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## ARTISTIC ASPECTS OF TRADITIONAL BESSARABIAN FURNITURE (LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY - MID-20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY)

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**Abstract.** The study focuses on the artistic aspects of traditional furniture from Bessarabia, dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. We emphasize the importance of materials, decorative techniques, artistic means, and decorative structure in the crafting and decorating of traditional furniture. The motivation for this research lies in analyzing how the culture and folk art of Moldova are reflected in the characteristics of traditional furniture. The specific hypothesis of this study posits that Moldovan traditional furniture represents an expression of the talent and artistic sense of the craftsmen and householders from Moldova. The research aims to conduct a detailed analysis of the materials used, including wood and others, as well as decorative techniques such as carving, sculpture, and painting. The objectives include a comprehensive description of the mentioned materials and techniques. The research methods included documentary analysis, relevant illustrations, and extensive field research in all regions of the Republic of Moldova, spanning the years 2007-2023, contributing to the scientific and applied foundation of the research. The main results consist of highlighting the role of traditional furniture in reflecting Moldovan culture and folk art, providing data and illustrative images to support these aspects.

**Keywords:** *folk art, materials, means, traditional furniture, techniques, structure.*

**Rezumat.** Studiul se concentrează asupra aspectelor artistice ale mobilierului tradițional din Basarabia, datând de la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea până în mijlocul secolului al XX-lea. Acesta pune în evidență importanța materialelor, tehnicilor decorative, mijloacelor artistice și structurii decorative în confecționarea și decorarea mobilierului tradițional. Motivația cercetării constă în analiza modului în care cultura și arta populară din Moldova se reflectă în caracteristicile mobilierului tradițional. Ipoteza specifică a acestui studiu presupune că mobila tradițională moldovenească reprezintă o expresie a talentului și a simțului artistic al meșterilor și gospodarilor din Moldova. Scopul cercetării este de a efectua o analiză detaliată a materialelor utilizate, inclusiv lemnul și altele, precum și a tehnicilor decorative, cum ar fi creșterea, sculptura și pictura. Obiectivele includ descrierea exhaustivă a materialelor și tehnicilor menționate. Metodele de cercetare au inclus analiza documentară, ilustrații relevante și cercetări de teren extinse în toate raioanele Republicii Moldova, pe parcursul anilor 2007-2023, ceea ce a contribuit la fundamentare științifică și aplicativă a cercetării.

Principalele rezultate constau în evidențierea rolului mobilierului tradițional în reflectarea culturii și artei populare moldovenești, oferind date și imagini ilustrative pentru a susține aceste aspecte.

**Cuvinte cheie:** *arta populară, materiale, mijloace, mobilier tradițional, tehnici, structură.*

## **1. Introduction**

The culture of people is expressed through the material and spiritual values that dominate in a specific region and define it as a nation. The article "Moldovan Folk Ornaments" by S. N. Șaranuța highlights the close connection between folk art and the everyday life of the people, serving as evidence of their rich talent [1, p. 5]. In this context, our article explores the richness and diversity of folk art, with a focus on rural furniture. Traditional furniture from Bessarabia, from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, a period characterized by significant changes in society and rural environments, represents a remarkable aspect of the cultural and artistic heritage of this region. This furniture is not only an example of the skill of local craftsmen but also serves as a window into the history and culture of Bessarabia during that period. The rustic furniture of Moldova, deeply rooted in rural communities at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was profoundly influenced by the introduction of carpenter-made (urban) furniture into peasant households, revealing signs of modernization and cultural shifts.

This change generated a dynamic interaction between urban and rural environments, impacting the traditions and production styles of furniture. Development initiatives from gubernial and regional zemstvos contributed to the formation of classes and professional schools in the field of craftsmanship, significantly influencing the furniture creation process and reflecting the specific trends of that period.

In this article, we aim to explore the artistic aspects of traditional Bessarabian furniture from this period. Furthermore, in light of the detailed analysis of the classification of traditional furniture based on material, form, and function from previous research [2, pp. 16-17], with a particular consideration of the storage, leisure, and dining functions of furniture, we address the artistic aspects influenced by their placement within the home. Whether they are situated in a pantry, the main house, or the "Casa Mare," these pieces exhibit varying artistic characteristics [3, pp. 73-83]. Focusing on the materials used, decorative techniques, artistic means, and decorative structure. In this regard, we will examine wood, metal, and wickerwork in detail as materials, as well as techniques such as carving, fretwork, sculpture, pyrography, and painting. Additionally, we will delve into the artistic means employed in crafting the furniture, including proportion, symmetry, rhythm, and contrast, all of which contributed to the harmony and expressiveness of these works of art. The decorative structure of rural furniture will be emphasized, highlighting how ornamental elements and motifs were composed to create unique and significant pieces. We will carefully analyze the details that added beauty and value to these furniture pieces, bringing to the forefront the elements that made them so distinct and valuable in the cultural context of Bessarabia.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

