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SYMBOLISM OF THE ROMANIAN BLOUSE „IA”**

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The Ia of Puhoi: The History of Its Discovery and Ethnocultural Valorization (General Preliminary Considerations)

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Ethnographic expeditions conducted in the village of Puhoi (Ialoveni District) with the aim of researching and valorizing local tangible and intangible cultural heritage (Project code: 25.80012.0807.59SE) have brought to light valuable cultural vestiges, among which several items of traditional costume stand out, including a traditional women's blouse discovered by chance by its current owners.

The documentation of this case was made possible through interviews conducted with Maia Ceban (Cojocari) (b. 1985), artistic director at the Puhoi House of Culture, municipality administration, head of the folk ensemble “Mărgăritarele,” and with the sisters Anastasia Parfenii (Botnaru) (b. 1960) and Ludmila Dolneanu (Botnaru) (b. 1965), both working in the field of commerce.

Maia Ceban presented the history of this traditional ie, “which was found in the house purchased by the Parfenii family, Anastasia and her son Sergiu, Victor, and daughter Elena. The house was bought from two elderly women; according to their accounts, those women had once been deported to Siberia and later returned, after which they sold the house. When the new owners cleaned the property in preparation for renovation, in the cattle shed and under the manger they discovered, buried in a sack, two shirts (...).” The festive blouse was affected by time and was later restored through the efforts of Ana Sinița, a local craftswoman. Subsequently, Maia Ceban participated with this ie in the festival “La poalele țiglei” in the village of Văsieni, where she won first prize in the category “Traditional Shirts.” It is worth noting that the same discovery also included a “daily, everyday shirt,” observed as similar to garments worn by “several women in the village.”

In her memoir notes, Anastasia Parfenii states that her family “bought this house in the summer of 2000; no one had lived in it for about ten years. The house belonged to Ionaș Tabac and Maria (Manea), a renowned seamstress. We purchased the house from Dumitru Tabac, nephew and godson of the former owners. When we started cleaning and trying to restore the household, in the shed where animals were kept, we found in a bundle two items that we could not bring ourselves to discard. When we opened it there, the children were almost afraid—what could it be? The bundle had been placed under the manger. ‘Mother, we don’t know what this is, let’s see!’ We worked on them, restored them, and I still keep them to this day. They were also taken to the museum in Chișinău (National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History) and brought by Mrs. Ana Sinița to Mrs. Varvara Buzilă, who deciphered their meaning: the black squares represent the earth, blue is water, and red is the sun; this corresponds to the tricolor; this is the ladder rising to heaven, and here there is something like a serpent. Ana Sinița promoted this blouse.” According to approximate estimates, this traditional women's blouse discovered in Puhoi is about 100 years old, size 48 (L), intended as festive attire for a short-statured woman. The second blouse has modest ornamentation and was intended for everyday wear.

Thus, both garments were restored through the efforts of Ms. Ana Sinița, becoming objects of study for several specialists, including researchers from the Institute of Cultural Heritage during field expeditions in the village. It is significant that this festive traditional blouse discovered in Puhoi has become a source of inspiration for the clothing design of Maia Ceban, head of the local folk ensemble “Mărgăritarele.”

Keywords: Puhoi, ie, local tradition, restoration, cultural heritage.



The Embroidery of The Romanian Blouse(Ia) - A Representative Symbol of Intangible Cultural Heritage

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This paper examines the importance of transmitting Romanian traditions through educational courses dedicated to the making of the traditional blouse known as the ie, a representative symbol of national cultural heritage. The study highlights the role of these educational activities in preserving cultural identity, promoting authentic values, and encouraging younger generations to appreciate and continue traditional crafts.

The paper emphasizes that such courses contribute not only to the acquisition of specific sewing and decorative techniques, but also to a deeper understanding of the cultural, historical, and symbolic meanings of traditional motifs. At the same time, these activities have an important social impact, as they encourage collaboration, communication, intergenerational learning, and the continuity of traditions within the community.

By promoting cultural education, folk creativity, and respect for traditional craftsmanship, courses focused on the making of the ie become an effective means of preserving, revitalizing, and promoting Romanian traditional heritage in contemporary society.

Keywords: Romanian traditions, ie, cultural heritage, traditional crafts, cultural education, identity, folk creativity.



TRADITIONAL TEXTILE HERITAGE AS A RESOURCE FOR SUSTAINABLE FASHION DESIGN

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This article examines traditional textile heritage as a resource for sustainable fashion design, emphasizing cultural identity, craftsmanship, symbolic motifs and the creative reuse of traditional costume in contemporary fashion.

Keywords: sustainable fashion, textile heritage, traditional costume, cultural identity, craftsmanship



THE ROMANIAN BLOUSE "IA" – HISTORY, PRESENT AND FUTURE

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The Romanian blouse IA reflects the evolution of the Romanian people. It tells us, in symbols, about our past, about our customs, our traditions, about the main events in our lives, where the Romanian blouse IA has always been present, as clothing worn by Romanian women. It is and will be a source of inspiration for the clothing of other peoples. Currently, the Romanian blouse IA continues to inspire. Moreover, it will be like this in the future, because Romanians are connected to the whole world. The paper presents the emergence and evolution of the Romanian blouse IA, present aspects regarding the Romanian IA are highlighted and a forecast of what our IA will mean over time, in the era of artificial intelligence (AI) and beyond is also made.

