNESCO, the Regional Centre (category II) in Sofia, UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture in Europe (BRESCE) in Venice. The Ministry of Culture also collaborates with institutions specialised in ethnology, such as research institutes of the Romanian Academy, the National Archives for Folklore from the representative ethnographic regions in Romania, and local authorities. The Ministry of Culture is implementing the National Plan for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage through the National Commission for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, a specialised advisory body under its supervision.

Beyond the general frameworks specific to all signatories to the *2003 Convention*, the Romanian state applies measures to preserve intangible cultural heritage in accordance with decentralisation policies. The Government of Romania carries out short-, medium- and long-term programmes through representative institutions in the territory, including:

- National or regional ethnographic museums, such as the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, the Dimitrie Gusti National Village Museum, and other ethnographic museums under local authorities;
- Regional Centres for Conserving and Promoting Traditional Culture;
- County Cultural Directorates, through their subordinate bodies with direct or tangential responsibilities in the field of intangible heritage;

⁶The section dedicated to traditional blouses is organized by: a) categories; b) the cut; c) fabrics; d) sewing techniques; e) ornamental structures; f) positioning; g) organization; h) ornaments; i) motifs; j) chromatics; k) value/functions; l) items that cover the bottoms of the blouses; and m) types of blouses in the *National Repertoire of Intangible Cultural Heritage I* (Bucharest, Institute for Cultural Memory, 2008, pp. 101-103).

- Administration of the National Cultural Fund, which is subordinate to the Ministry of Culture;
- National Institute of Heritage, which maintains the inventory of active intangible cultural heritage elements.

XV. Categories of entities with a role in protecting, safeguarding, monitoring, enhancing and promoting the element

As in the past, the element benefits from the attention given by different types of entities that hold specific roles related to the traditional blouse with *altiță*. These specialised entities with **decision-making and strategic** duties in ethnology and fields adjacent to cultural heritage, as well as **administrative responsibilities on the central, regional and local levels**, promote the element by revitalising and disseminating information about it within both specialized and broad audiences, such as entities responsible for formal and non-formal education, the general public, and the media. All of the entities collaborate in various forms, directly or tangentially. At present, in Romania, the element is widely known nationally and internationally, in specialised and non-specialised circles, in villages and in cities, and regardless of age groups, gender or socio-professional background. All of these entities act and interact directly and indirectly with the practitioners at the heart of these processes. These include:

- **Specialised institutions:** Research institutes belonging to the Romanian Academy, ethnographic museums or museums with duties in adjacent fields, university centres that include traditional costumes in their study programmes, institutions with mixed specialized and administrative roles (e.g. the National Institute of Heritage). These institutions carry out identification, field and fundamental research, cataloguing, indexing, and publication of studies, critical editions, and anthologies relating to the item and/or practitioners. They also set up documents/archives relating to the element, own databases on the elements and the craftspeople, and organize exhibitions that highlight the element. They play a role in: **data preservation and safeguarding and enhancing the element;**
- **Specialists** (e.g. ethnologists, ethnographers, and others in related fields) carrying out regular or sequential activities in relation to the element and crafts people through annual, multi-annual, and time-limited research projects, national and international communication sessions, debates, working groups, specialised committees, consultancy on the element, and other means. Professionals carry out activities similar to those of specialised institutions with a focus on the collaborative side of research, and presenting results;
- **Institutions with a strategic and administrative role** represented by the central authorities (e.g. Ministry of Culture, County Directorates for Culture and Arts) that carry out strategies, public policies, framework programmes on the element, allocate funds for the field and specific programmes;

