

PASTORAL TRANSHUMANCE IN MĂRGINIMEA SIBIULUI

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Abstract. This paper deals with certain aspects of a traditional activity practiced in a mountain-hilly region from southern Transylvania, called Mărginimea Sibiului. Sheep-breeding is one of the oldest activities in this area, with a significant impact on all generations, including the inhabitants of this region today. We present details of pastoral transhumance in Mărginimea Sibiului in different periods of time and nowadays, knowing that its peak was in the 18th and 19th centuries. The methodology used is based both on the analysis of a complex specialist literature and on field trips and discussions with the local authorities and the families of shepherds who currently participate in the process of transhumance. Also, in the analyses made we used statistical data obtained either from the National Institute of Statistics, or from Sibiu County Statistics Department. We established the areas of transhumance, determinant causes, restrictive factors after 1990 and the advantages of practicing transhumance.

1. INTRODUCTION

Two types of transhumance existed in Romania in historical times i.e. *beekeeping transhumance*, based on the melliferous resources and *pastoral transhumance* favoured by the natural extension of alpine and subalpine pastures and meadows, the particularities of the natural components and the traditional crafts (sheep skin processing, the furrier's trade, wool processing, etc.).

Transhumant shepherding, mentioned in historical documents as early as the 13th (1224), 14th (1383, Cristian) and 15th centuries, imposed the expansion of grasslands at the expense of forest lands, the organization of handicraft–industrial activities, professional meetings, the building of a road infrastructure (trade routes overlapping transhumance routes), the organization of huts (of the closed fold-type) and of various economic activities.

Pastoral activities in Romania highlight a reality that cannot be contested, namely, man's integration into nature, or the balance that should exist within the geosystem between the natural and the anthropic components.

Man's activities often produce environmental imbalances, which may have irreversible consequences. Therefore, knowing the limits of human intervention on the natural environment is imperative in order to preserve its particularities that ensure the existence of life.

Shepherding, as one of the oldest occupations, has a positive influence on the relationship between man and nature, stimulating partnership and not antagonism.

Mărginimea Sibiului area has a tradition in sheep-breeding, due to its geographical position in the south Transylvanian mountain-hilly area. This accounts for the vast expansion of pastures and meadows to the detriment of arable land, stimulating animal husbandry as the basic economic activity in the region.

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To conserve vegetation for grazing in the warm season, sheep flocks are moved every year between village and mountain, or between village, mountain and the lowlands. These movements take place over longer or shorter distances, depending on the size of flocks. Thus, owners with smaller flocks are annually oscillating between village and mountain, or between village, mountain and the area adjacent to the village hearth.

In the past, shepherds with large flocks practiced transhumance on longer distances, usually as far as the Romanian Plain, the Subcarpathians of Oltenia, the Dobrogea Plateau, etc. (Popp, 1932). In some cases, depending on the political and socio-economic situation, transhumant shepherds would cross the frontier into Ukraine, Russia (the Caucasus, the Crimeea), Bulgaria and Turkey. However, these were multiannual movements, and once arrived on those territories the sheep flocks would remain there for several years.

The transhumance movement in Romania was at its height in the 19th century, afterwards declining. Many causes had led to this situation e.g. the nationalization of the main means of production in the second half of the 20th century under the totalitarian communist regime and more recently, after 1990, the restitution of agricultural and forest lands replaced state property by private property.

Currently, because of difficulties in moving the flocks over private lands, transhumance is practiced on a small scale. However, in 2014 some owners from the villages of Mărginimea Sibiului (Jina, Poiana Sibiului, and Răşinari) did participate in transhumance.

Regardless of the scale of transhumance in contemporary times, its practice remains a specific phenomenon in the villages from Mărginimea Sibiului, a tradition that connects the past to the present, highlighting man's attachment to nature. Also, the conservation and development of vegetation in pastures and meadows are another favourable factor which can contribute to maintaining the ecological balance.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

This work is the result of the scientific research conducted in the rural area of Mărginimea Sibiului between July and December 2014. We used a complex methodology, based on both the study and analysis of a variety of bibliographic resources and on field trips in several representative localities such as Jina, Tilişca, Sălişte, Poiana Sibiului, Rod, Răşinari and others. A special role in this study was played by discussions with the local authorities and with families of the shepherds involved in transhumance. Statistical data were obtained from local town-halls in Mărginimea Sibiului, Sibiu Veterinary and Food Safety Department, Sibiu County Statistics Department, the National Institute of Statistics Bucharest and Sibiu General Agricultural Census.