Keywords: Romania, the history of Romanian blouse IA, the present of Romanian IA, the future of Romanian IA

From the Mulberry Leaf to the Silk Thread. The Raw Silk Veil in Romanian Traditional Costume

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Silk thread, known in Romanian as borangic, is one of the most valuable natural textile fibres, obtained from the cocoons of the silkworm. Originating in ancient China, silk production gradually spread throughout the world, becoming a symbol of refinement, prosperity, and elegance. In the Romanian cultural space, borangic played an important role in the rural economy, in the development of household crafts, and in the affirmation of local cultural identity.

One of the most representative pieces made of borangic is the marama, a traditional veil and an essential element of Romanian women’s costume. Worn especially by married women, the marama had both a practical function, covering the head, and a symbolic one, indicating social status, age, marital status, and belonging to a certain community. Through the delicacy of the fabric, its subtle transparency, and the natural lustre of the silk thread, the marama became a garment of great refinement, associated with dignity, femininity, and respect for traditional norms.

In Romanian traditional costume, the marama made of borangic is distinguished by its generous dimensions, fine texture, and discreet ornamentation, often created through woven patterns, geometric motifs, vegetal elements, or symbolic designs. These decorative elements did not have only an aesthetic role; they also reflected the artistic taste of the community, the skill of the women who made them, and the spiritual values of the rural world. The marama was worn on festive occasions, during religious ceremonies, weddings, and other important moments in community life, becoming a sign of identity and continuity of tradition.

The process of producing borangic involved several stages: raising silkworms, feeding them with mulberry leaves, harvesting the cocoons, extracting the thread, and preparing it for weaving. In traditional households, these activities required patience, skill, and knowledge transmitted from one generation to another. Thus, the marama made of borangic is not merely a clothing item, but the result of an entire universe of practices, beliefs, and women’s craftsmanship.

The study of the borangic marama highlights its importance within Romanian cultural heritage, both as a traditional costume piece and as an expression of the technical and artistic refinement of rural communities. Through its aesthetic, symbolic, and identity-related value, the borangic marama remains an important landmark of Romanian textile tradition and an essential element in the preservation and promotion of folk costume.

The Romanian Ia as a Silent Language of Tradition: The “Authentic Romania” Festival, a Celebration of Nation, Homeland, Art, and Beauty

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Silk thread, known in Romanian as borangic, is one of the most valuable natural textile fibres, obtained from the cocoons of the silkworm. Originating in ancient China, silk production gradually spread throughout the world, becoming a symbol of refinement, prosperity, and elegance. In the Romanian cultural space, borangic played an important role in the rural economy, in the development of household crafts, and in the affirmation of local cultural identity.

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Keywords: Authentic Romania, Hobița, Brâncuși, traditions, folk costume

The Romanian Blouse and Brâncuși — Two Forms of Romanian Authenticity that Became Universal

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This paper explores the Romanian traditional blouse (ia) as a form of living cultural heritage and as one of the most representative expressions of Romanian identity. Beyond its aesthetic value and traditional significance, the ia is approached as a cultural symbol that embodies memory, belonging, continuity, and the transmission of values from one generation to another.

The study is based on a personal reflection generated by the experience of wearing the traditional Romanian costume and aims to highlight the profound connection between tangible cultural expressions and the inner experience of identity. In this context, the ia is understood not merely as a garment, but as a living testimony of collective memory, craftsmanship, spirituality, and cultural resilience.

Particular attention is given to the symbolic relationship between the Romanian ia and the artistic vision of Constantin Brâncuși. Although expressed through different artistic languages, both represent essential forms of Romanian authenticity. The repetitive motifs and symbolic geometry of the ia, as well as Brâncuși's pursuit of simplicity and essence, reveal a common aspiration toward universality while remaining deeply rooted in local cultural traditions.

The paper also examines how cultural heritage becomes meaningful through personal experience and emotional connection. The feeling of belonging generated by wearing the traditional costume is interpreted as a form of reconnection with cultural roots and as an affirmation of identity within a global context. In this sense, the ia and Brâncuși's artistic legacy can be viewed as complementary manifestations of a cultural heritage that transcends geographical and temporal boundaries.

The study argues that the universal recognition of both the Romanian ia and Brâncuși's work derives precisely from their authenticity. Their ability to transform local cultural values into universally meaningful symbols demonstrates the enduring relevance of Romanian heritage in contemporary society. As expressions of memory, identity, and continuity, they contribute to a deeper understanding of the relationship between cultural roots and universal human values.

Keywords: Romanian blouse (ia), Constantin Brâncuși, cultural heritage, living heritage, cultural identity, authenticity, memory, universality, tradition, continuity.

The Transformation of the Traditional Rural Habitat in the Moldavian SSR (1944–1961): Continuity of Identity and “Soviet Modernization”

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The paper analyzes the transformations of the rural habitat in the Moldavian SSR during the period 1944–1961, based on previously unpublished photographic documents and archival sources, demonstrating that Sovietization did not lead to a complete replacement of traditional culture, but rather to a complex negotiation between old practices and the new norms imposed.

The reoccupation of Bessarabia by the USSR in 1944 triggered a sweeping process of Sovietization, aimed at radically restructuring the rural landscape through collectivization, the standardization of housing, and the centralized planning of villages. Officially, these changes were presented as “socialist modernization”, intended to replace traditional structures with an ideologically standardized model.

Ethnographic expeditions from 1948 to 1953 documented the transition from traditional dwellings to new-style ones, built according to standardized designs approved at the republican level. Villages were redesigned with straight, wide streets, and houses were uniformly spaced 6 meters from the road, facing south. Some settlements in the Dniester Valley were entirely relocated due to the construction of the Dubăsari hydroelectric plant. Although modern construction techniques (slate, stone blocks, fired brick) were promoted, traditional materials – mud and straw adobe, reeds–continued to be widely used due to the high costs of industrially produced or extracted building materials.

