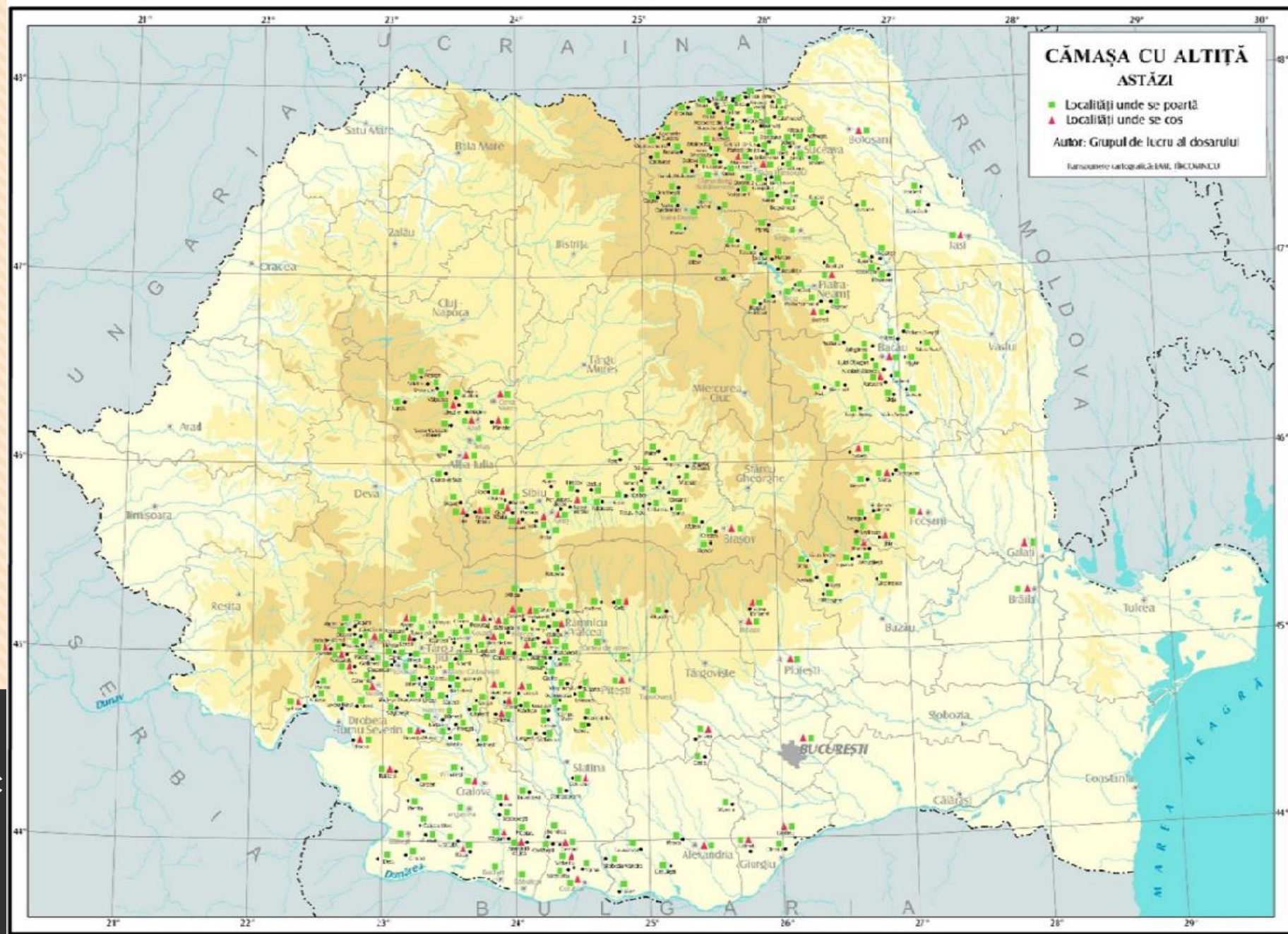


The art of the traditional female blouse with “altița” in Romania and the Republic of Moldova

**– inscribed on the UNESCO Representative
List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the
Humanity (in 2022)**

Dr. Ioana BASKERVILLE
Romanian Academy, Iasi Branch
President of the National Commission for the
Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage



The long history of this clothing item

- Documented in church iconography
- Worn by Romanian queens



Ruler Neagoe Basarab's daughters wearing traditional blouses, portion of a votive painting, fresco, in the Episcopal Church of the Curtea de Argeș Monastery, 1526, author Dobromir Zugravul (Dobromir the Painter)