Particular attention was paid to reviewing the Romanian geographical literature and related fields: biology, ecology, history, etc. Thus, works of regional geography, rural and economic geography were being analyzed. Of particular value are the animal husbandry studies elaborated by the Institute of Geography of the Romanian Academy in collaboration with professors from the Department of Geography, Hosey University of Japan. These works deal particularly with the breeding of sheep and the practice of transhumance in Eastern European, highlighting case-studies from Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovenia.

Likewise, a special role in this study had the works on transhumance specific to the Mediterranean countries: Spain, France, Italy, Central and Western Europe – Germany.

Finally, we would mention the variety of cartographic documents from different time-periods, matching historical documents, that helped us reconstitute the phenomenon of transhumance in the rural areas of the Romanian Carpathians.

Statistical data processing and the elaboration of thematic maps is based on the QGIS and ArcGIS software.

3. STRUCTURE, TEXTURE AND ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS OF THE RURAL SETTLEMENTS FROM MĂRGINIMEA SIBIULUI

Mărginimea Sibiului is located in the south-west of Sibiu County, at the contact between Sibiu Depression and the Cindrel Mountains. The term *Mărginimea Sibiului* has historical connotations, referring to the villages situated at the contact between mountain and the relatively flat, plain-like depression “on the outskirts” of Sibiu and an area centered on Sibiu city. The inhabitants of these villages are called *mărgineni*, being famous for their shepherding” (Irimie, Dunăre, Petrescu, 1985, p. 14).

This area of contact, called Mărginimea Sibiului includes 17 settlements (16 villages and one town), which extend between the Olt Valley to the east and the Sebeş Valley to the west, covering about 1,335 km². The settlements are Boița, Sadu, Râu Sadului, Tălmăcel, Rășinari, Poplaca, Gura Râului, Orlat, Fântânele, Sibiul Vale, Galeș, Tilișca, Rod, Poiana Sibiului, Jina, and Săliște, the last one having town status since 2003. Mărginimea Sibiului encompasses also territories belonging to 12 territorial-administrative units: 10 communes and 2 towns (Fig. 1).