In this study, we focused on traditional furniture from the Bessarabia region, dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The materials used for research included authentic pieces of traditional furniture found in museum collections in the Republic of Moldova and items identified during field research. These artifacts were selected to cover a

variety of styles, decorative techniques, and regional characteristics, providing a comprehensive picture of furniture from this period.

To analyze the artistic aspects of traditional Bessarabian furniture in detail, we employed a combination of research methods, including direct observations, field studies, and documentary analysis. Field research involved visits to museums and private collections to examine authentic furniture pieces and document decorative techniques. Direct observations allowed for a detailed assessment of the materials used, wood processing techniques, decorative techniques, as well as the decorative structure of the furniture pieces.

Additionally, we consulted reference sources and previous studies to gain historical, social, and cultural context, crucial for understanding the production of traditional furniture in Bessarabia during the analyzed period. Moreover, based on data analysis, we utilized statistical processing of results to observe regional nuances.

Traditional furniture from rural environments holds a significant place within folk art. A careful observation of furniture pieces found in rural households reveals the craftsmanship and remarkable skills of those who built them, be they carpenters or householders. Although furniture was primarily focused on functionality, adopting simple and ingenious structures, ornamentation was rare. However, special emphasis was placed on ensuring a harmonious balance between the components of the furniture, and correct proportions were crucial. In the artistic album "Din ornamentica romană" (From Romanian Ornamentation) designed by D. Comsa, it is emphasized that art is a replica of nature, reflecting the artist's vision and feelings in the light of their talent [4, p. 4]. This artistic insight is found in folk art, even in objects that may seem predominantly practical but adhere to harmonious proportions, thus highlighting the remarkable aesthetic sense of Romanian rural communities.

In the context of furniture decorations, a limited approach to ornaments can be observed, with special attention paid to their harmonious placement on the respective surfaces. There is a preference for simple forms and entirely engraved surfaces, with a clear prevalence of geometric motifs [5, p.121]. When it comes to the constructive characteristics of traditional furniture, they are distinguished by proportionality and the ability to seamlessly combine various components into a unified ensemble. The decoration was strategically placed on the surfaces of furniture pieces, with a greater concentration on the main parts exposed to view and less presence on less visible sides, completely absent in areas considered invisible. For example, in the case of a bed, ornamentation was concentrated especially on the legs, while the long boards were covered with textiles. A significant observation is the gradual decrease in the density of decor on dowry chests, which held significant artistic value, having multiple exposed surfaces: the main front, the two sides, and the lid. Furthermore, variations can be distinguished regarding the ornamentation of component elements, so that the decor applied to flat and expansive surfaces differs from that applied to thin elements, such as legs or edges of the furniture [6, p.39].

On pieces of furniture, decorative elements such as the diamond or straight line are commonly found, appearing on different planes. These ornamental elements are often inspired by everyday life and the surrounding environment, adapted and stylized using various techniques such as incision, sculpture, painting, or fretwork. These details are carefully and harmoniously placed on the appropriate surfaces to seamlessly blend with the wood's texture [7, p.11].

Each culture develops distinct artistic characteristics defining its folk style. While some elements and ornamental motifs may be influenced by neighboring cultures or invaders, folk

style often evolves independently, still retaining common traits with other cultures. What distinguishes folk style is how the artistic ensemble is composed. By studying peasant furniture pieces from the entire region of Basarabia and through comparative analysis in specialized literature, we can identify the distinct artistic characteristics of peasant furniture, especially those from Basarabia. In general, dating antique furniture from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries divides this period into several distinct intervals: – until 1850; – between 1850–1917; – between 1918–1950; – after 1950 [8, p.171]. However, depending on the type of furniture, characterizing a specific period may be more or less apparent. For instance, dowry chests, due to their distinct artistic features, provide a more detailed characterization of the period in which they were created. Chests covered with tin, for example, are characteristic of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. This relatively short period of crafting these furniture pieces is explained by the rapid wear and tear of tin, which had rapid oxidation and deformation properties.

