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## CASA MARE: MEMORY, IDENTITY AND MUSEUMIFICATION

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## Rezumat

**Casa mare: memorie, identitate și muzeificare**

Articolul examinează inițiativele de la bază privind conservarea patrimoniului cultural local, având ca exemplu *casa mare* – camera de oaspeți sau cea reprezentativă a locuinței tradiționale moldovenești. Apariția, în anii independenței, a unui număr mare de inițiative de acest tip – muzee, colecții etc. – indică actualitatea nevoii de a menține identitatea culturală locală. În general, asemenea muzee sunt organizate în jurul conceptului de *casa mare*, însă colecțiile includ, de regulă, obiecte care reflectă întreaga gospodărie țărănească și nu doar din cele tradiționale, ci și din perioadele interbelică, sovietică și post-sovietică. Această diversitate ridică problema memoriei colective locale și a modurilor de fixare a acesteia. Pentru a facilita analiza practicilor locale de conservare a patrimoniului, autorul utilizează termenul de muzeificare de la bază. Studiul se bazează pe cercetări de teren efectuate în mai multe sate din Republica Moldova. Analiza studiilor de caz permite evidențierea câtorva trăsături ale acestui fenomen, care subliniază, totodată, actualitatea și gradul redus de cercetare al temei. În primul rând, se observă o cerere tot mai mare pentru conservarea și promovarea culturii și istoriei locale, manifestată prin reconstrucția propriilor amintiri ale curatorilor muzeelor. În al doilea rând, se remarcă idealizarea modului tradițional de viață, ceea ce reflectă nevoia unei reprezentări adecvate a istoriei. În al treilea rând, aceste muzee ridică problema autenticității – sensul ei, limitele și rolul în reprezentarea culturii locale.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** casa mare, memorie locală, identitate, inițiative de la bază, muzeificare

## Резюме

**Ка́са ма́ре: па́мять, иденти́чность и му́зеефика́ция**

В статье рассматриваются низовые инициативы по сохранению локального культурного наследия на примере *каса маре* – парадной комнаты молдавского традиционного жилища. Появление в годы независимости большого числа низовых инициатив – музеев, коллекций и т.д. говорит об актуальности запроса на поддержание местной культурной идентичности. В основном подобные музеи оформляются под *каса маре*, однако коллекции, как правило, включают в себя объекты не только традиционного, но и всего крестьянского хозяйства межвоенного, советского и постсоветского периодов. Подобное разнообразие поднимает вопрос о коллективной локальной памяти и способах ее фиксации. Для удобства анализа локальных практик сохранения наследия автор использует термин низовая музеефикация. Исследование опирается на полевые материалы, собранные в ряде сел Республики Молдова. Анализ кейсов помогает выделить следующие

особенности данного феномена, которые также указывают на актуальность и слабую изученность данной проблематики. Во-первых, это запрос на сохранение и продвижение локальной культуры и истории, который актуализируется через реконструкцию собственных воспоминаний кураторов музеев. Во-вторых, это идеализация традиционного образа жизни, что свидетельствует о наличии запроса на адекватную репрезентацию истории. В-третьих, такие музеи поднимают вопрос об аутентичности: ее смысле, границах и роли в репрезентации местной культуры.