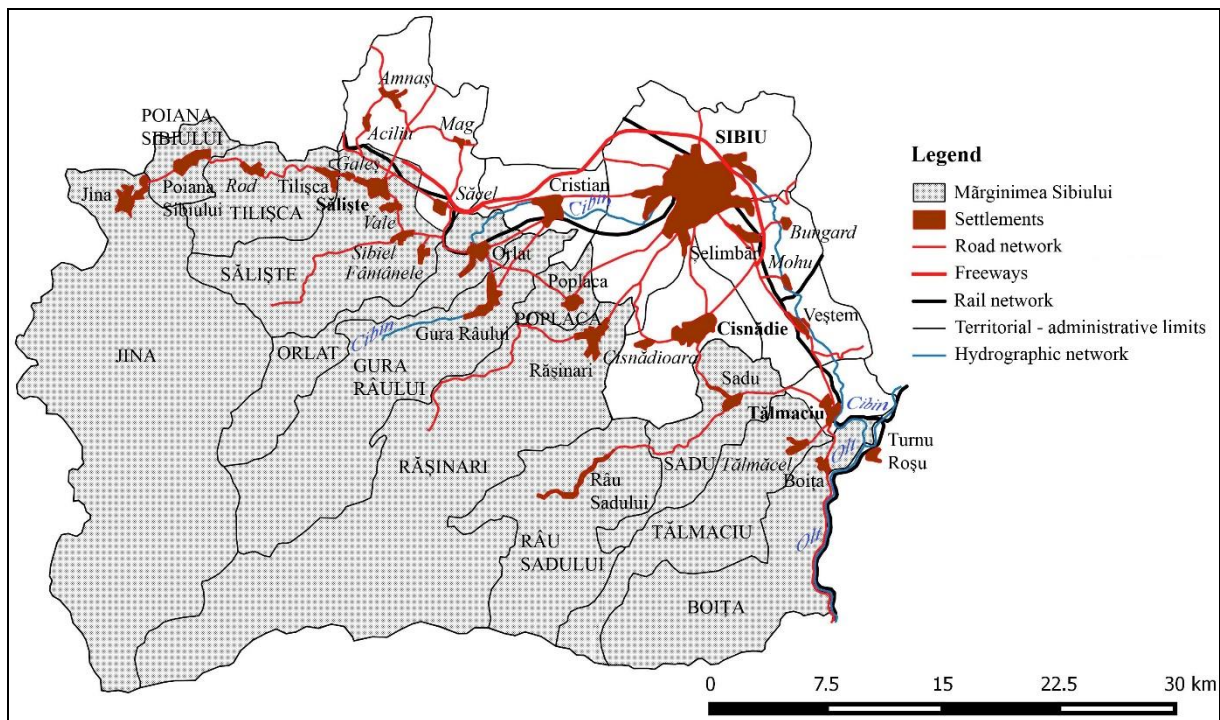


Fig. 1 – Settlements from Mărginimea Sibiului.
(Source: Processed after the Topographic Map of Romania, scale 1: 200 000).

The structure of settlements from Mărginimea Sibiului is influenced by the geographical position of this area, between a submontane depression and the Carpathian Mountains. These settlements are located on the southern outskirts of Sibiu Depression, their village hearth partially extending on the piedmont steps of the Cindrel Mountains. It is the southern alignment of the settlements in the depression area, where both the village hearths and especially the estates (lands adjacent to the hearths) rise on the northern slopes of the Cindrel Mountains, including even the Alpine area.

The geographical position of these settlements explains the name *Mărginime* (*outskirts*) given by geographers and researchers from other fields (historians, sociologists, ethnographers, etc.).

In general, these settlements have a compact structure specific to depression areas. Households (home and annexes) are located at a small distance from one another, showing compacting trends

especially in the central area. The space between buildings is generally small, including agricultural lands used “within the village hearth.” The built area can be clearly delimited from the adjacent surfaces (estate) of agricultural use, or most often of pastoral use.

A specific feature of the villages advancing into the mountain area is their hearths are located on the piedmont step of the Cindrel Mountains. In this case we notice a compact structure in the central area, or the core of the hearth, and scattered structures in the outskirts, depending on the configuration of the relief and the hydrographic network, households being located, tentacle-like in the valleys. This is specific to the rural settlements of Jina, Poiana Sibiului, Rod, Tilişca, Sibiul, Fântânele, Gura Râului, Răşinari, Râu Sadului, and Tălmăcel.

Sălişte (town-status since 2003), is the only urban settlement in Mărginimea Sibiului, a status based mainly on demographic grounds (over 5,000 inhabitants, together with the rural settlements pertaining to it). The structure of the town observes the configuration of the rural settlements in these areas, with a compact core and scattered towards the outskirts, the hearth expanding north-westwards – south-eastwards.

In the case of both compact and scattered rural structures, the built area is well-outlined, distinct from the lands adjacent to the hearths.

Currently, the hearth of the settlement core has a tendency to compacting, while the scattered outskirts have a tendency to expanding.

The *texture* of settlements refers to the layout of buildings in the hearth in relation to the configuration of the street network. This reflects the internal order of the streets.

The oldness of settlements in Mărginimea Sibiului shows certain irregular textures, specific to villages that were not subjected to systematization and territorial planning. In this sense, the street network has a circular or radial arrangement (the streets are usually diverging from the core, or the center of the locality, towards the outskirts of the hearths). There are also newer settlements (Râu Sadului, documented in 1850) with a monolinear or bilinear texture. Râu Sadului has a monolinear texture, the hearth lying along DJ 105G (county road) and being parallel to the Sadu River. Likewise, Prislop Village, which pertains to Răşinari Commune, has a bilinear texture, being a relatively new village, documentary attested in 1954.

The *form* of settlement hearths in Mărginimea Sibiului is predominantly irregular polygonal, due to their unsystematized evolution. The largest hearths are specific to Poiana Sibiului, Sălişte, Orlat, Gura Râului, Răşinari and Sadu. The tentacle-like hearth of Jina Commune covers a large surface, due mostly to its territorial location on the highly fragmented piedmont relief. Regular forms of the rectangle, square or triangle type, are specific only to the new settlements, built according to some systematization plans.

The *geo-economic functions* specific to the settlements of Mărginimii Sibiului are centred on two types of activities: *agriculture*, focused mainly on animal husbandry owing to large pastures, meadows, and *forestry* lands; forests represent an element particular to this area.

The total agricultural land of the 12 administrative units (10 communes and 2 towns) that form Mărginimea Sibiului covers 1,334.93 km². The largest expansions (over 200 km²) are specific to Sălişte Town and Jina settlement. Surfaces larger than 100 km² have four settlements with: Tălmăciu, Răşinari, Gura Râului and Boiţa, the smallest one are in Poplaca, Râu Sadului and Poiana Sibiului.

