



## **Traditional Architecture in Romanian Philately (VI): the Case Study Regarding Households from Stănești, Straja, Șuici, Șurdești and Tilișca**

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### **Authors' contributions**

*This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Author BVC designed the study, performed the literature searches and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Authors ALP and MC managed the analyses of the study. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.*

### **Article Information**

DOI: 10.9734/AJESS/2021/v19i130452

#### Editor(s):

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Complete Peer review History: <http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/69685>

**Original Research Article**

**Received 20 April 2021**

**Accepted 24 June 2021**

**Published 01 July 2021**

### **ABSTRACT**

In addition to the series dedicated to traditional architecture, through this study aims to present the way in which the households from Stănești, Straja, Șuici, Șurdești and Tilișca are represented at philatelic level. In this approach, stamps, semi-illustrated and illustrated postcards, maximum postcards and other philatelic effects were used. All this was identified, indexed, analyzed, and described in terms of information provided by philatelic catalogs and sites with dedicated content (such as Colnect®, Delcampe®, PicClick®, and StampWorld®). Following the analysis of the identified pieces, it can be concluded that the respective areas (Stănești, Straja, Șuici, Șurdești

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and Tilișca) are well delimited from a philatelic point of view, both the exterior and the interior are very carefully represented.

*Keywords: Peasant households; philatelic issues; rural community; traditional architecture.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Traditional architecture is based on empirical knowledge of building materials, gained over time, through repeated trials and failures [1]. Knowledge of the technique of using these materials is orally passed down from generation to generation. However, the manifestations of traditional Romanian architecture do not suffer and are well represented in everyday reality. The traditional Romanian village represents the direct and intimate transposition even (without an intermediary) in the forms of the practical and spiritual needs of the members of the respective community, resulting from the specific way of life and from the system of values that the communities share [2]. The shape of the house and the settlement is prescribed by tradition, being very durable over time and automatically expressing the system of collective values of the type of society or community that gives birth to it and to which it is addressed.

As the societies that gave birth to this architecture are - usually - pre-modern societies (less dynamic and in which there is a more organic consensus between the individual and the community), the value system is collective, shared by community members, and individual originality is limited. Hence the harmony between the individual, the community, and the built environment, as well as the great formal unity of the architecture of a community (both in terms of location and time). At the same time, in vernacular architecture, there is a certain symbiosis, between the built and the natural environment in which it intervenes.

In this sense, this paper aims to show that Romania is a multicultural space, in terms of traditional architecture and thematic philately, composed of components with Romanian, Saxon, Hungarian, etc. [3]; and that the traditional village is a real agro-tourist resource, currently poorly exploited and aggressed. The chance of rehabilitation is through the education of the community.

Traditional households can become rustic guesthouses in their authentic environment. And through thematic philately and related exhibitions

we can show the population the values that were, an architecture with common sense, good taste, which is set aside, what reality offers us today does not bring us praise [4]. Today we can no longer talk about village architecture. And architecture is part of the country's culture, which defines a community. Moreover, it is quite possible that in the future we will not be able to talk about the defining characteristics of traditional architecture [5]:

- How to build characteristic of the community;
- Recognizable local or regional character, which response to the environment;
- Stylistic coherence, shapes, and image, or the use of traditional types of buildings
- Traditional expertise in design and construction transmitted informally;
- Effective response to functional, social, and environmental constraints;
- Application of traditional construction systems and crafts.

As such, these principles should be promoted now, as far as possible. A way to promote these principles, as well as the immovable cultural heritage, respectively the sustainable development of the community, can be philately [6,7]. Having as a starting point a series of studies undertaken in the period 2018-2020 [8,9], we set out to review and analyze, through the prism of the existing philatelic material at the level of various sites, the architecture traditional in several areas. For this case study we choose five households from Romania were considered, respectively those from Stănești (Argeș county), Straja (Suceava county), Șuici (Argeș County), Șurdești (Maramureș county), and Tilișca (Sibiu county).

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The documentation regarding the elements of traditional architecture was made through the prism of consulting some specialized sites, especially those referring to the households from the considered areas – Stănești (Argeș county), Straja (Suceava county), Șuici (Argeș County), Șurdești (Maramureș county), and Tilișca (Sibiu county). 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<sup>®</sup>, Delcampe<sup>®</sup>, eBay<sup>®</sup>, Okazii<sup>®</sup>, PicClick<sup>®</sup> and StampWorld<sup>®</sup> 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 Stănești (Argeș County)

On the upper valleys of Dâmbovița, under the peaks of Pietra Craiului, one of the most interesting ethnographic areas of Romania has been established over time. Taking its name from the "muscele", low and gentle hills, Muscel was the basis for the formation of one of the first Romanian state formations. The proximity of Câmpulung, as well as the connections with Transylvania, created the possibility for the early economic area development [10].