**Ключевые слова:** каса маре, локальная память, идентичность, низовые инициативы, музеефикация

## Summary

**Casa mare: memory, identity and museumification**

This article examines grassroots initiatives for the preservation of local cultural heritage through the example of the *casa mare* – the guest or “great” room of the traditional Moldovan household. The emergence, in the years of independence, of numerous grassroots initiatives such as private museums and collections indicates the growing importance of maintaining local cultural identity. Most of these museums are organized around the concept of *casa mare*, yet their collections typically encompass objects representing the entire peasant household, including not only traditional items but also those from the inter-war, Soviet, and post-Soviet periods. Such diversity raises questions about collective local memory and the ways it is preserved. For the purpose of analyzing these local heritage preservation practices, the author employs the term grassroots museumification. The study is based on fieldwork conducted in several villages of the Republic of Moldova. Analysis of the case studies highlights several key features of this phenomenon, which also point to the relevance and insufficient scholarly exploration of the topic. First, there is a growing demand for the preservation and promotion of local culture and history, often manifested through the reconstruction of the museum curators’ personal memories. Second, there is a noticeable idealization of traditional lifestyles, reflecting a broader quest for an adequate representation of history. Third, these museums raise questions about authenticity – its meaning, boundaries, and role in representing local culture.

**Key words:** casa mare, local memory, identity, grassroots initiatives, museumification

Over the past century, the accelerating pace of modernization, the development of information technologies and technics has posed new and increasingly complex challenges to the assessment and preservation of cultural diversity and heritage. In the

Republic of Moldova, this issue is particularly acute due to the discrepancy between the habitual practices of the Soviet period and those of the new capitalist order, which often fail to align with the long-established norms of the European Union. The country has lost a significant part of its heritage through modernization and urbanization and continues to lose more because the topic remains insufficiently reflected at all levels of decision-making. Nevertheless, the global trends toward authenticity, as well as local and national identity, are increasingly entering Moldova's information space from regions that have already faced similar challenges and sought solutions.

Traditional rural culture has emerged as one of the obvious responses to the request for identity, since Moldova remains a predominantly agrarian country with a largely rural population, and the diversity of its local variants provides ample material to satisfy this internal demand. American anthropologist J. Cash, who made a lot of research here in 2000es, highlighted the underestimated meaning of the "village" in cultural and political processes of nation-building. It was perceived as a collectively imagined source of deeply valued "authentic" social and cultural identity (Cash 2007). Today we can observe a sharp increase of interest towards traditional culture, which is maintained and stimulated by the state cultural politics and activities of some local actors, such as museums, libraries, cultural centers etc. And parallel to the official actors, there still open the private collections, as though there is a danger to lose culture and tradition and we should conserve it as fast as possible. Memory and identity reflect what they have: in a lack of a structured and complex culture with a wide range of symbolic personalities and events, like in France, for example, local culture tries to preserve rural traditions viewed as a core of the nation. The XX century was a complex one for the territory of Moldova, rich in revolutionary events, wars, ideological changes, modernization, urbanization and so on. The last decades were dynamic as well. Besides economic factors two processes were the gravest for identity preservation – globalization and migration. In the conditions, when the world becomes too open, the time goes too fast, and at the same time the villages become deserted, people try to catch and preserve the past. Therefore, the museums and collections we were talking about majorly contain objects from different periods, including the recent one, because the things become historical in a very short time.

During ethnographical expeditions in different Moldovan villages carried out in 2024–2025 the new data about *casa mare* forms and formats was collected. The village gradually modernized, and even in

the old houses, where *casa mare* remained a part of their structure, it served different purposes except for the original one. *Casa mare* started its decline in the beginning of the XX century together with gradual changes in traditional lifestyle and with the raising influence of the urban culture. Therefore, in some villages people still use this name for a guest room, in the other villages they call it differently, for example the drawing room, that is they acknowledge its disappearance. Over the past 150 years, the structure and interiors of dwellings in Moldova have undergone significant changes toward greater comfort and functionality. The social structure and gender roles have also transformed: whereas in the past several generations used to live under one roof, with a clear division of household duties and the whole family sleeping in a single living room, today we observe the maximum individualization of housing. From a psychological point of view, modern authors speak of the personalization of space and the individual structuring of one's environment (Дом 2016: 23). In contrast, the traditional way of life required adherence to collective norms and integration into the social structure of the local community, in which tradition played a unifying role. According to ethnologist S. Adonyeva, in traditional cultures that did not presuppose individual development, a person had to be transformed into another status through some ritual acts (Adonyeva 2014). Between these two poles lie contemporary local practices associated with the ceremonial or guest room. Their persistence is primarily linked to the high value placed on family in local culture and to the preservation of the traditional festive religious-agrarian cycle, in which religious holidays hold the highest importance (Ivanova 2016).