The land fond structure is dominated by forest land, (almost 60% of the total surface), and agricultural land (over 1/3 of the total of Mărginimea Sibiului). The other land fond categories, that is, ways of communication, buildings, waters, unproductive lands (total 4%), each category having one percent of the overall land fond.

The agricultural surface (arable lands, pastures and meadows, vineyards and orchards) covers 505 km², i.e. 38% of the Mărginimea Sibiului land fond. The largest agricultural areas belong to Sălişte (124 km² or 55% of the total area), Jina (80 km² or 25% of the total area) and Tălmăciu⁹ (73 km², respectively 29% of the administrative total of this settlement). The reduced agricultural surfaces of Tălmăciu and Jina come from the forest expansion specific to the mountain zone.

The agricultural use highlights the hilly-mountain specificity of this area, with over 80% meadows and pastures and only 14% arable land of the total surface-area, which explains the pastoral function of these settlements.

In general, areas expanding on mountain steps (Jina, Orlat, Gura Râului, Rășinari, Râu Sadului, Tâlmăciu, and Boița) have small agricultural surfaces (under 40% of the total land), compared to others that expand northwards, in depression or plateau areas (Săliște), where agricultural land represents over 50% of the total surface of localities.

Due to the submontane relief, arable lands are not very extended, differences among the communes resulting, on the one hand, from the size of the territorial-administrative units, and from distinct fragmented relief lands, on the other. Arable lands hold the highest percentage of the agricultural surface, over 20%, in the settlements which include relatively flat surfaces located at the contact between the depression, the piedmont and the glacis, e.g.: Orlat (34%), Poplaca (32%), Sadu (26%), Gura Râului (24%), communes and Săliște town (21%).

At the other end of the spectrum are the settlements that occupy partly the northern slopes of the Cindrel and the Lotru mountains up to the watershed, such as Râu Sadului, Poiana Sibiului, Jina and Tilișca communes, where arable land represents 4% of total agricultural land.

In the settlements that have little arable land, pastoral and forestry uses prevail.

Thus, pastures and meadows have the highest share in the Râu Sadului, Poiana Sibiului, Jina, Tilișca and Boița communes (over 90% of the total agricultural land), but referred to the total land fond, it is Săliște, Poiana Sibiului and Tilișca that rank first with 40% – 60%. Usually, the largest areas are occupied by pastures, with the exception of Jina, Râu Sadului, Sadu and Tilișca, where natural meadows prevail.

Orchards and vineyards are not specific to this region, except for Săliște which has 220 ha of orchards and 101 ha of vineyards, that is almost 3% of the total agricultural surface.

Forests sum up 77,807 ha, which represents 59.17% of the administrative-territorial total that includes Mărginimea Sibiului. Most forest land have Jina commune and Tâlmăciu town, 24,032 ha and 12,836 ha, respectively (74% of the total land fond in Jina and 69% in Tâlmăciu Town); between 6,000 and 8,500 ha forest land have Săliște Town, Gura Râului, Rășinari and Boița communes.

Since all these settlements have the estate on the northern slopes of the Cindrel and the Lotru mountains, which explains the wealth of forest land.

Therefore, animal husbandry and forest exploitation are the basic functions of these settlements, in addition, rural tourism and agro-tourism is being practiced in Mărginimea Sibiului, as part of promoting and developing green tourism.

4. PASTORAL TRANSHUMANCE: PAST AND PRESENT

The activities connected with sheep-breeding are an ancient tradition here, the rural area of Mărginimea Sibiului being a unique territory where natural resources and environmental conditions converge.

Transhumance is a very complex process, involving the movement of flocks to the mountain in the warm season and their return to the plain in the cold season.

The term comes from Latin where *trans* means *across, from one end to another* and *humus soil, land, ground*. The term *transhumance* was used in the Mediterranean area (Spain, Italy, France), being introduced in the scientific literature by Paul Vidal de la Blache, at the end of the 19th century (Rinschede, 1988, p. 97).

In the family of Romance languages the term *transhumance* is still used today, it referring to migration and seldom to the movement of livestock.

Geography has extended the meaning of this term, it currently standing for an economic form of having sheep flocks moved to the alpine pastures (Beckinsale, 1975, pp. 68–75; Rinschede, 1988, pp. 96–108; Yasuda, 1958; Tsukihara, 1992).