- **Institutions with a decision-making role that may represent Romania in cultural, diplomatic settings and others** (e.g. the National Commission of Romania for UNESCO, the Romanian Cultural Institute in Bucharest and its external bureaus, embassies). These entities liaise with specialised and administrative entities to promote the element and highly skilled craftspeople; liaise with Romanians abroad and facilitate the strengthening of ethnic identity; have databases and information about Romanians interested in traditional elements; and allocate funds for the field and specific programmes;
- **Administrative institutions and local authorities in municipalities** carry out targeted programmes and celebratory events that are generally aimed at popularizing and promoting the element and craftspeople. These entities foster local group and social cohesion, raise awareness of the value of the element, keep databases on craftspeople and active areas, and allocate funds for the field and specific programmes;
- **Higher education institutions** with ethnological and related studies programmes may have compulsory and optional courses on the element, especially in masters and doctoral levels that provide the possibility to research the element in the field. These entities support young people to conduct research in the field, thereby preparing future specialists;
- **Cultural establishments, cultural centres and similar institutions** play a role in social cohesion, and they organise various types of interaction between craftspeople and communities;
- **Local authorities (municipalities)** decide and implement programmes through cultural institutions that promote the element, raise awareness, enhance group cohesion, and allocate funds for the field and specific programmes;
- **NGOs** focusing on intangible cultural heritage or related fields have the following tasks and roles, together or as individual organisations: promotion of the element and/or the practitioners), revitalisation, congregation of various groups and communities, and contribution to the largest possible participation of society members in the understanding and preservation of the element. They can act as representatives and social performers, and they can support initiatives on the durable and sustainable development of the element in its specific context or other contexts. **The groups of practitioners** organised as NGOs have an explicit role in preserving, safeguarding, and passing on the element;
- **Formal education institutions** (e.g. schools, high schools): some institutions are constantly running programmes dedicated to the traditional costume from different perspectives depending on the subject matter (e.g. arts, crafts, language and literature);
- **Non-formal education institutions** (e.g. cultural institutions, other institutions providing non-formal education) contribute to an organised learning of the skills, such as the techniques, toolkit, and materials;
- **The media** plays a role in disseminating and promoting specialised information, raising awareness about the element and practitioners. They

also report on new trends from related areas, such as fashion, marketing, elite influencers, international phenomena, and visual and decorative arts that relate to the element.

Today, the element and craftspeople are and can be supported through new media technologies and online communication channels. Without exception, all categories of entities use these modern resources to exercise their roles in and contribute to: protecting, safeguarding, monitoring, raising awareness, promoting, and revitalising the element, the craftspeople and/or the spatial, temporal and ceremonial contexts dedicated to them. Since 2010 in particular, ‘urban bees’ groups have served as revitalisation groups or communities that document the element, work with specialists, and carry out various activities at local, national and international levels, thereby representing a recent multifunctional social phenomenon at social level.

XVI. Targeted measures for the protection, conservation, safeguarding and promotion of the element

Envisaged short-, medium- and long-term safeguarding measures:

- Establishing institutional framework collaboration agreements and protocols between decision-making, strategic, specialist, administrative, education, and media institutions;
- Updating the national safeguarding strategy in this area;
- Amending the mechanism to update the National Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage;
- Providing the necessary resources for continuous research and monitoring of the element and practitioners;
- Developing transdisciplinary teams addressing conservation, safeguarding and promotion of the element and its practitioners under a coherent and united vision;
- Establishing measures to prevent inappropriate or abusive treatment of the element and practitioners;
- Developing partnerships with entities in the areas of durable, environmental and sustainable development;
- Developing databases on the element, practitioners and specialists studying the element;
- Providing scientific advice about promoting the techniques of making the traditional blouse with *altiță* in order to neutralise influences that may lead to excessive commercialisation and the creation of products that are not in conformity with native values, that confuse recipients, and that harm creators of genuine items;
- Implementing cultural projects through relevant museums to support the process of passing on the element and acknowledging its cultural significance through thematic exhibitions, fairs and demonstration activities;
- Emphasising the contribution of research institutes that support the sustainability of the element;

- Producing traditional material resources or digital information material;
- Support the network of museal village collections through active dialogue with owners, creators, and specialists.