Thus, the *casa mare* has become a concentrated reflection of the entire peasant way of life, which makes it an integral part of almost any representation of traditional culture. An important trend observed in the contemporary village is the almost ubiquitous presence of a local museum – either public or private, the latter having become particularly widespread in recent decades. It is precisely these private museums that are the focus of this article. The term museum is used here in a rather broad sense, as it refers to a room within a house decorated with old household objects, or a restored parental home, or a collection of local traditional artifacts curated by the author of the initiative according to their own knowledge and memories.

Since such museums are a relatively recent phenomenon, debates about their taxonomy are still ongoing in academic circles. It should be noted that similar initiatives are also emerging in urban settings and may be dedicated to the most unexpected sub-

jects (for example, the author's CoffeeMolka Coffee Museum in Chișinău, around which a community of urban history enthusiasts has formed). A recent issue of the journal *Ethnographic Review* published a polemical discussion of the concept of the "vernacular museum," in which the authors proposed a variety of alternative terms: small, amateur, "folk," community-based, local, family, grassroots museums, popular museumification, bottom-up initiatives, individual museum-making practices, and so on (Абрамов и др. 2016). In the English-language literature, there is also no consensus regarding terminology; researchers use terms such as independent grassroots micro museums (Vella 2020), vernacular museums (Klimaszewski 2020), and local small museums (Hudales 2007). Studies conducted in Romania have introduced related notions such as local museums, author museums, or village collections. Since these initiatives represent private efforts to preserve cultural heritage, I propose analyzing them through the concept of museumification, which in this context acquires a broader meaning than the classical one – as a process of heritage preservation through its conservation. Its grassroots nature is clearly reflected in the literature, where authors describe "heritage from below" as a form of diverse and often difficult-to-classify modes of commemorating the "material" past (Мельникова 2024: 68).

In Moldova, research on such grassroots initiatives is still in its early stages, as the issue of heritage preservation itself has only recently been brought to public and academic attention. The country is in the process of adopting and critically reinterpreting European norms and legislation related to culture and heritage. This makes the study and documentation of existing local, non-institutional museum practices all the more relevant.

Another important aspect to note is the poor condition of traditional objects in rural areas, which have suffered both from the passage of time and from modernization processes. Against the backdrop of constant reconstruction of old houses, the replacement of wells, roadside crosses, and other elements of the rural landscape with standardized, factory-made ones, the demand for local identity is growing. This process takes place within the broader search for national identity, which is characteristic of young states. In Moldova, traditional culture has become one of the main responses to this request (Ivanova 2024). Some residents have become aware of the importance of preserving and promoting local culture and history, and the most enthusiastic among them have begun to assemble collections. Other community members often join these initiatives by bringing

old household items to contribute to the "museum". Interestingly, in neighboring Romania, where this process began much earlier, in the context of democratization and the re-evaluation of heritage within EU cultural policy – Romanian vernacular museums were selected for a national cultural program, *Village Collections din Romania* (2008–2013) (Klimaszewski 2020: 2), thereby gaining a certain degree of recognition from the academic community.

Let us consider three separate cases, quite different visually but united by a common intention of the museum curators to preserve and present local culture through the traditional dwelling and, in particular, the *casa mare* as its most distinctive part. The materials were collected by the author during field expeditions in 2024–2025, as well as from various media sources.