Moreover, for dowry chests, the furniture's form can provide information about the geographic space and specific period. For example, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the northern and central regions of Bessarabia, the chests were without legs and had a straight lid, with floral elements usually distributed in three rectangular registers. In the same period, in the southern regions, the chests were slightly larger, with profiled legs, a straight lid, and more stylized floral decorations distributed in 2 or 3 registers in a circular form.

However, for other pieces of furniture, such as tables or beds, dating covers a broader time span, usually being covered with different textiles. Dating furniture can bring up interesting aspects, but these will be addressed in detail in subsequent research. In this study, the focus will be on the general artistic aspects characteristic of the period from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

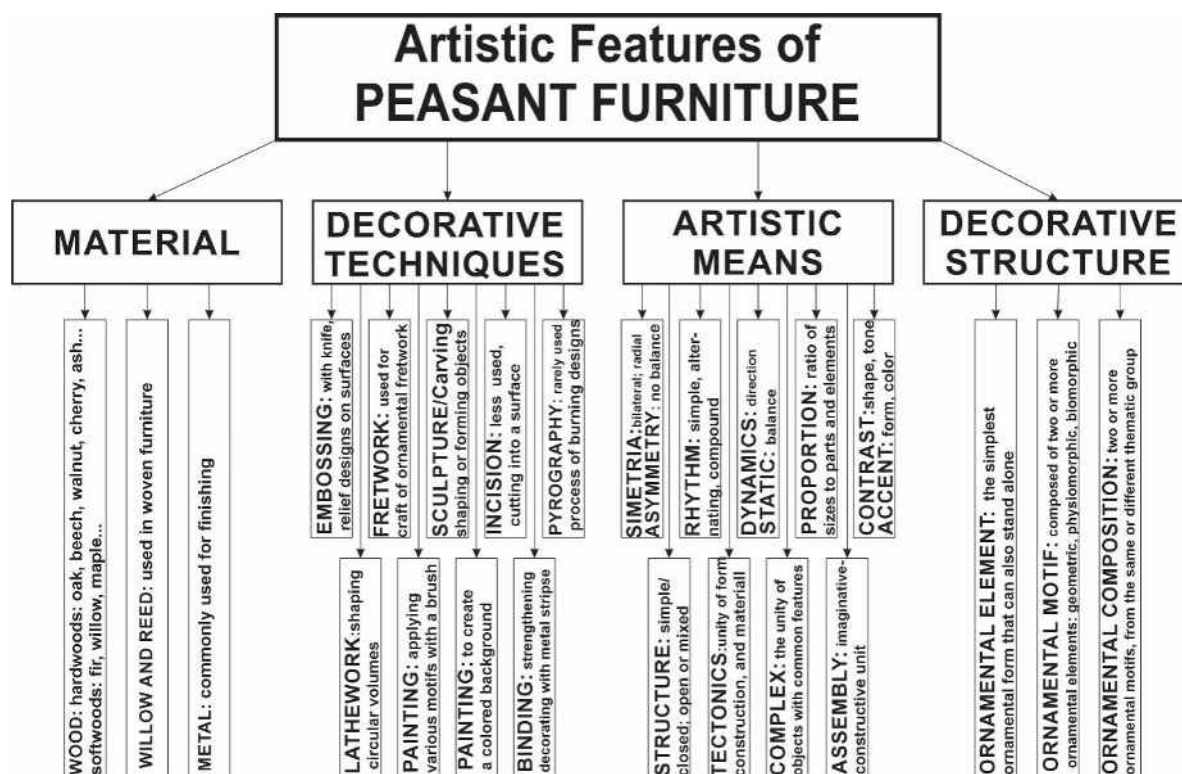
The artistic sensibility of the peasant or craftsman creating the furniture, whether for personal use or on commission, contributes to the emergence of remarkable artistic traits in peasant furniture. These artistic aspects are reflected in the choice of materials used in constructing the furniture, in the decorative techniques and artistic means employed, as well as in the decorative structure of the furniture pieces [9, p.98].

### 3. Results

The structured distribution of artistic features of peasant furniture can be observed in Figure 1. Furthermore, we will carefully analyze each component separately to better understand the specific aspects of this furniture.

**Materials used in peasant furniture:** Peasant furniture stands out through the use of a variety of materials, each contributing to a distinct and durable appearance. Among the most commonly used materials are wood, metal, and wicker, each possessing its own aesthetic characteristics and qualities.

**Wood** is frequently chosen for peasant furniture due to its availability and durability. It is used in various types, such as oak, beech, walnut, elm, cherry, lime, spruce, etc. Each type of wood has distinctive characteristics regarding texture, durability, and strength. For example, oak wood is renowned for its hardness and noble appearance, while beech wood is appreciated for its strength and uniform texture. In Figure 2, we can see a round low table made from oak wood, displayed at the Tomai Village Museum in Leova. This piece of furniture dates back to around 1940.



