



Traditional Architecture in Romanian Philately (V): Case Study Regarding Households in Nereju, Ostrov, Sălciua de Jos, Șanț and Sârbova

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Author BVC designed the study, performed the literature searches, and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author ALP managed the analyses of the study. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Traditional architecture is integrated into the landscape, is adapted to the environment, and uses local natural materials. These are the general features. In fact, in each area there are their own and recognizable elements that ensure the local specificity. In this context, the present study aims to emphasize the beauty of traditional Romanian architecture in terms of philately. It is desired to expose the architectural specifics from the other five areas. This time it is the turn of illustrated postcards and other philatelic effects from Nereju (Vrancea), Ostrov (Constanța), Sălciua de Jos (Alba), Șanț (Bistrița-Năsăud) and Sârbova (Timiș) to come to the fore. What do these households have in common? Each of them suggests the idea that the new architecture should not imitate the old one. But it must respect the local specificity, assuming at the same time the moment when it was created. There is no need for constructions that imitate the architecture of 100-150 years ago (shown in the philatelic effects exposed), but for constructions that respect the spirit of the place.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The term "vernacular" in architecture can take on different facets depending on the trends of the country in which it is used. For which this term contains a small dose of ambiguity. Why isn't "vernacular architecture" more simply called "traditional architecture"? Because "traditional architecture" refers to buildings erected by craftsmen, by people specialized in construction, and who will not be their users [1]. The craftsmen took their knowledge orally from their ancestors, and the materialization of their knowledge leads to architecture specific to the area they belong to. Traditional architecture also includes public buildings (e.g., churches, windmills, watermills).

"Vernacular architecture" can become "traditional architecture" through the persistence of its forms and concepts. What about "popular architecture"? "Popular architecture" is "traditional architecture" but applied only in rural areas. And "Rural Architecture"? "Rural architecture" refers to rural architecture - both popular and trends over time. It does not have the values of "traditional architecture" or "folk architecture".

Today, there is so much talk about traditional architecture, along with vernacular, because it is the condition for the sustainable development of rural communities [2],[3]. Traditional architecture has the quality of being ecologically sustainable by adapting to the climate and relief of a certain place and by using the natural building materials available in that area. Thus, vernacular architecture has a minimal impact on the natural environment, being sustainable from a social point of view, because it is based on the science of construction (local know-how) and local labor. This stimulates the feeling of belonging to people in that space, makes them feel that their place has something special and that they share the specifics of the area.

Vernacular architecture is sustainable and economical because it engages the local economy in the construction process and supports tourism [3]. Who prefers to go to Maramureș, for example, and sleep in a house without personality, with double-glazed windows, painted in bright colors and stainless steel railings? You go to Maramureș, and to other ethnographic areas, just to find the specific rural landscape. With small wooden houses and a

shingle roof, but also with local cuisine, these are the few places where you can still find food without preservatives and dyes.

The specific architecture of a certain place is influenced by a combination of factors, without any of them being decisive. The interpretation of traditional architecture only according to climatic factors, for example, would be simplistic. Sometimes, neighboring villages with the same climate and relief develop differently. To emphasize this aspect, we proposed, as a continuation of our previous concerns, to present five other households. These are alphabetically organized, and, as we proposed, the list of case studies continues with Nereju (Vrancea), Ostrov (Constanța), Sălciua de Jos (Alba), Șanț (Bistrița-Năsăud) and Sârbova (Timiș).

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The documentation regarding the elements of traditional architecture was made through the prism of consulting some specialized sites. In particular, sites related to the areas considered in the study were consulted. At the base of all was the specialized information provided by the platforms dedicated to the Village Museum.