Despite administrative and ideological pressures, the rural population continued to arrange the interiors of their homes according to old cultural norms: handwoven rugs, embroidered tablecloths, Orthodox icons, and wooden furniture. The photographs analyzed capture this tension: portraits of Lenin and Stalin coexisted on the walls with Christian icons, reflecting a selective adaptation, not a complete assimilation of Soviet ideology.

The electrification and radiofication of villages, carried out primarily in the 1950s, brought real changes to daily life—electric lighting, radios, sewing machines, and metal beds. Radios also served as a tool for ideological propaganda, broadcasting political content into rural homes. The expansion of public fountains and aqueducts partially improved the water supply, especially in localities near cities.

The transformations of the rural habitat in the Moldavian SSR were neither uniform nor fully in line with the Soviet model. Traditional culture acted as a filter that shaped the reception and implementation of changes at the local level. Rural housing remains a testament to the balance between continuity and change, between adaptation and the preservation of cultural identity, confirming that imposed modernization generated hybrid forms of dwelling, in which authentic traditional culture and new Soviet elements coexisted.

Keywords: Traditional habitat, Moldavian SSR, Sovietization, traditional culture, identity.



THE ROMANIAN IA – AN EXPRESSION OF THE CULTURAL IDENTITY AND HISTORICAL CONTINUITY OF THE ROMANIAN PEOPLE

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This paper highlights the role of the Romanian blouse, ia, as a defining symbol of the cultural identity, spirituality, and historical continuity of the Romanian people. Considered more than a simple item of clothing, the ia represents a form of artistic expression and a visual language through which values, beliefs, and meanings inherited from generation to generation are transmitted. The study examines the origin and historical evolution of the ia, emphasizing its connections with ancient civilizations such as the Cucuteni culture and the Thraco-Dacian world, as well as the transformations it has undergone over time according to regional specificities.

Furthermore, the paper analyzes the natural materials and traditional techniques used in its making, underlining the importance of craftsmanship and the skill of women in rural communities. Special attention is given to decorative motifs and chromatics, which reflect the relationship between human beings and nature, the cosmos, faith, and social status. The Romanian ia is also presented as a source of inspiration in art, literature, and fashion, as well as an element of cultural heritage promoted through the Universal Day of the Romanian Blouse.

Through its beauty, authenticity, and symbolic value, the ia remains a living testimony to Romanian folk creativity and a contemporary identity landmark, capable of connecting the past with the present and tradition with modernity.

Keywords: Romanian ia, cultural identity, heritage, tradition, decorative symbols, historical continuity.

UNELE ASPECTE ALE PREZENȚEI ARBORILOR ÎN CÂNTECE POPULARE ROMÂNEȘTI

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În trecut, arborii au jucat un rol esențial în evoluția societății umane. Aceștia făceau parte din viața omului, inclusiv a poporului român, fiind utilizați ca sursă de hrană, medicamente, combustibil și material de construcție pentru realizarea obiectelor necesare vieții cotidiene. Prezența lor s-a reflectat și în literatura orală, precum în basme, snoave, ghicitori, proverbe etc., dar și în textele cântecelor populare românești. Deși există numeroase studii dedicate muzicii populare românești și diverse culegeri folclorice, nu am identificat niciun studiu consacrat prezenței arborilor în creația muzicală populară românească. Prin urmare, în acest material științific ne-am propus să prezentăm câteva aspecte privind prezența arborilor în textele cântecelor populare românești.

M-am limitat doar la studiul cântecelor de dragoste (de dor și jale) și al celor istorice (haiducești). În textele respective întâlnim diverse componente ale arborilor, precum frunzele și fructele, dar și referiri la pădure, livadă, arbori din flora sălbatică, precum și la pomi fructiferi. Frumoase sunt mai multe versuri din diferite cântece ca: „Sloboade, Doamne, frunza./ Să-nverzească pădurea./ Să pot merge la mândra./ Să nu vadă măicuță”; „Am auzit, dragă, eu./ Că te țin părinții rău./ Să le spui tu lor așa: / Să-ngrădească livada/ Prin prejur cu pari de-arin”; „Și-am zis verde nucă sacă./ Pe pădure-i promoroacă/ Și s-apleacă la pământ/ Numai eu rămân plângând/ Cum n-oi plânge ș-oi ofta?/ Ce-am iubit, n-oi mai uita./ Și-am zis verde de arțar”; „Trei gutui și trei lămâi./ Geaba, maică, mă mângâi./ Căci ca mâne-ai să rămâi/ Trei gutui, trei mere verzi./ Geaba, maică, mă dezmierzi./ Căci ca mine nu mă vezi”; „Foaie verde de-un măr dulce/ Când oi pleca și moi duce./ Nimenea nu mă ajunge”. Suferința provocată de dragoste ar fi putut constitui una dintre cauzele pentru care mulți tineri au devenit haiduci. În acest sens, prezentăm versuri din diferite cântece haiducești: „Frunză verde de măr dulce, / duce-m'aș și tot m'aș duce/ ... unde se'ntânesc haiducii; ..., / las și sapă, las și plug / și mă duc... să mă fac, maică, haiduc; / și în codru-am să trăiesc”; „Foaie verde, foi de nuci, plin îi codru de haiduci, – / La totul pomul câte cinci”. Textele din cântece populare dezvăluie ce făceau haiduci cu bani furati: „Un păgân ... îl întreabă pe Codrean: - Măi Codrene, ... câte case le-ai hoțit./ tu cu banii ce-ai făcut?/ Codrenaș la el ... îi grăia:/ - Ba eu nu-s un prost ca tine./ să țin banii lângă mine; eu îi iau de la bogăți/ și-i îngrop pe sub copaci/ pentru oamenii săraci./ Săraci'n pădure mergeau./ copacii jos deborau./ banii sub copacii găseau”. Unii haiduci erau prinși și arestați: „Foaie verde sălcioară./ toată lumea-i slobojioară/ numai Corbea-i la'nchisoare”. Cântecele populare oferă date și despre suferințele mamelor haiducilor: „Prin pădure, pe poiană, / trece mama lui Codreanu./ Lângă un bătrân stejar/ s'a'ntâlnit cu un pădurar/ ... – Bună ziua, pădurare./ nu știi de Codreanu oare?”; „Prin pădurea bradului/ trece mama Radului./ din ochi negri lăcrămând/ și de Radu întrebând”.