**Figure 1.** Artistic features of peasant furniture.

Here is a concise overview of the characteristics of several types of wood used in traditional furniture making:

1) Oak: Oak stands out for its durability and strength, featuring a distinct texture and various shades of brown. It is renowned for its nobility and is often used in traditional furniture, providing it with resilience and stability.

2) Beech: Beech is a solid and robust wood with a uniform texture and diverse shades of brown. It is appreciated for its strength and dimensional stability, making it suitable for crafting furniture. Beech is easy to work with and gives furniture a natural and warm appearance.

3) Walnut: Walnut is known for its beauty and a variety of shades, ranging from dark brown to light brown. This wood has a fine texture and a distinct look, prized for its aesthetic appeal. Walnut is often used in high-quality furniture, adding an elegant and sophisticated touch.

4) Elm: Elm is a durable and resilient wood with a medium to rough texture and various shades of brown. It is resistant to moisture and insects, making it suitable for traditional furniture with a rustic and natural appearance.

5) Cherry: Cherry wood stands out with its warm and attractive color, ranging from deep reddish-brown to pale pink. With a fine and uniform texture, it is easy to work with and suitable for detailed finishes. Cherry provides moderate strength to furniture and is often chosen to add elegance and refinement to pieces.

6) Lime: Lime wood is known for its slightly yellowish hues and fine, uniform texture. It is easy to work with and can be shaped, making it suitable for intricate carvings and complex decorative patterns. While it is a durable wood, it is less resilient than oak or beech. Lime is favored, especially in traditional furniture, for its pleasing appearance and ease of handling.

7) Spruce: Spruce is less durable than the other mentioned species but stands out with its bright color and uniform texture. It is often used for lighter furniture or decorative details, bringing freshness and lightness to pieces.

This provides a general overview of the characteristics of each type of wood mentioned. Exact characteristics can vary depending on the wood species and growth conditions [9, pp. 29-31].

**Metal** represents an essential element in traditional furniture, bringing both decorative elements and essential functionality to furniture pieces. Components such as hinges, handles, and locks, handcrafted from metals like wrought iron, copper, or tin foil, are carefully integrated into the furniture's structure, giving it a sophisticated look and increased durability.

An illustrative example of the application of metal in traditional furniture creations can be seen in Figure 3, where a dowry chest displayed at the Museum of History and Ethnography in the village of Mateuți, Rezina district, is presented. This chest is primarily made of wood, but its surface is covered with tin foil, a thin metallic material. Tin foil, also known as tinplate, is decorated with reliefs obtained by pressing or embossing a predefined pattern into the tinplate.

This concrete example demonstrates how metal adds value both aesthetically and functionally in the context of traditional furniture. By covering the wood with tin foil, the dowry chest receives a distinctive decorative appearance, while the elaborately crafted reliefs in the tinplate add a unique artistic element. Thus, traditional furniture is no longer just a simple container for precious items; it becomes an impressive and durable piece.

By including metal in the manufacturing process of peasant furniture, a perfect harmony is achieved between wood and metal, bringing significant benefits in terms of both aesthetics and functionality. Metallic elements such as hinges, handles, and locks not only contribute to the strength and stability of furniture pieces but also add a distinctive charm to their design.



**Figure 2.** Use of wood in furniture making. Tomai Village Museum, Leova, Approx. year 1940, Donated by Gumenita Terenti. Photo by Uncu Ana (2020).



**Figure 3.** Dowry chest covered in tin foil. Museum of History and Ethnography in the village of Mateuti, Rezina district. Photo by Stirbu Ion (2020).



**Figure 4.** Rush table Museum of History and Ethnography, Soroca city. Detail photo from 1926, School of Furniture and Basket Weaving, Soroca County Prefecture. Photo by Bulat Nicolae (2020).

**Rush** represents a distinctive material in the context of traditional peasant furniture, notable for its flexibility and ease of processing. It is often used, especially for weaving and decorations, giving furniture pieces a unique and authentic character. In traditional furniture creations, rush is often chosen to bring various decorative details to life, such as weaves or ornamental elements, adding a special charm to these pieces.

A concrete example of the use of rush in furniture manufacturing can be seen in Figure 4, which presents a photograph of a table made of rush, displayed at the Museum of History and Ethnography in the city of Soroca. This image fully illustrates how rush is integrated into the design of traditional furniture and highlights the craftsmanship of artisans from the school of weaving of furniture and baskets, active in the Soroca county prefecture in 1926.