With regard to the element ‘the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder’, including its specific local and regional names as set out in the description of the element, recent programmes, projects, initiatives and measures contributed towards the preservation, protection, acknowledgement, and awareness-raising of the importance of the item and its promotion among local communities and the general public. Such programmes, projects, and initiatives include:

1. The contributions of the Ministry of Culture’s institutions and local public authorities:

1.1. The National Heritage Institute, in collaboration with the Iași County Centre for the Conservation and Promotion of Traditional Culture and the National Library of Romania, carried out the project *Romanian Blouses and Romanian blouses — traditions and promotion* (2019).

1.2. Many museum institutions carry out projects each year, deliver exhibitions, edit publications, and organise fairs for craftspeople that promote intangible cultural heritage, including the traditional blouse with *altiță*. The institutions include the Dimitrie Gusti National Village Museum, the National Museum of the Romanian Peasant, the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania, ASTRA National Museum Complex in Sibiu, the National Museum Complex Iași, Golești Museum of Viticulture and Pomology, and the Dr. Nicolae Minovici Museum of Folk Art.

An example of such an initiative is the ASTRA Museum’s organization of the Universal Day of the Traditional Romanian Blouse on the 24th of June, held for seven editions, and the Traditional Artistic Crafts Competition that held its 25th edition in July 2020. The Dimitrie Gusti National Village Museum has implemented projects to research and promote the traditional costume, including the blouse with *altiță* from various parts of the country. Projects include *The Women’s Traditional Costume of Suceava* (2015), *The Folk Costumes from Vâlcea* (2017), *The Folk Costumes from Mehedinți and Dolj* (2018), and *The Traditional Costumes from the Wallachian Plain*, all held in the collections of the Dimitrie Gusti National Village Museum.

In order to promote the collections of blouses and the textiles from the collection of the Dr. Nicolae Minovici Museum of Folk Art, the Bucharest Municipality Museum made a catalogue publicly available under the title *Romanian festive blouses from the collections of the Dr. Nicolae Minovici Museum, written by Maria Camelia Ene*, where the blouses with *altiță* from museum collections are brought to the forefront. In addition, some of the blouses collected by the forensic doctor Nicolae Minovici are exhibited in the Dr. Nicolae Minovici Museum of Folk Art, and visitors are invited to view and analyse them. At the same time, the collection of folk costumes can also be appreciated by means of an interactive window. The Dr. Nicolae Minovici Museum of Folk Art has a dressing room with an augmented reality system with an interactive display. With this app, one can ‘try on’ a traditional costume — either one item or the entire costume from one of the following ethnographic regions: Muntenia, Moldova, Oltenia and Transylvania. This

experience is possible by means of a multi-touch overlay screen and interactive augmented video.

1.3. Some people with craftskills, that are recognised and promoted by local and central authorities and media, are invited to cultural events, competitions and museums and have even received the Living Human Treasures distinction as tradition bearers of the craft (Olivia Tima, Alba County, 2011; Silvia Tecoanță, Sibiu County, 2013; Constantin Nițu, Olt County, 2018; Alexandrina Filip, Olt County, 2020). It is necessary to strengthen the performance frameworks, preserve the community role in social cohesion, and, in particular, promote these model practitioners.