Constatăm că textele cântecelor populare românești care fac referire la arbori reprezintă o sursă valoroasă pentru cercetarea etnografiei românești și pentru studiul istoriei sociale a României, dar și o sursă de inspirație pentru crearea diverselor opere literare, inclusiv a scenariilor de filme artistice. Pădurea, împreună cu arborii săi, a constituit un refugiu atât pentru cei aflați în suferință, cât și pentru haiduci.

Cuvinte-cheie: arbori, pădure, cântece, dragoste, haiduci.



THE SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN UNESCO HERITAGE AND EDUCATIONAL DESIGN: THE BLOUSE AS A SUSTAINABLE DIDACTIC RESOURCE

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The article analyzes the structural symbiosis between UNESCO heritage and modern educational design in pre-university artistic education, utilizing the Romanian blouse (Ia) as a sustainable didactic resource. The paper establishes an integrated instructional model, demonstrating how the art of making the blouse can be leveraged tridimensionally through the coordinates of formal, non-formal, and informal education. Within the formal dimension, educational design focuses on translating the semiotics of folk motifs and its technical rigors into the curriculum of specialized workshops. The non-formal dimension extends learning through transdisciplinary projects, creative camps, and partnerships with the crafting community, while the informal dimension harnesses the "memory of sewing" as an organic transmission of heritage through gesture and identity internalization. The applied methodology combines curricular analysis, observation of learning pathways in art high schools, and ecopedagogical modeling. Key results reveal that this hybrid educational ecosystem stimulates students' cognitive autonomy, transforming the blouse from a static cultural document into a living, sustainable object, perfectly integrated into the visual culture of the younger generation.

Keywords: educational design, Romanian blouse, formal education, non-formal education, informal education, UNESCO heritage, pre-university artistic education

The Woman as Cosmos: Dreaming and Weaving in the archaic Romanian culture

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This article proposes a reading of the Romanian traditional blouse, *ia*, not as an ethnographic object or national identity symbol, but as a material archive of an archaic form of feminine knowledge that operates outside the diurnal, rational order and that has been systematically misread as superstition or social segregation. Drawing on Romulus Vulcănescu's Romanian mythology, Elena Niculiță-Voronca's habits and belief of the Romanian people and Gilbert Durand's anthropological structures of the imaginary, the article argues that the woman who sews and the woman who dreams are, in the archaic Romanian culture, manifestations of the same structural role of mediator between the visible and invisible worlds. The argument unfolds in three moves. The first establishes that access to deep cosmological knowledge in Romanian folk culture is structurally reserved for feminine figures operating in conditions of liminality, such as The Fates, Baba Dochia, The Old Mother, Ielele, whose shared characteristic is functioning at the threshold between social order and cosmic force. The second shows that this liminal position was ritually and bodily prepared through systematic practices documented by Elena Niculiță-Voronca, in which *ia* functioned as a material interface between the seen and unseen worlds, sensitive to the temporal conditions of its production. The third puts this folkloric logic in dialogue with Durand's Nocturnal Regime of the imaginary, demonstrating that the repetitive motifs of the *ia*, such as the rhomb, the spiral or the solar motif, function not as representations but as condensations of archetypal imagery, operating according to the same logic as oneiric images in the Freudian sense. The article concludes with a methodological proposal that heritage objects functioning as recipients of collective nocturnal imaginary require an archetypological reading, accessible mainly through participation, than analysis. The contemporary recovery of *ia* risks redistributing the object without redistributing the knowledge regime that produced it.

Keywords: *ia*, Romanian archaic culture, liminal femininity, Nocturnal Regime, imaginary, archetypal image, textile ritual, intangible heritage



The Identity Language of Clothing

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Since ancient times, image has represented a subtle form of communication, extending beyond the direct expression of visible realities. In this sense, clothing forms do not have only a practical and concrete function, but also operate as refined means of communicating identity. The primordial myths of humanity have preserved, up to the present day, universally valid truths regarding the spiritual dimension of clothing and its symbolic role within human communities.

Romanian folk culture is part of this broad human pattern, developing complex forms of expression with multiple layers of meaning. What is commonly and sometimes imprecisely referred to today as the “folk costume” is, in fact, the civilizational expression of a group identity, a synthesis of individual identities shaped by a shared historical past and by similar geographical, cultural, and ethnographic spaces.