**Decorative techniques** represent a particularly important aspect of traditional peasant furniture, contributing to its artistic value and unique identity. Among these techniques, we can list the following:



**Figure 5.** Long Chair, Cresting.  
Owner: Viorica Dabija, Trușeni  
Commune, Chișinău Municipality  
Photo by Elena Madan (2007)  
[11, p.95].



**Figure 6.** Dowry Chest, Cresting.  
Museum of History and  
Ethnography, Balti Municipality.  
Late 19<sup>th</sup> – early 20<sup>th</sup> Century.  
Photo by Elena Madan (2009)  
[8, p.176].



**Figure 7.** Wooden,  
Dish Rack, Fretwork  
Ethnography  
Museum in Cania  
Village, Cantemir.  
Photo by Raisa  
Andronov (2020).

1) **Cresting:** This technique involves using tools such as knives, chisels, or compasses to create ornaments through cuts on the surface or edge of objects. Incision is characterized by making shallow cuts in wood, giving rise to geometric ornamental motifs. This technique is usually found in the decoration of items such as dowry chests, tables, chairs, benches, beds, dishes, and more. A conclusive example of the application of this technique can be seen in Figure 5, which presents a long bench illustrating incision techniques. It belongs to Mrs. Dabija Viorica from the village of Trușeni, Chisinau municipality. Additionally, Figure 6 presents a dowry chest that uses the incision technique and is exhibited at the Museum of History and Ethnography in Balti, dating from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

2) **Fretwork:** This technique involves the precise cutting of wooden panels to create delicate shapes and elaborate decorations. Recently, this technique has gained increased importance, both in terms of its different working method and its application in the traditional decoration of rural interiors with truly beautiful motifs. Fretwork is used in furniture to decorate chair backs, corner shelves, platters, beds, corner cabinets, benches, or coat racks. A significant example is presented in Figure 7, where fretwork can be observed in a piece exhibited at the Museum of Ethnography in the village of Cania, Cantemir district.

3) **Sculpture or Carving:** This technique, derived from incision, involves shaping prominences to create three-dimensional or relief details. Typically, softwood species such as poplar or linden are used, but harder wood like oak can also be used because hardwood fibers are generally less prone to chipping. Sculpture is often used in a later period, with the introduction of mechanized tools, and is used in making table legs, chair backs, and sofa armrests, with a varied decorative profile. A relevant example can be seen in Figure 8, which shows the use of sculpture/carving in a piece exhibited in the House-Museum of the artist Igor Vieru in the village of Cernoleuca, Donduseni district.

4) **Incision:** This less common technique involves making deep scratches to highlight the contours of shapes. An example of the application of this technique can be seen in Figure 9, which presents the use of etching in a sofa owned by Mrs. Munteanu Ana from the village of Frumusica, Floresti district.

5) **Pyrography:** This technique involves the use of specialized tools and branding with heated iron to create ornamental motifs. A relevant example can be seen in Figure 10, where we can observe the use of pyrography in a piece displayed at the Museum of History and Ethnography in Slobozia Mare, Cahul. This work was created by Mr. Grigorii Brovcenco in 1910.



**Figure 8.** Wooden, Dish Rack Sculpture. House-Museum of Artist Igor Vieru, Cernoleuca Village, Donduseni District. Owner and Crafted by Roland Vieru. Photo by Elena Madan (2009).



**Figure 9.** Settle Incision. Owner: Ana Munteanu Frumusica Village, Floresti District. Photo by Elena Madan (2008) [12, p.3].



**Figure 10.** Pyrography Technique. Museum of History and Ethnography, Slobozia Mare Village, Cahul, Year 1910, crafted by Brovcenco Grigorii. Photo by Maria Chiciuc (2020).

6) **Painting and Decoration:** These two techniques are used to add colors and decorative motifs to the surface of furniture. An example can be seen in Figure 11, which shows a dowry chest painted in a reddish-brown tone. This is displayed at the Giurgiulesti Village Museum, Cahul. As for painting, Figure 12 presents a painted dowry chest displayed at the Edinet County Museum. This technique involves the meticulous application of various decorative motifs on furniture, adding artistic and expressive details.