### Vorniceni – Rediscovery of local history and traditions

The private museum *Vatra Dumeniului* from Vorniceni village, Straseni district, represents a house built in traditional style with one big room – *casa mare*. It is filled with a number of objects, owned by the hostess or collected from the villagers. Elena Lazarev, the founder, provides a detailed story about items in her collection. Her persistence and almost detective-like meticulousness in tracing the origins of the objects among relatives and local residents helped her assemble it. Elena inherited her love for traditions from her grandmother – skipping a generation, since her mother followed the fashion trends of her time – a very common feature of the Soviet period. Her background in economics helped her develop her idea and win a grant that allowed her to build a museum in a traditional style of *casa mare* and to continue developing the site for educational and touristic purposes. The story of her dream began with an old loom and the idea of reviving the local weaving tradition.



Image 1. *Vatra Dumeniului*, museum façade, v. Vorniceni. Photo: Ivanova Nina, 09.12.2024.



Image 2. *Vatra Dumeniului*, interior, v. Vorniceni.  
Photo: Ivanova Nina, 09.12.2024.

Although in her actual house Elena does not have *casa mare* she has rich recollections about her grandmother's one:

*There were always towels, rolls of woven cloth, runners, and lots of new clay dishes (meant as gifts). The rugs were made of hemp, wool, and rags. There were no synthetics. There were always pillows, with and without pillowcases. The dowry was always arranged in a pile. There was a wardrobe. A narrow bench for the dowry. Layers of runners, pillows on top, stuffed with down. I didn't see anything in the casa mare except the dowry – that was the main component, something sacred. There was always an icon, usually a gift <...>. As children, we wanted to take everything from there – everything was beautiful, new. The room was never heated. There were family photos, the focus was on family <...>. As children, we were only allowed to look, not to touch. It seemed sacred. Today's children don't know what "sacred" means.*

Elena also described when and how the *casa mare* was used and its actual importance for the national culture:

*For me personally, the "casa mare" is a sacred place that represents us as a folk. We have no diamonds or minerals – we have corn and hands. Everything in the house was made by hand. We are proud of the "casa mare" as a nation. With all this modernism, our houses have lost something. Couples would never sleep in the "casa mare". It is like a church altar – a combination of home and church. It was used for celebrations, while everyday life took place in another part of the house.*

Interestingly, although Elena knows very well the traditional objects and their proper arrangement in a *casa mare*, in her museum she included more modern objects and peasant household items that were used in other rooms:

*We tried to improvise a small museum – a "casa mare". Children today don't know what that is. We tried to combine old and new things, even Soviet ones.*

This reflects a general subconscious trend followed by the private museum curators, also visible in ethnic-style restaurants, where the *casa mare* becomes a symbolic representation of the entire peasant household, including objects remembered from childhood, such as Soviet-era clocks, radios, sewing machines, and dolls. As it is mentioned about the similar spaces of Romania: "The idealized traditional household from the past is reimagined and reinterpreted by these makers dependent on the quantity and kinds of objects they have on hand" (Klimaszewski 2020: 120).

There are some essential narrative trends that could be traced in Elena's presentation of her museum:

- Idealization of the past, of traditional way of life: starting with the natural character of food and household to the admiration about wisdom of practices and rituals (she talks a lot about her endeavors to find more about symbols on the carpets).

- A critique of the Soviet regime, during which traditions were interrupted: "In Soviet times, traditions were excluded, but when something international had to be shown, there was Joc (famous dance ensemble), for it was necessary to showcase culture".

- Great accent is put on the value on local culture and history. Elena speaks in detail about local traditions, the folk practices she learned from her grandmother, and about the village craftsmen who made wooden objects and household items. The local characteristic features were accentuated by her grandmother: "once she said that she would have liked to sew her own clothes but could no longer see well enough to embroider the cuffs":

*We were children and said, "Why would you do that? There are plenty of clothes in the market – mom will buy some". But she answered: "If I go to Lozova or Bukovăț (neighboring villages), people won't recognize that I am from Vorniceni".*

- Collaboration with the expert society, although Elena does the major part of research by herself.