In this context, understanding the vestimentary language of a people cannot be the responsibility of ethnographers alone. As a visual representation of the history of culture and civilization, clothing must also be studied by historians, geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, and all those concerned with human society from ancient times to the present. The paper therefore emphasizes the importance of traditional clothing as a complex identity code and as a meaningful cultural document through which the spiritual, historical, and social dimensions of a community can be interpreted.

Keywords: identity, clothing, folk costume, Romanian folk culture, cultural communication, ethnography, civilization.

The Biographical and Practical Dimension of the Activity of Folk Artisans from the Republic of Moldova as Heritage Vectors in the Preservation of the Romanian Blouse (Ia)

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This research analyzes the fundamental role played by folk artisans from the Republic of Moldova in the process of safeguarding and revitalizing the traditional blouse (ia). Beyond the intrinsic value of the ia as a cultural artifact, the study focuses on the human and performative dimension of this craft, investigating how individual life paths and working techniques intertwine to ensure the transmission of intangible heritage.

The methodology combines ethnographic field research, semi-structured interviews with artisans from different generations, and documentary analysis of historical sources. The paper examines how contemporary craftsmen navigate between the rigor of traditional canon and the pressures of the modern market or mass cultural consumption.

Through their efforts to preserve sewing techniques, the organization of craft-related activities, and participation in thematic exhibitions, folk artisans transform the ia from a nostalgic object into a living symbol, ensuring identity continuity within the contemporary cultural space of the Republic of Moldova.

Keywords: folk artisans, ia (traditional blouse), safeguarding, biographical dimension, intangible cultural heritage, Republic of Moldova, cultural identity.



The Colours and Symbolism of Bulgarian Embroidery

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The roots of Bulgarian embroidery can be traced back to the traditions of the tribes that created the Bulgarian state in the 7th century A.D. Even before the establishment of Bulgaria, the peoples that inhabited the area of present-day Bulgaria were influenced by Roman, Byzantine, and oriental cultures. The first and the second Bulgarian state have introduced a more pronounced national character. The adoption of the Christian Orthodox faith has added the cross as an important symbol alongside the typical floral symbols. The 5 centuries of conquest by the Ottoman Empire have impacted the lives of Bulgarians, and non-Christian elements can be seen in Bulgarian embroidery. This period is also characterized by a more intensive exchange between the Balkan peoples that borrow and introduce elements from their neighbouring peoples.

Thus, Bulgarian embroidery shares common elements with embroidery found in Romania, Serbia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, etc. Many of the stitches, patterns, shapes and colours symbolize the sun, family, the cycle of life, etc.

The traditional colours have specific meanings. On a subconscious level, they serve as blessings and protect the person who wears embroidered clothes. Nowadays, embroidery can serve as a link to our ancestors and provide meaning in the lives of the current and future generations.

This paper presents an overview of Bulgarian embroidery and the symbols associated with it.

Keywords: Bulgarian embroidery, symbolism, colours, folklore, art.



The Spinning Spindle – History, Technology, and Symbolism

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The spinning spindle goes beyond its practical function as a tool used for producing textile thread, becoming a powerful symbol of creation, the continuity of life, and human destiny. In Romanian traditional culture, it holds a special place in the popular imagination, being associated with femininity, diligence, maturity, and the transmission of values from one generation to another.

This paper explores the symbolic dimension of the spinning spindle by analyzing its presence in myths, fairy tales, beliefs, and folk customs, where the act of spinning is often interpreted as a metaphor for the thread of life and the passage of time. At the same time, the study highlights the connections between the spindle, the traditional rural gathering known as the șezătoare, and the village community, spaces in which cultural identities were shaped and ancient traditions were preserved.

By investigating its symbolic and cultural meanings, the paper demonstrates that the spinning spindle represents not only an object of material heritage, but also a landmark of collective memory and of the Romanian spiritual universe.

Keywords: spinning spindle, symbolism, thread of life, folk traditions, șezătoare, cultural heritage, mythology, cultural identity.



THE STORY OF THE IA

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The Ia is a traditional Romanian blouse and one of the most representative elements of the Romanian folk costume. Usually made of white cotton, linen, or borangic — a fine natural silk fabric — the Ia is distinguished by its delicate cut, symbolic ornamentation, and rich embroidery. Its decorative motifs are traditionally placed on the sleeves, chest, and neckline, and they often include geometric, floral, or nature-inspired patterns. These motifs are not merely aesthetic; they reflect regional identity, social status, craftsmanship, and cultural symbolism passed down through generations.

In some regions, the Ia is also embellished with beads, sequins, or colored threads, which enhance its visual richness and uniqueness. Each blouse may differ depending on the area where it was created, making the Ia an important marker of Romania's ethnographic diversity. Beyond its role as a garment, the Ia represents heritage, femininity, creativity, and the continuity of Romanian traditions.

Today, the Ia is worn both during traditional celebrations and as a symbol of national identity in Romania and in Romanian communities around the world. Its cultural importance is celebrated annually on June 24, during the feast of Sânzienne or Drăgaica, which is also known as the Universal Day of the Romanian Ia. This celebration highlights the value of the Ia as a living symbol of Romanian culture, connecting the past with the present and preserving traditional craftsmanship for future generations.

Keywords: Ia, Romanian traditional blouse, Romanian folk costume, embroidery, folk motifs, cultural heritage, Romanian identity, traditional craftsmanship, Sânzienne, Universal Day of the Romanian Ia.