Through painting, craftsmen expressed their creativity and talent by creating various ornamental motifs such as flowers, leaves, animals, or geometric shapes. These details were applied with great care to give peasant furniture a distinctive touch and special charm. Furniture painting was initially done with water-based colors, and later, oil-based paints



became predominant, featuring floral designs or abstract patterns. This technique was successfully applied to many types of furniture pieces, such as dowry chests, low tables, high tables, sofas, and more. As it was a more recent technique, it became widespread throughout the republic because it was quick, accessible, and offered a wide range of decorative options.

7) **Wood Turning:** This technique refers to shaping forms/volumes through light scratching or cutting with a sharp tool. An illustrative example is shown in Figure 13, a table with turned legs, owned by Mrs. Olga Ciofu from Hasnasenii Mari Village, Drochia District.

8) **Metal Fittings:** This method involves reinforcing and decorating furniture pieces with metal strips. An example can be seen in Figure 14, which presents a dowry chest fitted with metal strips and displayed at the Village Museum in Boscana Village, Criuleni District.

Such classifications of decorative techniques can be found in several significant works, such as Nicolae Cojocaru's work "The Old Wooden House in Bukovina" [13], which addresses them in the context of interior decoration, and Vitalie Malcoci's work on "Architectural Stone Decoration in Moldovan Folk Art (Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century – 20<sup>th</sup> Century)" [14], which focuses on carving techniques and ornamental methods.

These examples represent just a few illustrations of how decorative techniques are applied in traditional furniture, detailed within each figure. The use of these techniques adds unique elements and aesthetic value to furniture pieces, thus contributing to the beauty and artistic diversity of these objects.



**Figure 11.** Painted, Dowry Chest. Museum of the Giurgiulesti Village, Cahul. Photo by Aurica Cazacu (2020).



**Figure 12.** Painted Dowry Chest. Museum of the Edineț District. Photo by Adriana Preașca (2020).



**Figure 13.** Table with Turned Legs. Hasnasenii Mari Village, Drochia District, Owner: Olga Ciofu (born 1924). Photo by Elena Madan (2007).



**Figure 14.** Iron-Banded, Dowry Chest. Museum of the Village, Boșcana, Criuleni District. Photo by Elena Samoila (2020).

**Artistic Means:** The artistic means used in peasant furniture contribute to creating a harmonious and expressive aesthetic. Among these are:

1) *Proportion:* It represents the size relationship between the parts and components of the furniture pieces. A concrete example is illustrated in Figure 15, which depicts a bed exhibited in the "A. Mateevici" House-Museum in the village of Zaim, Căușeni, dating back to the late 19th century.

2) *Symmetry:* Symmetry can take the form of bilateral or radial symmetry, which means the similar reflection of elements on both sides of the piece of furniture. A relevant illustration is provided by a dowry chest exhibited in the Museum of History and Ethnography in the village of Recea, Strășeni, owned by Corobceanu Pavel Alexandru, dating from approximately 1810-1820, with dimensions 900×405×420, as seen in Figure 16.

3) *Rhythm:* Rhythm is manifested through the repetition of forms and patterns, adding a dynamic aspect to the furniture pieces. An eloquent example is represented by a long bench

exhibited in the village of Tătăraști, Strășeni district, owned by Coropcean Dumitru, as shown in Figure 17.



**Figure 15.** Bed, Proportion. House-Museum "A. Mateevici", Zaim Village, Causeni, Late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Photo by Ion Găină (2020).



**Figure 16.** Dowry Chest, Symmetry. Museum of History and Ethnography, Recea Village, Straseneni, Owner: Pavel Corobceanu, Dating: ~ 1810-1820, Dimensions 900×405×420. Photo by Mihai Iovu (2020) [10, p. 176].



**Figure 17.** Long Bench, Rhythm. Tatarasti Village, Straseneni District, Owner: Dumitru Coropcean. Photo by Elena Madan (2009).

4) *Contrast and Emphasis*: These add visual interest by highlighting an element, either through shape or color. A carpenter's dowry chest from the National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History, Trebujeni – Orhei, dating from the late 19th century, illustrates the use of contrast and emphasis as artistic means, as depicted in Figure 18.

5) *Structure*: This refers to how the component elements of the furniture are integrated into a whole, ensuring both the solidity of the construction and a unified aesthetic. A representative example is a cupboard exhibited in the Museum of History and Ethnography in the village of Mateuți, Rezina district, owned by Gușan Elena, as shown in Figure 19.



**Figure 18.** Wardrobe, Static. Museum of History and Ethnography, Taraclia, 1930, crafted by Aflatarli Apostol, master from Bolgrad, Owner: Raisa Aflatarli. Photo by Tatiana Nechit (2020).



**Figure 19.** Dowry Chest, Emphasis. National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History Chisinau, from Trebujeni – Orhei. Late 19th Century, [15, p.263].