The description of the zonal specificity and implicitly of the architectural dynamism was made by referring to the information from the sites with philatelic content. These include the Colnect®, Delcampe®, eBay®, Okazii®, PicClick® and StampWorld® platforms. In addition to this information, discussions with other collectors of philatelic material were also of real use.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 The Household from Nereju (Vrancea County)

From the various typologies of Vrancea households, smaller or larger, according to the material condition of the owners [4], the area is represented in the Village Museum in Bucharest by a house brought from Nereju (see Fig. 1a) [5],[6]. It dates from the second half of the nineteenth century. Next to the gate with fir poles and horizontal beech planks, which slides horizontally, ensuring a simple but ingenious and secret lock, there is the "merindar" suspended on wooden legs. It shelters under a roof of shingles,

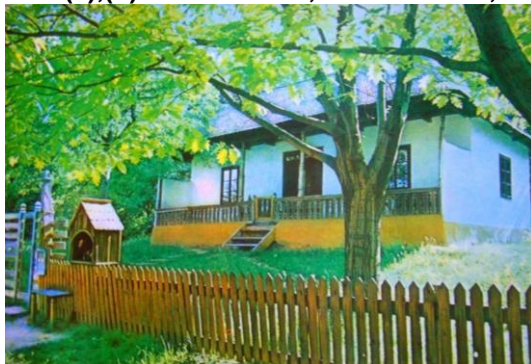
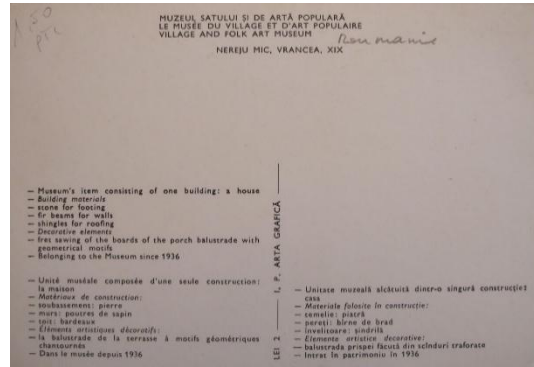
the bucket of fresh water, and a bowl to fruit made available to hikers.

Built on rough stone boulders, with a porch on the front and ornate pillars, the house is built of

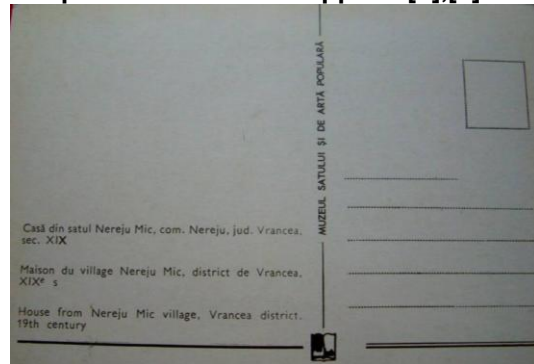
fir, and with small shingles covered in a notched part on the visible side. The walls, glued with clay mixed with straw, are whitewashed both inside and out.



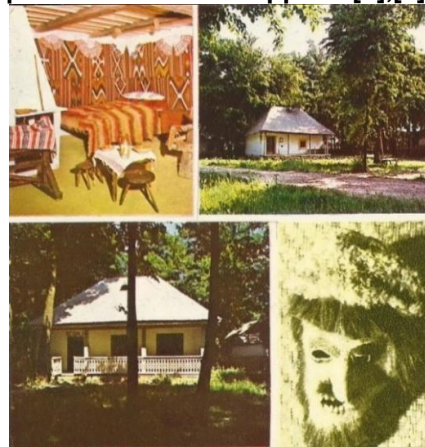
(a),(b) exterior view, double-sided, no other philatelic elements applied [5],[6]



(c),(d) exterior view, double-sided, no other philatelic elements applied [7],[8]



(e) exterior view, distant plan, no other philatelic elements applied [9],[10]



(f) exterior view, distant plan, no other philatelic elements applied [11],[12]



(g) collage view, distant plan, no other philatelic elements applied [13]

Fig. 1. Illustrated postcards representing the household from Nereju (Vrancea)

Shepherding as a main occupation is reflected in the many wool and fur products used by the inhabitants. At the end of the porch, a wide plank bed, covered with hemp linen and a streaked blanket of colored wool, serves summer rest.