The stitched language of the Ie: from the semiotics of traditional motifs to contemporary identity reclamation

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This paper proposes a paradigm shift in the study of Romanian material culture, approaching the sleeve-embroidered blouse - the Ie - from multiple perspectives: primarily through its aesthetic and functional value, and secondarily as a complex semiotic system and a non-verbal text structured by precise grammatical rules. Historically, the white fabric served as a projection screen for an entire archaic cosmology, wherein every needle stroke, chromatic choice, and geometric arrangement constituted a set of signifiers pointing to profound mythological signifieds. Utilizing the tools of structural semiotics, this research deconstructs the visual syntax of the traditional blouse into distinct registers: the *altiță* (the celestial register, cosmic order, and archetypes), the *încreț* (the terrestrial register, stability, and structural duality), and the *râuri* (the register of the flow of time and the succession of generations). At a lexical level, abstract geometric motifs functioned as genuine ideograms: the rhombus codified the earth and fertility, the zigzag represented the vital forces of nature, and the wheat ear conveyed the idea of sacred regeneration. In the traditional community, this language ensured instantaneous social communication, decoding the wearer's marital status, age, and regional background. By observing a woman's blouse at the village dance (*hora*), the community could immediately decode her status: age, marital standing (unmarried girl, young wife, widow), social position, and even emotional state (via the color code: vivid colors for youth and celebration, dark or absent colors for mourning and old age).

In contemporary times, however, modernization and urbanization have caused a code rupture. The phenomenon of blind copying and computerized industrial reproduction (specific to the fast-fashion trend) has led to the de-semanticization of the costume, transforming an articulate language into visual noise, where motifs are combined chaotically and emptied of ritualistic content. Nevertheless, this study highlights an ongoing dynamic of re-semanticization: the ie has not died as a language, but is undergoing an intense process of identity reclamation. The contemporary wearer uses this garment as a current discourse in relation to the global world.

The paper analyzes three directions of this revitalization: the use of the ie as a political manifesto and identity branding in the international public sphere, where the local sign becomes a universal national symbol; the emergence of virtual communities (*Moldova coase Ie*, *Bucovina coase Ie*, *Semne cusute*, *Măiestria*, *Șezătoarea Basarabiei*, *Șezătoarea Basarabia*) that act as schools of textile paleography, where manual stitching becomes a form of cultural resistance against industrial standardization; and the semiotic hybridization found in postmodern street-style (pairing the ie with a leather jacket), which generates a conceptual dialogue between urban modernity and ancestral rurality. When an ie with ancestral motifs is worn with a black leather jacket, we witness a semiotic dialogue between two worlds. The leather jacket (a sign of urban modernity, of a rebellious or rock spirit) collides with the Ie (a sign of the ancestral and of rural purity). Thus, through its approach, this paper demonstrates that the contemporary ie refuses inert museumification. It remains a living object and a bearer of collective memory, capable of generating new meanings as long as society relearns and respects its structural alphabet.

Even if today most of us no longer know how to read every line of the rhombus or every "wolf's tooth" (*dinte de lup*) on the *încreț*, we intuitively perceive that this blouse carries a coded message. By refusing to let the ie become a mere commercial design and by striving to understand and respect its grammatical structure, the contemporary community transforms the ie from an archaeological document into a living, articulate, and extremely powerful discourse.

Keywords: semiotics, Romanian blouse, de-semanticization, identity reclamation.

IA as an identity element and aesthetic matrix in Nicolae Grigorescu's creation

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Romanian art, in its vast complexity and depth, has offered, over the centuries, countless reflections of the nation's soul, its aspirations and its rich heritage. Among the countless elements that have contributed to defining this visual identity, the ia occupies a place of masterly importance. This traditional piece of clothing, of intrinsic beauty and layered symbolism, has long transcended its purely practical role, becoming a true standard of belonging, refinement and the Romanian spirit. In a historical and cultural context, the work of the painter Nicolae Grigorescu (1838-1907) stands out as an essential point of reference, through the prism of the way in which he valorised and transfigured the ia into a central piece of his creation, giving it a new artistic and identity dimension.

The present study proposes a paradigm shift in the reception of Nicolae Grigorescu's work, placing the ia not in the position of a simple clothing accessory of the rural universe, but in the role of an autonomous plastic subject, formal matrix and identity pivot. In Grigorescu's work, the ia ceases to be a background ethnographic detail; it becomes a projection screen of Romanian pictorial modernity and an instrument for conceptualizing national dignity.

In art history studies dedicated to the 19th century, the folk costume has often been analysed as a secondary element, a decoration meant to ensure the "national specificity" in portraiture, genre composition, etc. A careful reading of Nicolae Grigorescu's work, however, reveals an inverse reality: in his canvases, the ia does not dress the model, but the model is chosen to wear and enhance the ia.

In an era in which Romanian urban society imported its cultural and clothing forms from the West, Grigorescu operates a spectacular movement of aesthetic resistance. He isolates the ia from its purely utilitarian context and treats it as an object of high spirituality and visual refinement. The white canvas, rough or fluid, decorated with ancestral motifs, becomes the nucleus around which the painter organizes his composition, volume and, above all, the equation of light.

For Grigorescu, the major challenge was not to copy the embroidery patterns, but to translate plastically the texture and physical properties of the ia under the incidence of sunlight (plein-air). Depending on the material from which the ia was made, the artist recalibrated his entire brushwork technique.

The revolutionary element brought by Grigorescu to Romanian painting is the treatment of the white of the ia. Influenced by the experience of Barbizon and the impressionist avant-garde, the artist refuses to see in white a non-color. The white of the ia becomes a hypersensitive reactive medium. Instead of using white as a simple value of luminosity, Grigorescu loads it with reflexes. In the shadow areas of the wide sleeves, he introduces bluish reflections (taken from the sky) and discreet ochres (reflected by the earth). The ia thus functions as a mirror of the entire surrounding macrocosm, integrating the character into nature through the fabric.