**Figure 20.** Wardrobe, Structure. Museum of History and Ethnography, Mateuti, Rezina. Owner: Elena Gușan. Photo by Ion Știrbu (2020).

6) *Tectonics*: This artistic means refers to the organization and connection of the component elements of the furniture. A relevant example is represented by a sofa exhibited

in the Museum of History and Ethnography in the city of Balti, dating from approximately the 1940s, with dimensions of 174×67×80, as seen in Figure 20.

7) *Complex*: This refers to the unity of furniture objects that share common features or form an ensemble, thus representing a piece of furniture with multiple elements that have similar characteristics. A significant example is the cupboard/sideboard exhibited in the "Constantin Stamati" Memorial House in the village of Ocnita, Ocnita district, as illustrated in Figure 22.

8) *Ensemble*: This refers to the imaginary-constructive unity in which multiple pieces of furniture have common features or elements. A representative example is provided by the cupboard and long bench exhibited in the Museum of Cahul County, owned by N.S. Conoval from the village of Semionovca, Codama, Odessa region, with dimensions 890×1450×2000, as illustrated in Figure 23.

These artistic means contribute to adding value and meaning to peasant furniture, giving it uniqueness and expressiveness.



**Figure 21.** Settle (bench with storage), Tectonics. Museum of History and Ethnography, Balti, Dating: ~ 1940s, Dimensions: 1740×670×800. Photo by Elena Madan (2008) [12, p.3].



**Figure 22.** Cupboard/Buffet, Complex. Memorial House "Constantin Stamati," Ocnita. Photo by Elena Madan (2008).



**Figure 23.** Cupboard and Long Bench, ensemble. Museum of Cahul County. Owner: N.S. Conoval, Semionovca Village, Codama, Odesa Region. Photo by Elena Madan (2009).

**Decorative Structure:** The decorative structure of peasant furniture focuses on the organization and composition of ornaments and decorative elements. This is highlighted through the following aspects:

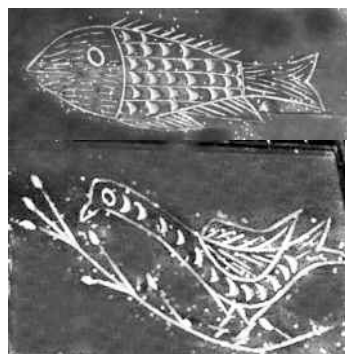
1) *Ornamental Elements*: These represent the simplest form of ornamentation, consisting of indivisible parts that can be used independently in decoration, such as a leaf, a petal, a branch, a stem, or a fruit. An example is the ornamental element "fish and dove" discovered in the detail of a sofa from Țipova, Rezina district, as illustrated in Figure 24.

2) *Ornamental Motifs*: These are composed of two or more ornamental elements. An illustrative example is the ornamented stool owned by Laur Nina from Trusenii, as illustrated in Figure 25.

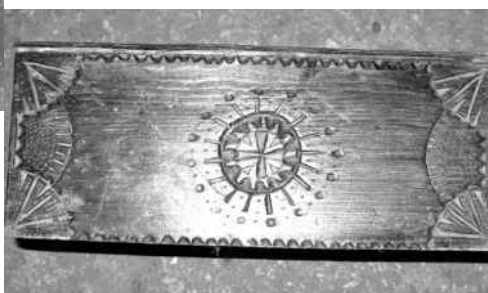
3) *Ornamental Composition*: This represents the aesthetically pleasing arrangement of ornamental motifs resulting from two or more ornamental motifs, without the need for them to belong to the same thematic or stylistic group. A notable example is the ornamental composition on a carpenter's dowry chest exhibited in the Historical-Ethnographic Museum of Ocnita town, owned by Capmoale Dumitru and Agafia Vasile from the village of Dingeni, Ocnita district, as illustrated in Figure 26 [8, p.20].

These ornamental elements and compositions contribute to the pleasant and balanced appearance of peasant furniture, adding remarkable artistic details and aesthetic significance.

Through the detailed analysis of materials, decorative techniques, artistic means, and decorative structure, we can better understand the artistic peculiarities of peasant furniture and its contribution to our national values. Each component adds a unique and expressive element to the furniture, reflecting the artistic talent of the peasant or craftsman who created it. The careful choice and processing of materials, the use of ornamental techniques, and the application of artistic means breathe life into these exceptional pieces of furniture. The decorative structure contributes to the cohesion and beauty of the furniture, highlighting the skill and creativity of the craftsmen.