In the middle room there are flower vases with pyrographed motifs. The warehouse is also a carpentry workshop. Clothes and utensils used in the main occupations are hung on wooden nails. In the living room there is a cupboard with earthenware, a low table with three legs and chairs around it; pots, hatchery, and cauldron.

In the cleanroom, the furniture is simple: two beds, a table, a bench, and a box of fir wood dowries. The walls are covered with polychrome wool and cotton fabrics. The decor is completed by erasing bright colors. Another ethnographic element that stands out is the masks carved in wood or made of sheep fur. They are used in fun games organized since ancient times on waking nights at the head of the dead. These dances signify the liberation from suffering and the perpetuation of life.

3.2 The Household from Ostrov (Constanța County)

A household from the village of Ostrov, a settlement on the right bank of the Danube, was also transferred, in 1958, to the Village Museum in Bucharest [14]. This reflects the concerns of the locals, who in parallel with agriculture and viticulture, were also engaged in fishing and beekeeping. In this context, the household includes the house, the oven, the bread, and the barn. In front of the barn is a wicker basket for storing grain and a wooden pot used in viticulture. From a constructive point of view, the house is built on a clay pedestal mixed with chopped straw. The walls of a network of hornbeam, twigs and oak forks are glued to clay and protected by a roof on four smooth slopes.

The plan of the house includes a median porch that serves as a kitchen. It has two chimneys that house the hearths and the openings of the two Mediterranean-influenced stoves. Next comes the living room, the cleanroom, and a pantry, the latter being stored even the work tools [14]. On the main façade, the low porch with beautifully shaped pillars and capitals, painted red, is the main decoration element of the house. The rich household inventory includes a series of oriental pieces, related to the long coexistence with the

Turkish-Tatar minorities. These include copper vessels, including cauldrons, trays, and pans.

The interior of the living room is individualized by an archaic bed shape, made of a beaten earth platform, and by the richness, variety, and beauty of the interior fabrics. They are made of wool, borangic, and cotton. The textile materials have a very rich ornamental range. Among the chosen or embroidered motifs are the compositions with "pond birds", "horsemen", "women with umbrellas". The thick woolen fabrics are pieces of great artistic spectacle, striking through the geometric decoration and the chromatic in vivid tones.

3.3 The Household from Sălcuia de Jos (Alba County)

The architectural ensemble from Sălcuia de Jos (Alba county), consisting of a house and a pantry, was built in 1815 and transferred to the Village Museum in Bucharest in 1936 [19]. The name of the village comes from the large number of willows that grew on the banks of the Arieș, and the specification "de Jos" indicates the place downstream, where it is located on the river. In Țara Moșilor, in addition to shepherding and agriculture, mainly occupations, forestry work, wood processing and mining were a means to cover the necessities of life.

Representative of the traditional architecture of the Apuseni Mountains, the house and pantry of the Arieș Valley - kept in scattered villages that climb to the ridges of the Apuseni Mountains - is an example of the connection between man and the environment.

The plan of the house includes the porch and a room. Outside, there is a porch on the façade, with pillars joined by elegant arches, and a wooden railing. The windows have carved wooden bars. The house is built of fir beams carved on four sides, on a stone foundation. It has a roof three times higher than the walls, with steep slopes, to adapt to the climate with heavy rainfall and to provide space for the conservation of materials. The cover is made of hand-harvested wheat straw, "trampled with a foot", on a wooden frame. The pairs of "corni" are fixed on the beams and nailed to wooden nails.