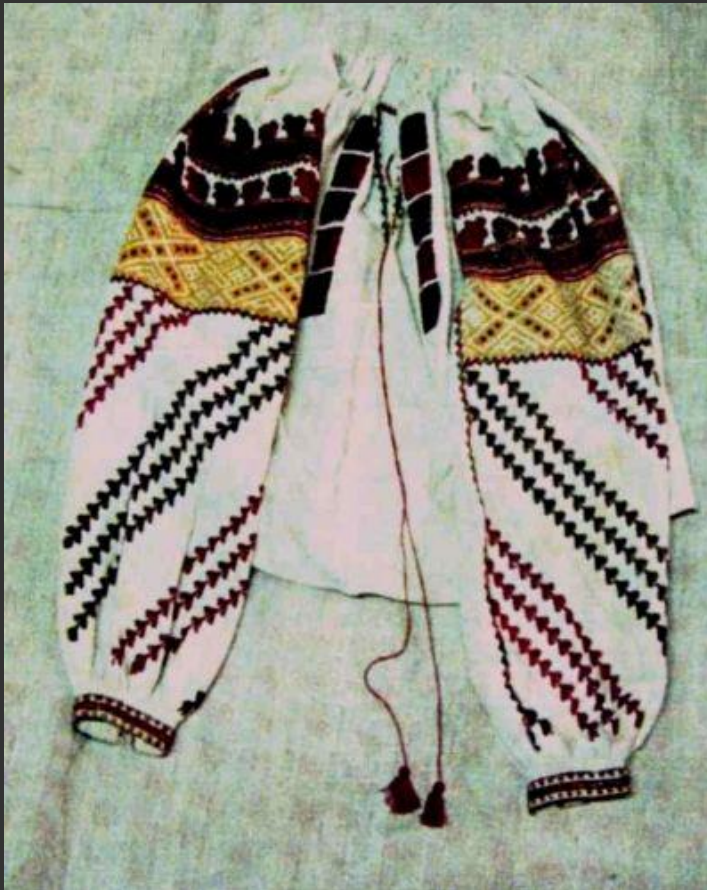
Her Majesty Queen Elisabeta of Romania in the folk costume from Argeș, 1872, Healy George Peter Alexander (1813-1894), oil on canvas, Peleș National Museum

What is the blouse with “altiță”?



Photo: Sezatoare Arges

What is the blouse with “altiță”?



Museum items (19th c. – early 20th c.)



Image collection of the Ethnographic
Museum of Brasov, Photo: Arpad Udvardi

- Etymology: Lat. *altus-a-um* = 'tall'
- The blouse's cut is gathered at the neck, where the sleeves and the body join
- The rich decorative sewn design on the shoulder ("altitza") and on the sleeves ("râuri" / 'rivers')



Photo: Museum of Oltenia (Craiova)



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A strong intergenerational continuity

Why the blouse with "altiță"?

- Inspired a painting of Henri Matisse ("La Blouse roumaine", 1940)
- The Romanian diaspora (since 2013)
- The urgent need to protect authentic design from mass-produced imitations by fast fashion brands.



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The online and in-person large sewing communities



Photos: Roxana Deca

Reclaiming and reviving:

from museum collections to living transmission of the sewing practices and specific ornaments



Photos: Corina Mihăescu

Rural & urban, young & elder



Photo: Silviu Horatiu Ilea



Photo: Mirela Cretu (ASTRA Museum)

The young generation



Photo: Roxana Deca



Photo: Mirela Cretu (ASTRA Museum)

The UNESCO recognition

- 2022: Rabat (Kingdom of Morocco)
- A UNESCO heritage of Romania & the Republic of Moldova



A continued engagement



Photo: Seazatoare Bucuresti

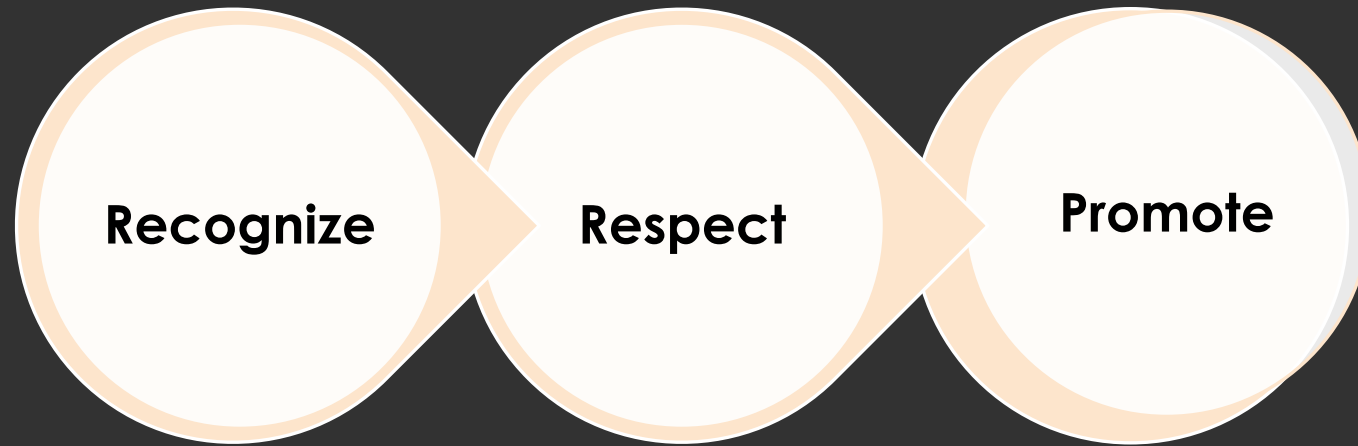


Photo: Mirela Cretu (ASTRA Museum)



Photos: Adrian Garneata (CJCPCT Iasi)

What are our responsibilities as civil society?



What are our responsibilities as civil society?

- Respect authentic items and craftspeople
- Legislative means to protect those who fully comply with the original techniques → limit counterfeiting and mimicking the crafts for purely pecuniary goals



Photo: La Blouse Roumaine

Civil society support – examples of good practices

- People wear and buy the traditionally handcrafted blouses within community events during religious, national and local holidays and fairs, other social gatherings thus supporting the livelihood of craftswomen who are making and selling the item
- In order to pass down the knowledge to the younger generation (sewing and embroidery techniques), craftswomen offer on a regular basis demonstration in elementary and vocational schools in their areas of residency
- Civic groups and NGOs interested to help safeguard the folk art and the craftsmanship associated with the blouse run online information campaigns to determine designers and other fashion businesses to give credit to the craftspeople and to discourage cultural missappropriation of the element (since 2013, the #GiveCredit movement).