The reconceptualization of Nicolae Grigorescu's work from the perspective of the centrality of the ia demonstrates that the artist discovered in this traditional piece the perfect formula of his plastic modernity. By isolating, refining and glorifying the ia, Nicolae Grigorescu not only documented the past, but offered Romanian culture an immaculate and perennial visual symbol, valid in universality.

Keywords: ia, identity, textile archetype, Nicolae Grigorescu.

Age and Gender Stratification Reflected in Romanian Traditional Costume

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The traditional costume of any people is conceptually unitary. This conceptual unity is manifested in the way the very purpose of wearing clothing is understood, from which derive the function of each garment, its principal characteristics, as well as the archetypal structures in accordance with which the various categories of garments may vary and evolve in the process of adapting to the environment and to the status of the wearer. Traditional costume comprises not only clothing, but also head adornment (the cut of the hair, its arrangement, hair fastenings, head coverings and the manner of wearing them), footwear and ornaments.

According to the Romanian traditional mentality, garments cover the nakedness of the body, constituting its first material envelope and, at the same time, contributing to the harmonious correlation between the physical body, the subtle bodies, the personality of the individual and the natural as well as the social environment. Thus, the general characteristics of Romanian traditional costume are revealed through a series of particular manifestations, depending on the age and gender category to which the wearer belongs, on his or her social status and, likewise, on the geographic, historical and cultural specificity of the region in which he or she lives.

The shirt, for instance, regarded as the basic garment of Romanian traditional costume and worn by members of all age and gender categories throughout the regions inhabited by Romanians, rests upon the unitary concept of the covering closest to the body. In making the shirt, the unitary principle of cutting from straight panels of homespun cloth (hemp, flax, cotton, floss silk/boranic) is observed, while all the openings (the neckline, the hem, the sleeve ends) and the places held to be energetically significant (chest, shoulders) are decorated/protected with ornament. Even so, shirts vary from one region to another and show a certain specificity for the different age and gender categories. The most elaborate ornamentation is found on the shirts of the young, those of marriageable age (girls and young men).

The everyday costume of children does not include the girdle (the brâu, the chingă, the chimir), which becomes an obligatory element from adolescence onward, when the first signs of sexuality appear. From the same stage of life, girls and women must wear a skirt covering (catrință, fotă, vâlnic, opreg etc.), while boys and men wear trousers (ițari, izmene, cioareci etc.).

Romanian traditional costume reflects age and gender stratification, functioning as a rigorous semiotic system that encodes information legible to the entire community.

Keywords: traditional costume, age category, gender category, traditional shirt, ornament.

Ukrainian Vyshyvanka and Romanian Ia in the Cultural Borderland of Bukovina: Between Shared Heritage and National Narratives

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In contemporary humanities, traditional culture is increasingly interpreted not as a static “national artifact,” but rather as the result of long-term cultural contacts, mutual influences, and processes of exchange. This tendency is especially visible in borderland regions, where cultural practices were formed through the continuous interaction of various ethnic, confessional, and social communities. In this context, Bukovina represents one of the most illustrative examples of a cultural borderland in Central and Eastern Europe.

For centuries, the Ukrainian and Romanian populations of Bukovina developed within a shared historical space. A particularly important role in this process was played by the Austrian period, when the region functioned as a multiethnic province of the Habsburg Monarchy. Constant interaction between communities contributed not only to economic and social exchanges, but also to the formation of common elements of everyday culture. One of the most expressive examples of such mutual influence is traditional clothing – the Ukrainian vyshyvanka and the Romanian ia.

Despite the differences between local traditions, the Ukrainian and Romanian embroidered shirts of Bukovina reveal numerous common features. These similarities concern ornamental motifs, colour palettes, embroidery techniques, cuts, and decorative composition. Geometric and floral ornaments, the predominance of red and black colours, and the symbolic meaning of individual elements contributed to the creation of a shared visual space within the region. At the same time, this common cultural field preserved distinct markers of difference connected with language, religious affiliation, local traditions, and forms of self-identification among particular communities.

Thus, traditional clothing in the Bukovinian borderland fulfilled a dual function. On the one hand, it represented a space of cultural dialogue and interaction; on the other, it remained an important marker of ethnic and local identity. This allows the vyshyvanka and the ia to be interpreted not merely as elements of “national costume,” but also as components of a broader regional cultural heritage.

In the twenty-first century, traditional clothing has experienced a new wave of actualization. Ukrainian Vyshyvanka Day and the Romanian celebration of Ia Day increasingly transcend the boundaries of folklore festivals and become important instruments of cultural representation, public history, and symbolic social consolidation. Social media, festivals, cultural initiatives, and tourism projects contribute to the popularization of traditional clothing as an element of contemporary heritage branding. In this context, the vyshyvanka and the ia function not only as symbols of ethnic heritage, but also as tools of cultural diplomacy and international representation for Ukraine and Romania.

At the same time, the contemporary revival of traditional clothing raises broader questions concerning the character of cultural heritage in borderland regions. Is it possible to speak about a distinct “Bukovinian” cultural tradition that transcends national narratives? To what extent is it appropriate to interpret traditional clothing exclusively within the categories of “Ukrainian” or “Romanian,” if many of its elements emerged within a shared cultural environment? The borderland character of Bukovina demonstrates that tradition almost never exists in a “purely national” form, but rather emerges through long processes of coexistence, interaction, and mutual reinterpretation.