In the hall, there is a high hearth built of stone slabs over which is suspended a pyramidal basket made of basalt slabs. The living room impresses with the richness of woolen fabrics,



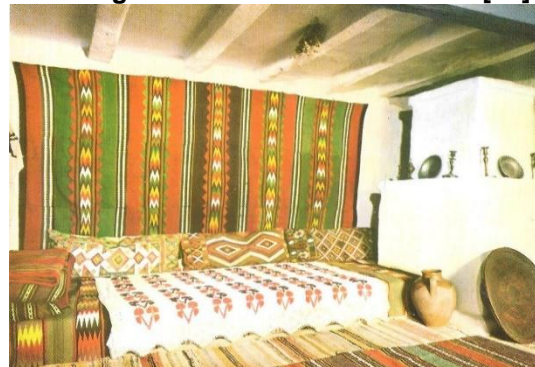
(a) exterior view, distant plan, associated with a semi-illustration [15]



(b) exterior view, distant plan, associated with a semi-illustration that also bears the special poststamp "The Semicentenary of the Village Museum from Bucharest" [16]

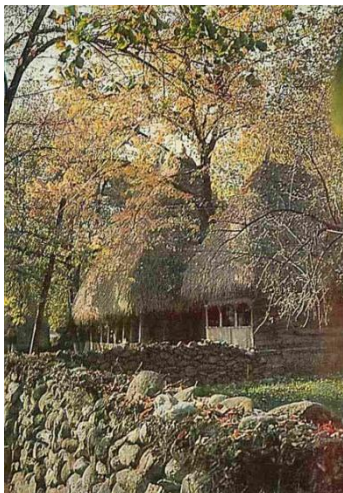


(c) interior view, without other applied philatelic elements [17]

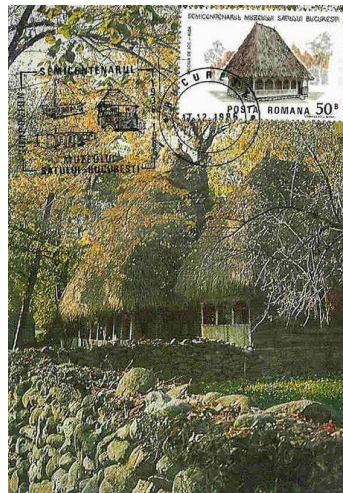


(d) interior view, without other applied philatelic elements [18]

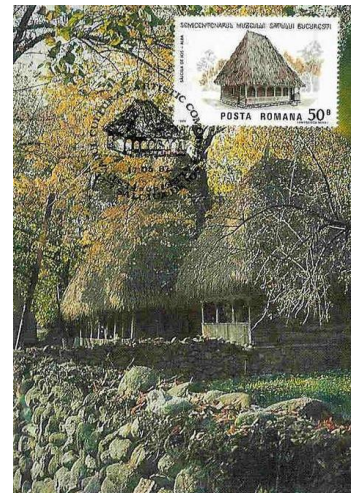
Fig. 2. Illustrated postcards representing the household from Ostrov (Constanța)



(a) exterior view, distant plan, no other philatelic elements applied [20],[21]



(b) exterior view, distant plan, bearing the special stamp "Semicentenary of the Village Museum" and the 50 bani postage stamp from the same issue, published on July 21, 1986, Bucharest [22]

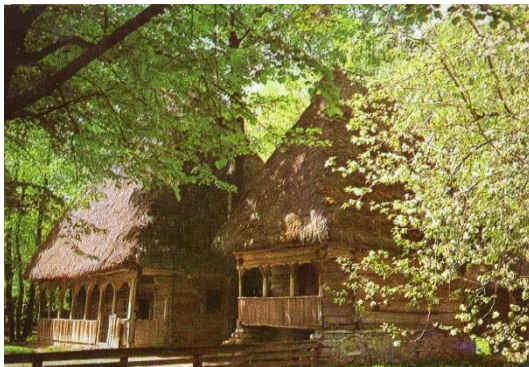


(c) exterior view, distant plan, bearing the special stamp "Cultural-artistic festival Alba's Treasures" and the 50 bani postage stamp from the same issue, published on July 21, 1986, Bucharest [23],[24]