Thus, sheep breeding, fruit growing, working in the forest, and practicing various crafts were the specific occupations of the inhabitants of the area. Stănești village, located on both banks of the Doamnei River, is a scattered village, with a tendency to lengthen on the river valley. Over time, throughout the area, the architecture of great expressiveness has developed, whose fundamental feature is the erection of buildings on high stone plinths. These also include the access scale to the living level (see Fig. 1) [11-13]. This type of construction is also widespread in the cities in the Muntenia area.

According to a copy that still existed in the village until the last years, a representative house was built in 1936, with local craftsmen, to which were added the annex buildings necessary to illustrate the way of life: the stable with stable and haystack, "povarna" where brandy, summer kitchen, and cottages were distilled. The house includes in the porch plan, a median porch with open-hearth and chimney, as well as two rooms, the living room and the one reserved for guests, heated with brick stoves 10.

The wooden pillars of the porch, simply shaped, are connected by cobweb arches and rest on the

solid masonry railing raised above the high bridge. This creates a contrast between the sturdy ground floor and the delicate shapes of the floor façade. The access staircase at the level of the house is hidden from view.

The dominant note of the organization of the interior is given by the numerous fabrics, white and beaded sheets with long threads, macadamias and headboards on the bed, barks with richly colored geometric choices, large and small towels with decoration in twigs. A specific piece of the Muscelean interior is the "lock", a long woolen rug decorated with large geometric motifs, which covers the walls of the "clean" room around it.

The Muscelean costume is distinguished by the sumptuousness of the pieces adorned with beads and geometric stitches, using in addition to the red and black thread and the gold or silver one. The household from Stănești village demonstrates, through all its characteristics, that human settlements do not develop in an "empty" space; but in a local, specific, full of life, in which soil, vegetation, and occupations are linked in a whole.

#### 3.2 The Household from Straja (Suceava County)

Located on the upper valley of Suceava, the village of Straja recalls, by its name, the old days when the locals stood guard against the invaders. Announcing the danger of their appearance through "ciuhe" lit at the top of the fir trees [14], the villagers gave news in the country to the royal court. From these places, with historical resonance, an original construction was transferred to the Village Museum in Bucharest, in 1960, erected right on the place where the spruce trees necessary for the construction were cut.

The walls, placed on a low stone foundation, are made of the round trunks of the trees, arranged in horizontal stacks and joined at the corners by a "sheepfold" cut (see Fig. 2a, c). At the top, the last beams are extended in steps, giving the house a particular look. The thin clay texture and the slightly gray color of the natural humus, with which the walls are covered on the outside, give the monument a remarkable plastic value.



(a) Exterior view, distant plane, no other philatelic elements applied [11]



(b) Exterior view, distant shot, with the special stamp "The Semicentenary of the Village Museum in Bucharest" [12]



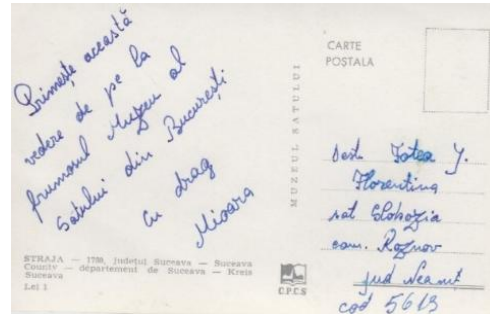
(c) Exterior view, distant plan, with the postage stamp from the și marca poștală cu valoarea nominală de... din emisiunea filatelică "Semicentenary of the Village Museum in Bucharest" [13]

Fig. 1. Illustrated postcards representing the household from Stănești (Argeș)

The roof with fir shingle roofs, shelters on the facade a wide, open porch, where the family rested or performed various household activities. Also, the plan of the house includes a large porch in the extension of which is the pantry, and on the right the living room.

The porch of the house does not have a ceiling. Cereals and other household utensils are stored here. The spacious and spacious living room illustrates the archaic organization of the space

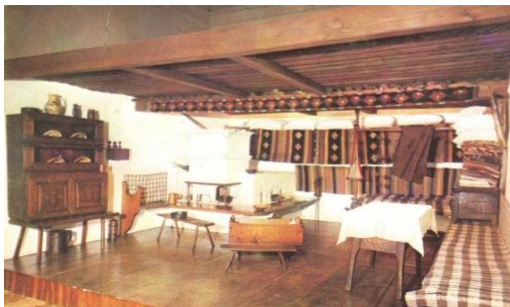
inside. The beautifully decorated high table and the cupboard in which the ceramic vessels shine complete the functional composition of the space [14]. The numerous woolen fabrics, made in harmonious and warm chromatic, popular pieces, give the interior a special shine (see Fig. 2c-e). The entire inventory of the Bucovina dwelling attracts attention through the diversity of forms and the accuracy of the execution. All other household objects made of wood amaze and delight with their plastic-decorative ingenuity.