2. The contribution of non-governmental institutions and other types of associations:

Non-governmental organisations and family associations whose activity is the promotion and safeguarding of the element and implementing specific projects include the *Oameni Buni* (Good People) association and *Lada de zestre* (The Dowry Chest) project (2019), which interprets the symbols of traditional folk creations, including the Romanian blouse; the *Artă și tradiții meșteșugărești* (Art and Craft Traditions) Association, in collaboration with Radio Reîntregirea (Radio Replenish) in Alba County, the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania, the Municipality of Zlatna, the National Museum of the Union, the Cluj County Studio, Transylvania Look S.A., and Independent LLC., which sought to recreate the traditional costume and stimulate the sewing of traditional regional costumes (2016); *Acul și Ața* (The Needle and the Thread), established by Nicoleta Oana Pârvan in 2010, which promotes weaving and sewing crafts that are practiced and passed on in the family; the *Ie Tradițională* (Traditional Romanian Blouse), established by Iulia Martinescu in 2013, to make blouses with *altiță* in Ponoarele, Mehedinți County; the *La Tismana într-o grădină* (In a Garden in Tismana) association, established by Florin Tantan, to promote craftwork in families; the *Ii de Breaza* (Romanian Blouses from Breaza) association, established by Anda Mănescu, which benefits from an old tradition of craftsmanship in the area since 1948 and joins other associations in Breaza that produce blouses with *altiță*; and the Avrig Bee, established by Maria Grancea in Sibiu County, where *Romanian blouses with shoulders* are sewn, among other items.

Some communities that are aware of the value of the local and regional costumes chose to build upon old church services and pastoral festivals in villages and organize celebratory meetings as a way to raise young people's interest in the garments and promote them regionally. An example of excellence, maintained for more than half a century, is the *Sărbătoarea iilor* (Celebration of Romanian Blouses) from Cezieni-Olt. It was initiated in 1920 by the wife of Dumitru Cezianu and continued by Princess Brâncoveanu until the Second World War. *The Celebration of Romanian Blouses* is today a real competition to select and give awards for the most beautiful blouses with *altiță* worn by the women dancing in the hora. The involvement of local authorities and the support provided by cultural institutions at County level after 2001 stimulated women to continue the tradition of sewing blouses. With this opportunity, the whole village becomes an immense exhibition of folk costumes, where each family exhibits the blouses sewn in that year on the fences of their households, as in **Figures 52** and **53**.



Figure 52 Street exhibition of traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder on fences of households, *Celebration of Romanian Blouses*, Cezieni, Olt County, photo by Valeru Ciurea, 2020



Figure 53 Street exhibition of traditional blouses with embroidery on the shoulder on fences of households, *Celebration of Romanian Blouses*, Cezieni, Olt County, Valeru Ciurea photo, 2020

Another similar event, iconic for Vâlcea County, is the Hora of Costumes organised annually under the patronage of local authorities in Pietrari commune, Vâlcea, as seen in **Figure 54**.



Figure 54. The Costumes' Hora, Pietrari, Vâlcea County

3. The contribution of collectors and individuals interested in the element:

Another aspect of heritage solutions is the initiatives of partner institutions in the field of culture and education and the efforts of a number of passionate collectors to make established items with great aesthetic and research value available to the public. These include Marius Matei from Gioroc in Timiș County, Gabriel Boriceanu from Mateiaș in Brașov County, Paul Torac from Brodina in Suceava County, Ligia Bodea from Iaz-Plopiș in Sălaj County, Florica and Romulus Zaharia from Băița in Hunedoara County, and the Dumitrașcu family from Ludu village in Mehedinți County.

4. The contribution of revitalisation communities⁷:

These individuals and groups carry out revitalisation interventions that promote the element. Revitalisation communities can be considered centres of regional or zonal resources that promote the element, engage in knowledge maintenance, and pass on the values of the traditional blouse with *altiță*. The programmes they run include social and cultural events, experiments, learning courses, and exhibitions in urban areas, rural areas and online. These revitalisation communities have documented the history of the blouses using, alongside museum and private collections in the country and abroad, the stitching albums promoted by the Romanian elite from the second half of the nineteenth century into the twentieth century. This is how the lasting interest in sewing and embroidering the blouse, with respect to the specificities of each region, has been maintained throughout centuries.