Thus, being apologetic about local traditions Elena managed to turn it into touristic and educational center, where one can not only learn something new about the old times, but to practice in manual skills etc. Elena is very proud to mention the importance of her museum for international promotion, for it was visited by a number of ambassadors and the other important persons.



### Oxentea – Artistic view on the local culture

A very characteristic initiative of the period about twenty years ago can be found in the village of Oxentea, Dubăsari district. This picturesque locality on the bank of the Dniester River has its entire riverside lined with rich private houses. On one of the plots lies a small complex established about twenty years ago by a couple from Chisinau – for the husband's fishing and the wife's artistic pursuits, as she was a painter. Over time, they built several small guest houses for their friends, and in an old house that remained on the property, they opened a small museum. Although the host Alexander was not talkative, his responses created the general outline of their family project. It began with a search for a place suitable for fishing and painting sessions, and over time the area became inhabited and developed: friends would come to fish or paint, while the owners gradually constructed buildings and landscaped the territory according to their tastes and needs. It should be noted the non-commercial character of the place; it was created for personal use and for a close circle of friends:

*There was nothing here – just weeds and a half-ruined house. We did everything gradually. The steps are the same, we just tiled them.*

They obtained the objects from local residents:

*The “casa mare” was decorated by my wife. We bought some items from locals, others were brought by people themselves – we exchanged things for cement, I remember.*

Local craftsmen also helped with the renovation. When asked about the purpose of creating the museum, Alexander replied:

*My wife is an artist, and the Artists' Union used to come here for plein-air sessions. We made the museum as a kind of outlet, for people. We held exhibitions, people from the village came. There were open-air exhibitions here, famous painters visited, and art schools came with children. It was a creative atmosphere.*

The museum itself is a traditional old house, characteristically painted blue, with a tiled roof and a typical *prispa* (veranda), where objects from different periods are displayed side by side. Two beautifully carved dowry chests stand out among the exhibits. Inside, the house retains the traditional division into three rooms: one serves as the exhibition of the *casa mare*, while the other two are closed to visitors. It is interesting to note that in residential houses the situation is usually the opposite – the *casa mare* often becomes a storage space for items no longer used in daily life, while the living rooms combine both everyday and festive elements. Therefore, in modern villages, it is often difficult to distinguish a *casa*

*mare* from an ordinary living room. In this author's museum, it is arranged according to the owner's own vision: a wall-sized carpet, embroidered towels and curtains, a corner with an icon framed by towels, and traditional costumes hanging on the walls. However, the sideboard was painted by the hostess herself, and the beds are placed parallel to each other, like in a guesthouse.



Image 3. Façade of the renovated old house, v. Oxentea.

Photo: Ivanova Nina, 02.12.2024



Image 4. Decoration of the angle with the icons, v. Oxentea. Photo: Ivanova Nina, 02.12.2024



Image 5. Casa mare room in the private museum, v. Oxentea. Photo: Ivanova Nina, 02.12.2024





Image 6. Traditional and artistic objects arranged on prispa, v. Oxentea. Photo: Ivanova Nina, 02.12.2024

It is worth noting that Oxentea is a fairly modernized village, where almost no old houses have been preserved, so Alexander's museum has significant value. It is also important that he managed to assemble a collection of local ethnographic objects, since until recently rural residents did not realize their cultural worth.

The case study of the Oxentia private museum demonstrates how the village territory itself creates framework for its museumification. Although the arrangement was carried out by people from a different cultural background – Russian-speaking city dwellers – this case is very representative of the 2000s, when interest in traditional culture became especially vivid. The owners also managed to build trusting relationships with the locals and integrate their project into village life. Angelina, Alexander's wife, curates a Facebook page dedicated to the village, where she regularly publishes artistic photographs that document local life, cultural practices, and events taking place on their property. It is noteworthy that there exists another, more formal social media profile of the village, which primarily features political announcements and official holiday greetings. This dual presence in the digital space reflects the coexistence of community-based, creative self-representation and the more institutional modes of communication typical of local administrations.