(a), (b) Exterior view, double-sided, with no other philatelic elements applied [15,16]



(c) Collage view with no other philatelic elements applied [17]



(d) Interior view, distant plane, with no other philatelic elements applied [18-20]



(e) Interior view, distant plane, with no other philatelic elements applied [21]

Fig. 2. Illustrated postcards representing the household from Straja (Suceava)



### 3.3 The Household from Șuici (Argeș County)

Climbing the Topologului Valley, we reach the road that starts from Curtea de Argeș and crosses the Șuici commune. On this road, in 1330, Carol Robert's army also went on the road to the famous battle of Posada. Mentioned for the first time in 1514 in an act of strengthening the possession, the Șuici commune is much older [22]. Along with agriculture, pastoralism was one of the main occupations of the inhabitants.

The Șuici household represents an architectural type characteristic for the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century [22]. The "connecting house", which brings together under one roof two buildings arranged at right angles, appeared as a result of the need to provide a separate home for the young family, which was formed after the marriage of the youngest son. In other situations, one part of the house performed the function of representation, being reserved for the reception of guests, and the other was intended for daily life. The stable, the supply store, and the corn depot were later added to the house.

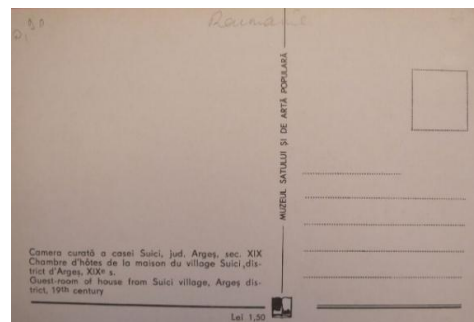
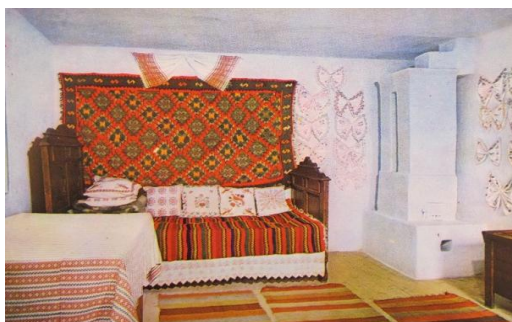
Perched on a stone plinth, which houses the cellar and birdhouses, the house in Șuici is built of carved and plastered fir beams. The roof has made of 6-7 rows of small, overlapping threads, which creates a remarkable decorative effect. The plan of the house includes two rooms for each construction, with separate entrances on the porch. The functional-decorative arrangement of the interior is differentiated in the two buildings. In the first, the decorative pieces

(furniture, carpets, towels, embroidered handkerchiefs, and a series of women's garments) are concentrated, as can be seen in Fig. 3.

The second construction includes a porch, with a kitchen function, in which the free hearth with the basket was replaced by a brick stove with a hob. There is also a living room in which there are various household tools and utensils, such as the war of weaving, a testimony of one of the permanent occupations of the woman in the household, pieces of furniture, simple and functional, and ceramic vessels, from the center Court Argeș.

### 3.4 The Household from Șurdești (Maramureș County)

The household dates from the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, coming from Țara Lăpușului, an area that attests to the old political organization of the Romanian population, long before the establishment of the first state formations. Following the geographical environment and the historical evolution and according to the socio-economic conditions, the village of Șurdești developed as a scattered village. It is a representative village for the Romanian settlements in the hilly area. Traditional occupations are agriculture, fruit growing, animal husbandry, mining, and forestry. The arrangement of the buildings - the stable with the stable, at the entrance to the household, towards the street and the house, placed in the second part of the yard - inscribes the structure of the household in the type of "double yard", specific to villages with the pastoral-agricultural economy.



(a), (b) Interior view, distant plane, with no other philatelic elements applied [23-25]

Fig. 3. Illustrated postcards representing the household from Șuici (Argeș)

The architectural complex consists of a dwelling house, barn (outbuilding next to the household, where cattle are housed and various agricultural tools are kept), "găbănaș" (warehouse where cereals are kept), pig house, "basket" (warehouse made of woven twigs in which cereals are kept), "sheep" stable and "bujdei" (fruit drying plant) [26]. The constructive techniques of joining the wood demonstrate the technical performance and the mastery of the carpenters in the area.