What falls within the category of performance of revitalisation communities is an in-depth knowledge of ‘secrets’ that explain how to stitch a sleeve with *altiță*, how to stitch together cloth widths, ways of attaching the *altiță*, and decorative motifs, colours and symbols. Some of the members of these communities have an impressive *savoir-faire*, and they acquired special skills. Since 2012, the online community, which has more than 34,000 members in 2020, and the *Semne Cusute* (Stitched Patterns) association, which was established in 2018 and coordinated by Ar. Ioana Corduneanu in Bucharest, updates the identity dimension of all the blouses across Romania and the Republic of Moldova. They maintain particularly close links with the group *Măiestria* - word play between ‘craft’ and *ie*, the word for traditional Romanian blouse - from Chișinău in Moldova, and the members of the associations of the two countries call themselves ‘needle sisters’.

The main source of inspiration for revitalisation communities was the collections of major ethnographic museums in the country and abroad. The communities created and posted an online collection of sketches and digital patterns on the blog archives of *Semne Cusute* (Stitched Patterns), thus providing information and help to those interested in practising this craft. The digital medium

⁷The phrase ‘revitalization communities’ used in this document marks a certain type of intervention that these groups mainly perform, namely revitalization activities. The new terminology is not validated at an international level, but it offers clarity to the present document.

has facilitated the launch of a forum for discussions on the *altiță*, embroidery techniques, clarification of the decorative and colour particularities of certain parts, types of materials, and the types of blouses from various ethnographic areas of the country. Examples of the initiative can be seen in **Figures 55** and **56**. The recognition of this phenomenon, initiated and developed through digital communication, is seen in the partnership with the Google Art & Culture Foundation in 2019 to allocate a permanent virtual space to exhibit the stitched blouses.



Figure 55. Stitched Patterns, coordinated by Ioana Corduneanu, Bucharest, 2020, photo Video Art Studio

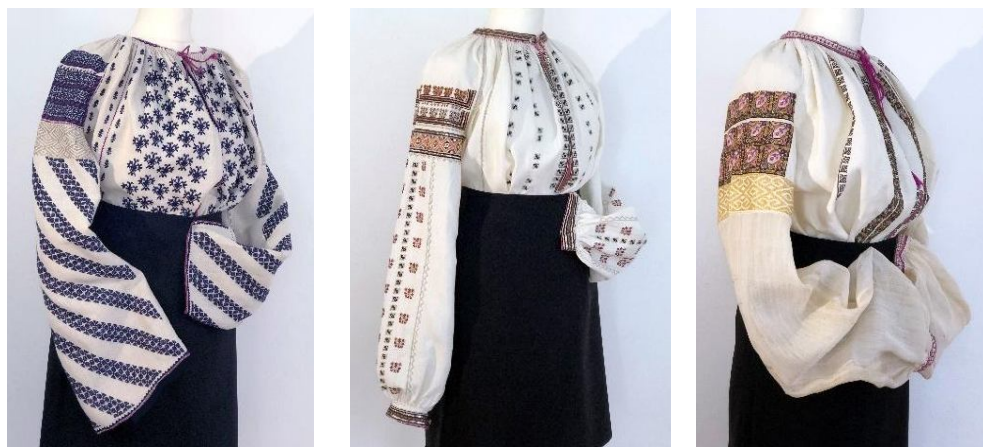


Figure 56. Blouses made in the ‘Stitched Patterns’ group, areas: Romaniți (Oltenia), Vrancea (Moldova), Vlașca (Muntenia)

The Bucharest Bee, established in 2014 and coordinated by Victoria Bizon, has more than 15,000 members today, and it provides an example of good practices for children and teenagers who cherish Romanian traditions. Regular meetings, in-person lessons and online initiatives ensure the dissemination of information regarding traditional working techniques, motifs, and regional particularities. The group and an example of a blouse can be seen in **Figures 57** and **58**.



Figure 57. The ‘Bucharest Bee’ group, coordinator Victoria Bizon



Figure 58 Blouse from Bukovina made by Victoria Bizon

The Piatra Bee, held in collaboration with Florentina Buzenschi in Piatra-Neamț, and the Bacău Bee promote the live phenomenon of passing on blouses with *altiță* from Moldova and promote the blouse as an important landmark in modern women’s clothes. The members of these two groups highlight the diversity

and originality of the artistic embroidery of the blouses in the Neamț area, the Bacău area and the Siret Valley by trying to return to the old techniques of stitching the *altiță* as old women from the countryside used to. Examples of these blouses can be seen in **Figures 59** and **60**.