#### **Puhoi – Family home of Eugenia Veveriță**

In the village of Puhoi, Ialoveni district, there is a notable point of attraction – the *Asconi* winery, which has gathered many ethnographic objects for its décor, purchased from local residents. As a result, many villagers believe that there are hardly any artifacts left for their own village museum. Nevertheless, there are many other initiatives originating from the community itself. One of them belongs to Eugenia

Veveriță, who recently renovated her parental home and turned it into a kind of museum. She preserved and arranged the objects based on her own memories. It should be noted that the woman has no formal training or expert knowledge, so her warm stories about her childhood home contain more emotion than factual detail. However, this is precisely what distinguishes such museums – they are deeply personal spaces of memory. In an interview with TVR Moldova, she said:

*Neighbors come, cousins come. They have beautiful memories here. Every time we enter the house, we feel like reliving them, because we have so many memories. I feel very good, and I am proud of my parents' house* (The story 2025).

Thus, the representation of her personal memories resonates with the collective memory of her relatives and neighbors, who also had similar beds, stoves, and carpets on benches in their childhood homes. The emotional response evoked by such an exhibition gives it a kind of value that the individual objects themselves might not possess. In the context of a globalized world and a disappearing rural culture that is becoming increasingly modernized, such a *house-museum* plays an almost therapeutic role, offering a return to a familiar and peaceful world.



Image 7. The author in her parents' *casa mare*, v. Puhoi. Photo: Ivanova Nina, 16.10.2025



Image 8. The façade of the museum, v. Puhoi. <https://stiri.md/article/social/istoria-eugeniei-vereita-din-puhoi-care-si-a-renovat-casa-parintasca/> (visited 25.10.2025)

Such museums represent more or less random collections of objects which reflect the views of the owners about tradition, authenticity and past, that is some collective memories of the local community. The objects are brought by the villagers, and thus they acquire a new value, being not old and out-fashioned, but old and historic. Although they majorly contain objects from different periods, including the recent one, these spaces reflect the fast change of epochs, when things become historical in a very short time: they speak of attempts to catch and preserve the past.

So, *casa mare* today is physically present in various forms of artificial representation or reconstruction in the public sphere – as collections, museums, restaurants, guest houses, and so on. Among local museums, we can distinguish private ones, established either as part of business initiatives or as the result of individual interest in culture and history. Such museums often represent rather eclectic collections of objects that reflect their owners' views on tradition, authenticity, and the past, that is, collective memories of the local community. From a professional ethnographic perspective, these collections can be criticized for their composition, as they mostly include items from the XX century, often handcrafted according to new urban patterns and lacking authenticity. The objects are usually brought by villagers, which grants them a new kind of value, they are perceived not merely as old or outdated, but as historic. This process provides villagers with a sense of identity and belonging to a community with a shared past. The owners of such collections, in turn, acquire the status of memory and identity keepers.

The practice of keeping traditional objects in a specially arranged *casa mare* space seems to be a distinctive feature of Moldova, fitting well into the concept of museumification – the process of transforming an object, a place, a phenomenon, or a practice into a museum exhibit, when its original function, status, and perception are altered. This transformation is one of the key mechanisms in safeguarding cultural heritage. The modification of function, status, and perception is crucial here. Although many villagers still keep handcrafted objects, for example, carpets made by their mothers and grandmothers, this material aspect of intergenerational continuity has largely been lost. The *casa mare* was deprived of its ritual function due to social change; it has also lost its status as a sacred and representational space. As such, it is no longer functional in its original sense, since any tradition ceases to exist without its social and cultural context. Thus, the current

perception of *casa mare* – as a necessity to preserve tradition and identity – finds its material expression in artificially organized spaces.