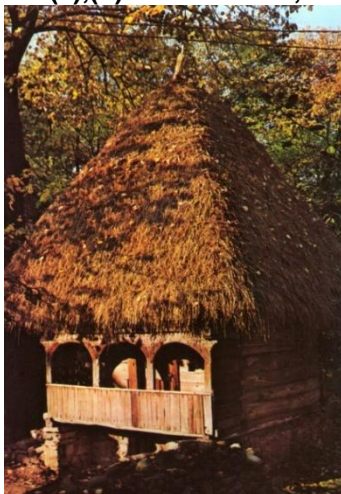
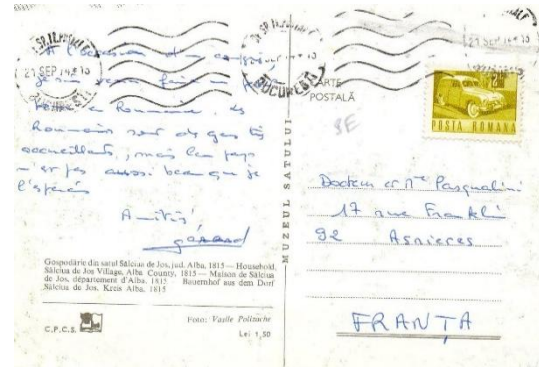


(d) exterior view, back to postcards above, no other philatelic elements applied [20]

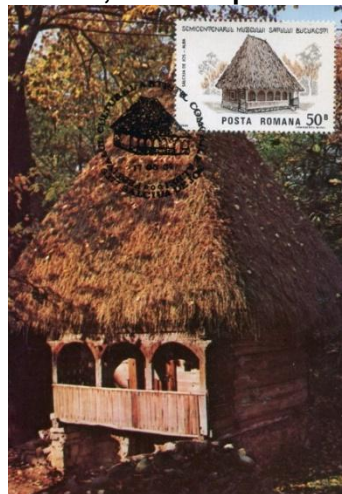
Fig. 3. Illustrated postcards representing the household from Sălciua de Jos (Alba)



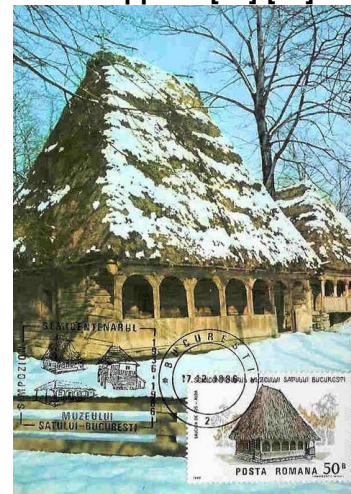
(a),(b) exterior view, double-sided, no other philatelic elements applied [25]-[27]



(c) exterior view, no other philatelic elements applied [28],[29]



(d) exterior view, bearing the special stamp "Cultural-artistic festival Alba's Treasures" and the 50 bani postage stamp from the same issue, published on July 21, 1986, Bucharest [30]



(e) exterior view, bearing the special stamp "Semcentenary of the Village Museum" and the 50 bani postage stamp from the same issue, published on July 21, 1986, Bucharest [31]



(f) exterior view, bearing the special stamp "Cultural-artistic festival Alba's Treasures", dated 17.05.1987, Sălciua de Jos P.O. [32]

(g) exterior view, bearing the special stamp "Semicentenary of the Village Museum", 21.07.1986, Bucharest [33]

Fig. 4. Other philatelic materials representing the household from Sălciua de Jos (Alba)

glass icons, and ceramic vessels. The furniture of the room comprises a bed fixed on two sides between the beams of the walls, a high table, and chairs with carved backs. The richly decorated dowry boxes and the swing fixed in the beam are covered with meticulous chisels. All these are the proof of a wooden creation of a special artistic value. The pantry serves as a storage room for food and clothes. It is built of wood, with a high stone foundation, with the structure and facade almost identical to those of the house, highlighting the unity of the ensemble.