Keywords: Bukovina, cultural borderland, cultural heritage, identity, traditional clothing.

The Handkerchief as an Element of Romanian Traditional Culture

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The embroidered handkerchief—known in various regions of Romania as *năframă*, *ștergar de mână*, or *căptăluș*—represents one of the most intimate and meaningful objects in the Romanian ethnographic inventory. Although at first glance it may appear to be a simple square piece of cloth intended for hygienic or decorative use, in the context of traditional society, the handkerchief functioned as a genuine instrument of social communication, a marker of status, and a carrier of ritual language.

From an ethnographic perspective, the making of a handkerchief involved a laborious process integrated into the domestic cycle of textile fiber processing, using materials such as linen, hemp, or cotton. The cloth, often woven at home on a loom, had to be particularly fine, reflecting the diligence and skill of the girl or woman who prepared it.

The ornamentation of the handmade embroidered handkerchief was never accidental. The embroidery, usually placed along the edges or in the corners, used geometric motifs such as rhombuses and winding lines, vegetal motifs such as flowers, leaves, and garlands, or avimorphic motifs such as birds. The chromatic choices varied according to the region and the purpose of the object. Bright colors, such as red with accents of yellow and blue, were specific to young people and symbolized vitality, love, and the energy of life. More sober colors, such as black, brown, and navy blue, were used by older women or during moments of mourning, reflecting restraint and resignation.

Each embroidery stitch—whether cross stitch, counted-thread stitch, or blanket stitch—added not only aesthetic value, but also a spiritual barrier, transforming the piece of cloth into a protective object. In the lives of young people in the traditional village, the embroidered handkerchief played the role of a coded love letter. In an age when feelings could not be freely expressed because of strict social norms, offering a handkerchief became a public or secret declaration of affection.

The handmade embroidered handkerchief was never merely an accessory, but a repository of emotions, beliefs, and social norms. From the threads woven in the intimacy of rural gatherings to its proud display during Sunday dances or its solemn role in rites of passage, this small square of cloth concentrates within itself the entire philosophy of the Romanian village: that of beautifying the useful and sacralizing the everyday.

Keywords: embroidered handkerchief, Romanian traditional culture, ethnography, textile heritage, ritual language, folk motifs, social communication, cultural identity.

Reinterpretation of Traditional Motifs from the Romanian Blouse (Ia) in Contemporary Wood Sculpture in the Republic of Moldova for the 2026 International Conference Identity, Tradition and Cultural Interferences. Symbolism of the Romanian blouse „Ia”

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The ornamental motifs of the Romanian traditional blouse (ia) constitute an important system of cultural signs, carrying identity, symbolic, and aesthetic values. In the context of contemporary art in the Republic of Moldova, these traditional motifs transcend their original decorative function and become sources of inspiration for new forms of artistic expression. This study examines the ways in which the ornamental motifs specific to the ia are reinterpreted in contemporary wood sculpture, highlighting the process of transferring textile symbols into the three-dimensional language of sculpture.

The research is based on a comparative analysis of traditional ornaments found on the ia such as the rhombus, the cross, the Tree of Life, the spiral, solar motifs, and phytomorphic elements and the manner in which they are employed in the works of contemporary Moldovan sculptors. The study investigates the formal and semantic transformations of these motifs, their adaptation to the specific properties of wood as a material, and their integration into decorative, monumental, or conceptual sculptural compositions.

The findings demonstrate that the reinterpretation of motifs from the ia contributes to the revitalization of traditional cultural heritage through contemporary artistic practices. Wood, a material deeply connected to folk culture and traditional craftsmanship, facilitates a dialogue between past and present, linking the intangible heritage embodied in the ornamentation of the ia with the tangible heritage of sculpture. As a result, traditional motifs are recontextualized and acquire new expressive meanings, becoming active elements of contemporary artistic discourse. This phenomenon highlights the continuity of cultural values and the capacity of art to preserve and renew identity symbols within the framework of modern society. The tendency to revalorize traditional motifs in contemporary arts in the Republic of Moldova confirms the importance of the relationship between tradition and innovation in shaping contemporary cultural identity.

Keywords: Romanian blouse (ia), ornamental motifs, contemporary sculpture, wood, cultural heritage, cultural identity, traditional symbolism, Republic of Moldova.

Gold Coin Necklaces Worn by the Roma: Between Tradition, Historical Reality, and Identity Marker

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According to historical and oral testimonies, some Roma groups traditionally wear gold coin necklaces as part of their traditional attire.

These ornaments have a long history, and in the collective imagination of non-Roma populations they are often regarded as a genuine identity marker. Furthermore, some of the Roma individuals interviewed emphasized the distinctive and specific character of these adornments.

Historical evidence indicates that these ornaments may have originated through a process of cultural borrowing from the populations with whom Roma communities came into contact. Over time, however, Roma traditions invested them with particular meanings and significance.

Gold coin necklaces symbolize wealth and prestige. In some cases, they distinguish different Roma groups from one another, functioning as an inter-group identity marker. At the same time, they have served, and continue to serve, as a means of storing wealth and transporting financial assets.

Under the communist regime, Roma communities suffered as a result of the confiscation of these gold coins. Following the 1989 Revolution, only part of the confiscated property was recovered by the descendants of the Roma families concerned.

The gold coin necklace thus represents a genuine historical element, one that is nevertheless imbued with complex symbolic meanings within Roma communities. It functions as an identity marker endowed with strong symbolic significance.

Keywords: gold coin necklaces, identity marker, Roma, communism, cultural borrowing.



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