So, the question is, what happened during the last decades, that urges the museumification of *casa mare*? Besides the evident pragmatic reasons – tourists' attraction, they seem to satisfy some requests of their curators, and the society in general. Here we come to the question of collective memory and the mechanisms of its functioning. The researcher V. Vakhshsteyn argues that understanding of linkage among the past, present and future in a society determines the value of memory in this society and it depends on the grade of detail and information content of history fixation (Вахштайн 2018: 6). After that he underlines the typical feature of contemporary practices of memory, which are characterized by the fact that while some events are preserved, others are suppressed and forgotten, and only one of the many possible interpretations occupies a dominant position. One reason for this may be the gradual shift away from mechanical documentation – partly due to its accessibility – towards active experience and using memory as a resource (Вахштайн 2018: 7). The described museum cases prove that experiencing the practices of the rural past is a popular method of dealing with the past, which becomes accessible and easy for perceiving. Its community nature, that is made for and by its members, with the scope to experience the past, resembles the ritual practices, one of the roles of which as a joint activity is to maintain solidarity within the community and create a sense of belonging to the whole (Вахштайн 2018: 33). Because of a strong connection between the past and the history, which is actually poorly represented in other museums and by the state or private actors, we can notice its mythologization, when traditional lifestyle is presented idealistically within the beautiful objects of *casa mare*.

Another important question is the form or representation of this collective past, that is *casa mare* itself. It was already underlined that its representations in grassroots museums go beyond the traditional "pure" ethnographic form. This image is personalized due to the individual memories of the curators, but at the same time it is highly idealized, aiming to represent the culture of local community. Exposing objects of different historic periods, even of the recent one, creates sometimes a picture near to the kitsch. This mode of assembling things reminds of bricolage of C. Lévi-Strauss, a model of thinking and culture production, typical for a traditional society with mythological type of consciousness (Српоева 2014: 136). The author drags opposition between

the bricoleur and the engineer as representative of creative and innovative thinking: “The engineer always tries to make his way out of and go beyond the constraints imposed by a particular state of civilization, while the bricoleur, by contrast, remains within them” (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 19). At best this mechanism is seen in the ethnic themed restaurants of Moldova, which tend to reconstruct inside their hall the village household or at least *casa mare*.

These forms of museumification rarely establish contact with the expert society, as in Romania, for example. One of the reasons is the overall unclear situation around the heritage in Moldova and restrained number of experts in the field. But there are also exceptions, as, for example, Elena Lazarev, who understands the importance of expertise for the widening of her activity. The other problem deals with understanding of authenticity, which can differ among the experts and curators. Moreover, authenticity itself remains vague in definition. Developed international tourism has become one of the reasons for the emergence of “staged authenticity”, which arises as a response to tourists’ demand for genuine rituals, objects, and experiences. In this regard, authenticity is an exclusively modern value, and its appearance is closely linked to the impact of modernity on the unity of social existence (Cohen 1988: 373). For ethnographers, authenticity mainly refers to pre-modern societies and to objects produced before the penetration of modern Western influences (Cohen 1988: 375). The negotiated nature of authenticity raises the issue of the invention of tradition, since a cultural product once considered inauthentic may, over time, come to be recognized as authentic. Moreover, even staged authenticity, which is often thought to destroy rituals and objects, may ultimately contribute to the preservation of culture, as the demand from tourists encourages the maintenance and reproduction of rituals and traditions that might otherwise disappear (Cohen 1988: 381). *Casa mare* in grassroots museums (and even in many local museum institutions) in this regard is a staged form of authenticity, because it is not a part of traditional lifestyle, but a reproduced one. Anyway, as such it attracts attention to the heritage as a whole and promoted interest to the local traditional potential.

Thus, many of the questions raised in this publication remain open. The presented materials and speculations about them need continual research on a larger data base. The theme of cultural heritage and its preservation has a big potential for investigation, for in the modern circumstances this question still has no fixed evident solution.

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