The plan of the house consists of three rooms: the porch, the "house" (living room), and the pantry. The ceiling of the living room is made of exposed beams, arranged perpendicular to the longitudinal walls of the house and supported on the main beam, which supports the ceiling, called "master beam" - the place where the craftsman grows his name and year of construction.

On the outside, the house has glued space between the beams and then whitewashed, which gives the facade a very particular look. Inside, the walls are glued (plastered) and whitewashed, and the floor is made of beaten earth. To the right of the room are the oven, the bed, and the relative (a thin wooden beam) on which various fabrics are displayed. On the left, a massive counter, which is used for rest and sleeping, a dowry box, and a hanger with glazed canes and glass-painted icons complete the interior. The wall opposite the entrance is adorned with wiper blades, and next to the window is a table with two high chairs.

Most of the pieces of furniture come from the specialized center in Plopiș, a village adjacent to Șurdești. The towels, sheets, tablecloths, and various wool and cotton fabrics that adorn the interior prove the skill and good taste of those who made them. Unfortunately, even so far we

have not been able to identify a form of philatelic representation suggestive for this household. Even less, we did not manage to capture circulating philatelic pieces, which would have promoted the architectural specifics of the area.

### 3.5 The Household from Tilișca (Sibiu County)

As a submontane settlement, the village of Tilișca consists of two parts: the gathered village, located along the valley, and the part in the mountains in the grassland area, composed of huts. The main occupations of the inhabitants of this area known as "Marginea" or "Mărginimea Sibiului" were cattle breeding and especially sheep (an occupation that takes the form of transhumant shepherding) and little agriculture.

The house, located on one side of the courtyard surrounded by a fence made of horizontal planks, is oriented with the pediment towards the street. This is also the specific position of houses in this area (see Fig. 4). The access inside the household is made through a gate with oak pillars, with beautiful notches [27]. The house stands on a stone plinth that includes the cellar and is built of fir beams carved and attached to the right wrist. The gabled roof, with a high inclination, is covered with fir bark. Specific to the old architecture is the gazebo.

The plan of the house consists of two rooms: the cleanroom and the living room. They are separated by a quadrilateral room. In the living room, the heating system is represented by the prismatic chimney stove, which is also used for cooking [27]. The presence of the stove in this room, but also the suite of household tools, the furniture, demonstrates the use of this room for practical purposes (see Fig. 5).



(a) Exterior view, distant plane, with no other philatelic elements applied [28]



(b) Exterior view, distant plane, with no other philatelic elements applied [29,30]

Fig. 4. Illustrated postcards representing the household from Tilișca (Sibiu)



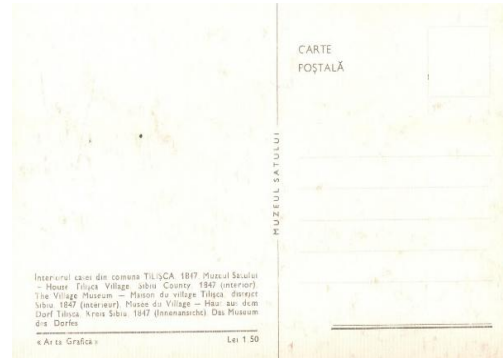
(a) Interior view, distant plane, with no other philatelic elements applied [31,32]



(b) Interior view, distant plane, with no other philatelic elements applied [33]



(c), (d) Interior view, double-sided, with no other philatelic elements applied [34,35]



**Fig. 5. Other illustrated postcards representing the household from Tilișca (Sibiu)**

The "big house" or "clean house" is "covered" with a large number of fabrics decorated with polychrome geometric ornaments on a red background, ceramic vessels placed on the beam, icons on glass, representing the place where guests are received. At the same time, in this space the different family events, calendar holidays, etc. take place (see Fig. 5b) [27]. The "clean house" is also a mirror of the economic condition of the households, as well as the diligence and skill of the women in the family in making fabrics.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Through this paper, it was proposed to see if there is a correspondence between the architecture of the five areas considered - Stănești (Argeș county), Straja (Suceava county), Șuici (Argeș county), Șurdești (Maramureș county) and Tilișca (Sibiu county) and thematic philately. Following the navigation

in the specialized literature and on the sites with dedicated philatelic content, this connection was managed to be emphasized. Thus, a supplement was made to the other similar previous studies (five in number), showing that there are concerns about the protection of the tangible real estate.

Such a concern is even through the various philatelic materials that were identified, analyzed, and described as briefly as possible. We enjoyed their very existence, not to mention the supporting illustrations that brought a touch of color to the entire study; and they nuanced, as faithfully as possible, the zonal architectural specificity, exposing both the exterior and the interior of the households.

#### 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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