Figure 59. Blouses sewn by Carmen Nădejde, Borca and Fărcașa, Neamț area, the Piatra Bee; photo Florin Ghimiș, 2020



Figure 60. Blouses sewn by Angela Colbeanu, Piatra Șoimului, Neamț County, and by Claudia Pătrașcu, the Bacău Bee, Faraoani, Bacău County; photo Roxana Cărceriu, 2020

The Ploiești Bee rediscovered the original album of Elisa Brătianu, edited in 1943, and her collection of blouses exhibited today at the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania in Cluj-Napoca. The project *Albina* (The Bee) pays tribute to the motifs and designs in this album, and a blouse created by the Ploiești Bee can be seen in **Figure 61**.



Figure 61. Blouses sewn by Gabriela Ene in the Ploiești Bee group (1-2) blouses from Olt and Vâlcea (Oltenia); (3) blouses from Vlașca (Muntenia); photo Gabriela Ene, 2020

The Brașov Bee reunites members coming from different parts of the country. They stitch blouses with *altiță* worn in Moldova, Bukovina or Oltenia as an emotional reminder of their childhood homes. Examples of this blouse can be seen in **Figure 62**.



Figure 62. Blouses sewn by Manuela Mujdei, Vatra Dornelor area, Suceava County, Neamț area, *Brașov Bee*

The sewing bees from the Vrancea area are all part of the same network of groups that stitch blouses, and they are descendents of the two major communities in Bucharest: *Semne Cusute* (Stitched Patterns) and the Bucharest Bee. They also benefited from the advice of the ethnographer Ion Cherciu, and they adopted the learning mode, the rigour of the details, and compliance with the motifs from the

sub-Carpathian area. The bees take place in Focșani, Soveja and Jitia. The Jitia Bee has the merit of teaching children how to stitch traditional blouses with *altiță*. **Figures 63** and **64** show some of the works and initiatives from these projects.



Figure 63. Blouses sewn by Luminița Avram, Vrancea area and by Elena Micu, Soveja area



Figure 64. *Traditional Artistic Crafts Competition*, the twenty second edition, 2017, ASTRA Museum, Luminița Apostu, Vintileasca commune, Vrancea County, and Alice Lăcrămioara Lălu, Jitia commune, Vrancea County, photo by Silviu Popa

These revitalisation communities organized numerous projects, exhibitions, publications, events aimed at promoting the element. These include *Ie Veche - Ie Nouă* (Old Traditional Blouse - New Traditional Blouse) (2015), *Original și Revival* (The Original and the Revival) (2016), *Ia Aidoma* (The Identical Romanian Blouse) project (2016-2020), the *Ia Aievea* (The Alike Romanian Blouse) project (2018-2020), *Măiestria* project (2019), the flash mob at Centre Pompidou in Paris (2019), and the *Rencontres francophones: embroidery, traditions et entrepreneuriat* event (2019).

5. Individuals and groups of practitioners

Practitioners from villages and cities that have acquired craftsmanship from their family or a small group, as well as the ones born after the communist period, have continued the artistic craft individually or by association with a group. After 1990, they have taken their own initiative to raise awareness, preserve, safeguard and pass on the element. These initiatives from individuals and groups that are motivated to preserve, create, innovate and pass on the element are at the heart of the above mentioned endeavours and underpin collaborative actions with practitioners, decision-makers and authorities. Some of the practitioners' representatives have taken steps in the field of non-formal education. For example, there is a family school in Poiana Sibiului, Sibiu County run by Maria Ciucă. She prepares the young women willing to acquire the craftsmanship of the needle and thread, as presented in **Figure 65**.