3.4 The Household from Șanț (Bistrița-Năsăud County)

Șanț village, located in the Someșului Mare valley, is part of the villages whose purpose was to defend the border of the old Austro-Hungarian Empire. The main occupations of the inhabitants were cattle raising, agriculture, and working in the forest. Most of the buildings in the village were built of wood. The house transferred to the Village Museum in Bucharest, in 1936, is built of wreaths of beams on a high stone base, with a porch on three sides [34]. The four-pitched roof has a "draniță" roof.

The plan of the house includes a median porch, without a ceiling, flanked by two large rooms. Each of them has a pantry on the backside. In the hall, where various household activities took place, there is also an area where food was prepared during the summer.

Numerous household tools and kitchen utensils, present in the hall, illustrate the domestic concerns of the owners. In the living room, the

complex heating system consisting of the oven and the stove with hob is important. The furniture, reduced in terms of the parts used, is arranged next to the walls. This creates an optimal space for lucrative activities [34]. This functional room is not without the warmth of household fabrics.

In the guest room, the furniture consists of two beds arranged symmetrically. Next to them is a table in the middle, a bench with a backrest, cupboards, dowry boxes, and painted hangers. The numerous decorative fabrics in wool and cotton and ceramic vessels give the interior a festive atmosphere. The center of interest in this room is the dowry. It is usually stacked up to the ceiling. The ornamental range of interior fabrics is characterized by the massive presence of floral elements. The chromatics are dominated by white and red.

3.5 The Household from Sârbova (Timiș County)

The household of Sârbova village, a representative element of the plain area of Banat, is located along the valley of the river Timiș. It dates from the beginning of the 19th century and was rebuilt in the Village Museum in Bucharest in 1936 [39]. From an economic point of view, in this area, the inhabitants practiced mainly agriculture as the main occupation. In many cases, this is associated with raising cattle and sheep, but also viticulture. Occupations are reflected in the structure of the household, which includes the house and the stables with shed and shed, completed with the storage vessel for corn.