**Figure 24.** Ornamental Element - Fish and Dove. Sofa Detail, Tipova, Rezina District. Photo by Elena Madan (2008).



**Figure 25.** Ornamental Motif – Sun Motif, Small Chair Detail. Owner: Laur Nina, Truseni. Photo by Elena Madan (2007).



**Figure 26.** Ornamental Composition - Carpenter's Dowry Chest. Historical and Ethnographic Museum, Ocnița Owners: Capmoale Dumitru (born 1907) and Agafia Vasile (born 1910), Dingeni, Ocnița District. Photo by Maia Taraban (2020) [11, p. 176].

#### 4. Discussions

Our research findings on traditional Moldovan furniture from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century add a new perspective to the discussion about the importance of integrating traditional elements into contemporary interior design. In this context, we have also analyzed the research of author Angela Munteanu, which highlights the role of traditional furniture in creating an authentic atmosphere and emphasizes the importance of harmonizing furniture with the interior to ensure comfort while preserving traditional elements [16, pp. 97-99]. We have also considered research from the article "Perception of style influences in architectural space" [17, pp. 59-67], authored by the same researcher.

These research studies support our conclusions regarding the value of traditional elements in contemporary interior design [18, pp.165-170]. Moldovan traditional furniture represents a concrete example of how traditional elements can bring authenticity and cultural identity to a modern space. Author Angela Munteanu also emphasizes the importance of harmonizing traditional furniture with the interior, which is essential for ensuring comfort and aesthetic coherence in a contemporary space.

These sources demonstrate that key elements of traditional furniture, such as specific ornamentation, shapes and decorations inspired by the past, the use of solid wood, specific assembly and functional accessories, as well as upholstery with traditional prints and ornaments, can be effectively integrated into contemporary interior design. The author also mentions the importance of structural details in influencing the functionality and appearance of furniture. These aspects significantly contribute to maintaining a connection with cultural heritage and adding uniqueness and authenticity to the contemporary interior.

A concrete example highlighting the success of this approach is the "Quintessence" collection created by Mihai Stamati in collaboration with Maria Bubuioc [19]. This collection of contemporary furniture leverages traditional heritage by reinterpreting crocheted structures and fabrics, using natural materials, and promoting the practice of traditional techniques. Through such projects, designers succeed in creating modern furniture that maintains a strong connection to cultural heritage and offers innovative and aesthetic solutions in contemporary interior design. These projects are concrete evidence that tradition and modernity can coexist harmoniously, and the results can be remarkable both artistically and functionally.

Furthermore, in an article authored by Natalia Berezovskaia about reinterpreted Romanian traditional style, it is emphasized that this style can be brought into modernity with delicacy and skill. Recommendations include using light colors in finishes, introducing wood into the design, and using solid wood furniture with carved details [20]. Textile accessories with traditional motifs are also essential for recreating the traditional atmosphere.

These practical examples demonstrate that integrating traditional elements into contemporary furniture and interior design can be successful and can contribute to promoting cultural identity in a globalized world. Therefore, it is important to continue exploring and harnessing this approach to create interior spaces with authentic and profound character.

## 5. Conclusions

In conclusion, traditional Moldovan furniture from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century represents an important aspect of the cultural and artistic heritage of the region. This furniture not only showcases the skill of local craftsmen but also reflects the history and culture of Bessarabia during that period. The artistic aspects of this furniture are remarkable and have contributed to the creation of unique and meaningful works of art. Using various materials and decorative techniques, craftsmen crafted furniture pieces that not only served practical purposes but also paid remarkable tribute to the aesthetics and culture of Bessarabia. These pieces of furniture are not just functional objects but also artworks that reflect the talent and creativity of rural communities during that time.

Moldovan traditional furniture, in particular, is a striking example of how these elements can be successfully adapted and used in contemporary interior design. Ornaments, shapes, and decorations inspired by the past, along with the use of solid wood and other traditional materials, contribute to creating spaces that blend tradition with innovation. This approach not only adds authenticity but also enhances comfort and aesthetic coherence in modern spaces.

Recommendations for future endeavors include establishing initiatives for the documentation and conservation of these valuable pieces. Collaborative efforts between

cultural institutions, local communities, and contemporary designers can play a pivotal role in ensuring the continued relevance and appreciation of Moldova's cultural heritage.

By valorizing and promoting these artistic characteristics, traditional furniture and interior design become symbols of cultural identity and testimonies to human talent and creativity. Thus, the continued exploration and application of this approach are crucial for creating interior spaces with authentic and profound character in the modern world.

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