Figure 65 Maria Ciucă family school, images from the exhibition 'Living Human Treasures', ASTRA Museum; 2003

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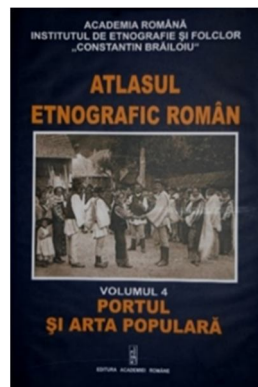
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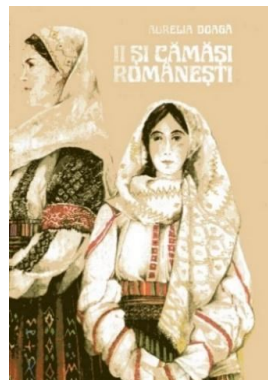
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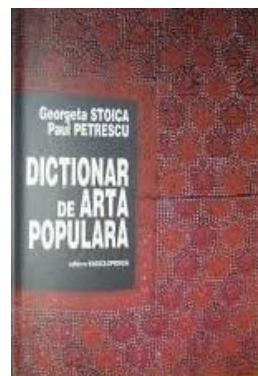
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Data collection, community involvement and consent

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Dr Mirela Crețu, researcher III, director of the Pavilion Museums Section, ASTRA National Museum Complex, Sibiu (documentation of the blouses with *altiță* in Transylvania, information on the phenomenon of revitalisation of blouses and the current state of the element; recent research data in southern Transylvania)

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They were involved in updating data in the field and recording audio-visual materials of craftswomen for the purpose of detailing regional and local techniques.

In order to produce the documentary film that will accompany the UNESCO file, the Romanian Peasant Museum provided audio documents from its archives, and the actual preparation was carried out by the Video Art Studio under the Ministry of Culture.

The National Institute of Heritage has included on its website the electronic file of the inventory pages dedicated to the blouse and its specific production techniques.

Representatives of communities and bearers of values supported the nomination, allowing the element to be recorded and documented on the ground. They provided the experts with material and supporting documents needed to prepare the dossier (photos, videos, fabric collections). Public authorities and creators agreed to the nomination and formal agreements regarding the techniques used in making blouses were signed.

Observations

The art of the traditional blouse with embroidery on the shoulder (*altiță*) — cultural identity element and techniques used in making blouses with *altiță* are proposed for inclusion on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage for the UNESCO session in March 2021 as a multinational dossier (Romania together with the Republic of Moldova).

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Glossary

altiță = the distinct part of the upper sleeve of the traditional blouse or the rich embroidery displayed on the upper sleeve of the traditional blouse

blană (fur) = very rich and dense sleeve embroidery registers specific for the blouse ornamentation in the region of Oltenia

brezărău = the drawstring around the neckline

catrințe = an embroidered waist apron for the front and the back, worn over a chemise; a skirt

ciocănele (small hammers) = special embroidery stripes adorned with vegetable motifs specific for the blouse ornamentation in Transylvania and Vâlcea County in Oltenia

ciupag = the embroidered breast or front of a traditional blouse or the name of the traditional blouse in Oltenia

foță = rectangular skirt made out of a four-thread weave of wool/cotton/silk wrapped around the body over an underskirt

giolgi = industrial cotton cloth

ie = generic term for traditional Romanian blouse

încreț = smocking (embroidery band right under the *altiță*). It has lost its original function of crimping the sleeve cloth and now it is only used for decor

maramă = woven headscarf made out of floss silk/cotton/fine wool

pieptar = embroidered fur vest

poale = underskirt or the bottom of a blouse

râuri (rivers) = vertical or diagonal lines of embroidery with various motifs on the sleeve, front, or back of the blouse. Usually, they connect the smocking with the cuff of the sleeve. Together, the *altiță*, the smocking and the rivers form the embroidery of the sleeve

șabac = stitch on the drawn out yarns of the fabric

tulpan = headwrap

vâlnic = woven wool pleated skirt