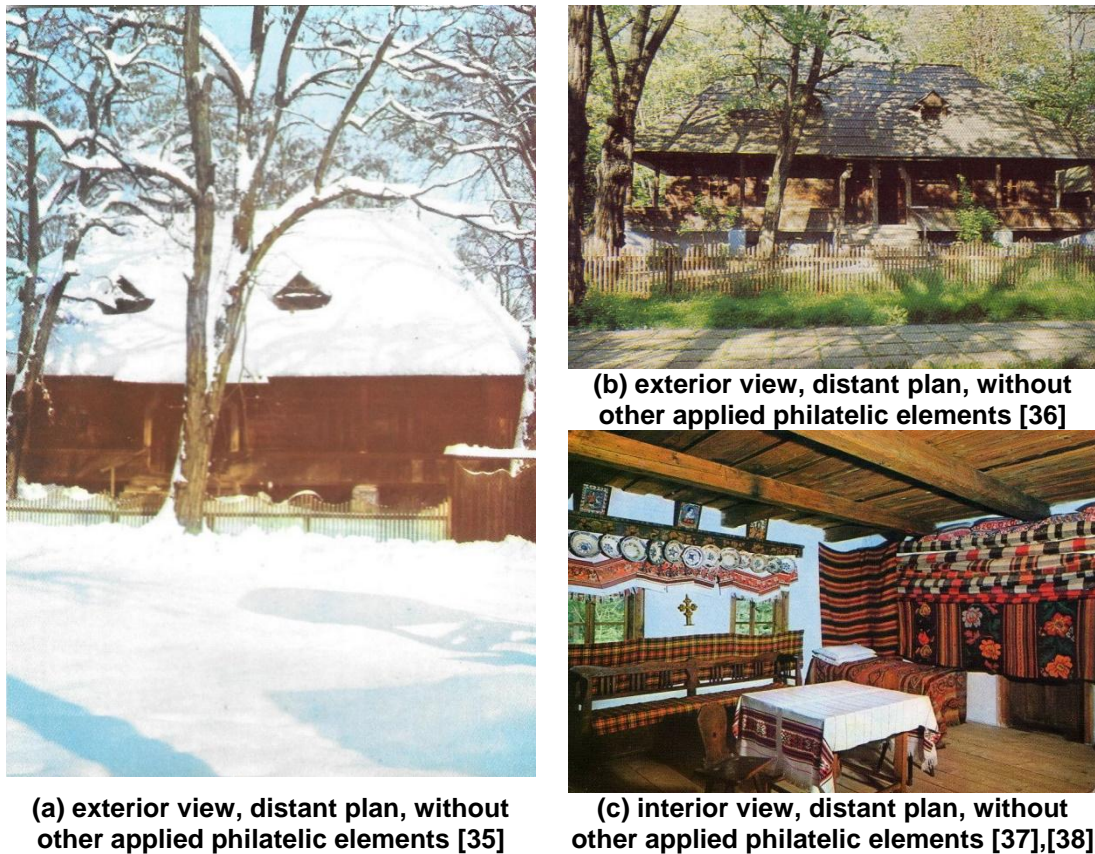


Fig. 5. Illustrated postcards representing the household from Șanț (Bistrița-Năsăud)



Fig. 6. Philatelic material representing the household from Sârbova (Timiș)

The constructions are arranged in the form of a closed quadrangle towards the street (see Fig. 6) [40], with a masonry fence. It is provided with board gates decorated with mythical motifs. From a typological point of view, the house belongs to the category of houses with two rooms and a median porch along the façade an open porch with pillars. The house is built on a stone foundation with a narrow wall facing the street, being built of brick, under a gabled roof with a tile roof. Specific to the area is the pediment

decorated with geometric elements in relief, made of plaster that frames the name of the owner and the year of construction.

Both the clean room facing the street and the living room bring together various pieces of furniture and a wide range of woolen fabrics. They have a vivid chromatic, in which red predominates, and are made of cotton, with a rich geometric decoration. In the hall, there is an ingenious and archaic food preparation system.

The oven is equipped with an imposing chimney, which also serves to heat the living rooms. From the above, it is observed that vernacular architecture is a contemporary architecture, but also an architecture that holds the history of society's memory [41], it is the creation of time (it is born from tradition and can be synonymous with popular architecture) [42,43]. At the same time, regarding the Romanian architectural tendencies, it is an architecture unworthy of human imobil heritage [44], if this traditional harmony is not preserved (via Village Museum) [45], which is the core of the human experience, and equally the expression of the culture of a community.

4. CONCLUSION

Although modern architecture has replaced the vernacular, late traces still exist. On the other hand, there is a problem; it has become visible that the vernacular is struggling to survive in an environment dominated by modern and academic architecture (hut cities have appeared in the outlying areas of cities; there are also examples of museum vernacular architecture). The architectural creativity of our century faces some challenges, but it should not abandon 1000 years of vernacular culture. We can even hope that in the future there will be a revival driven by a nostalgia for the old ways of building and inhabited - nostalgia for the essential values of the human being. Until then, however, let us keep alive the memory of the places offered by the former states, this approach being very easily achievable by referring to the philatelic effects that served the needs of the community at that time.

DISCLAIMER

The products used for this research are commonly and predominantly use products in our area of research and country. There is absolutely no conflict of interest between the authors and producers of the products because we do not intend to use these products as an avenue for any litigation but for the advancement of knowledge. Also, the research was not funded by the producing company rather it was funded by personal efforts of the authors.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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