According to the Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language, 1998, the term *transhumance* originates from the French word *transhumance* and represents *the periodic migration of shepherds and their flocks from the plain to the mountain, or from south to north in spring, and from mountain to plain, or from north to south, in autumn, to secure the food they need.*

When these movements occur only in the perimetre of residential settlements, covering short distances, they are called oscillation shepherding. The owners who have a small number of sheep practice this type of transhumance, basically between the mountain and the village hearth, or to its adjacent area. Transhumance may also cover long distances over hundreds, sometimes even thousands of kilometres; this is big transhumance, *small* transhumance being limited to the area close to the residential neighbourhood.

Transhumant shepherding has always been connected to a stable place, being specific to sedentary populations (Panaiteescu, 1969), while nomadism implies continuous change of residence, never practiced by Romanians. This clarification is welcome to avoid confusion between the term transhumance and nomadism, the latter being characteristic of migratory populations.

Historical documents record the participation of shepherds from Mărginimea Sibiului in the process of transhumance as early as the 13th century, also testified in the chronicles of the Hungarian King Bela the Fifth. Documents belonging to Voivode Mihai, the son of king Mircea cel Bătrân (the Old), state the right of the shepherds from Mărginimea Sibiului to graze on the southern slopes of the Carpathians, i.e. on the territory of Wallachia. The practice of transhumance is also confirmed in the next centuries, the peak period being 1700 – 1900, when the number of sheep flocks moved significantly increased. *Almost every village had its area of natural pastures in the Lotru and the Cindrel mountains. Tălmăcel Village alone owned seven mountains, practicing the rotation-grazing system* (Irimie *et al.*, 1985).

Also, the distances travelled have increased beyond the country's borders, on the territories of neighbouring states: Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine, sometimes reaching as far as Russia, Turkey, or Croatia.

Transhumance can have multiple causes, e.g. the different quality of pastures, the large number of animals (sheep), the absence of hay-fields in the cold season, the warmer climate in the plain, hence a longer period of vegetation over the year.

As from the 20th century, transhumance began declining due to the evolution of society, but primarily to the socio-political factors. Thus, the enlargement of cultivated lands in the Bărăgan Plain and the land reform at the end of the 19th century, after the War of Independence, represented restrictive elements for transhumance because of the expansion of private lands. Likewise, the so-called *customs war* between Romania and Hungary (1885–1896) made many sheep-owners turn to other activities (cultivation of trade plants, etc.).

After the end of the First World War and the formation of the National Unitary Romanian State in December 1918, there followed a period favourable for the development of transhumance, as the Romanian lands, abusively confiscated by the Saxon minority, were recovered.

Transhumance was also practiced during the communist regime, when the land was state property, and after the change of the political regime in December 1989. It is true that transhumance was less intensely practiced due mainly to the restitution of agricultural land to former owners, state property being replaced by private property.

In Mărginimea Sibiului, where animal husbandry represents the main occupation, transhumance has been practiced in all the 17 localities, the intensity of this practice varying with the period and the number of animals.

The movement of flocks in the four seasons of the year represents a very interesting process, not only of movement between village and mountain, but also of a small transhumance, in areas adjacent, or close to neighbourhood it Mărginimea Sibiului. Thus, in the warm summer season all flocks are ushered up to the mountain, to the alpine pastures and meadows beyond the timberline. In winter, the flocks come down either in the sheepfold of the owners with a small number of animals, or close to it in the so-called the hut area, where hay is stored for the cold season. In the intermediate seasons, in spring and autumn, some sheep-owners with small flocks participate in small transhumance, those with large flocks join big transhumance. In autumn, transhumance begins, ending up in spring, when the flocks return to the pastures and meadows around the settlements.

Small transhumance moves to the Hârtibaciu Plateau, Târnavă Plateau or Făgăraş Depression, while *big transhumance* covers long distances from the residential place, basically to the West Plain and Hills, or to the Dobrogea Plateau and the Romanian Plain.

Shepherds with few animals do not practice transhumance, oscillating only between the mountain and the valley (residential village). Oscillation is simple, when the movement takes place only on the mountain-village distance, or double, when in transitional seasons (spring and autumn), the flocks arrive on the meadows and pastures at some distance from the village, ascending or descending afterwards (depending on season), along the mountain-valley itinerary.

Among the settlements of Mărginimea Sibiului, – Poiana Sibiului and Jina are representative for the type of shepherding. Poiana Sibiului is a typical pastoral village, with a small estate, which implies a complex system of moving the flocks. Owners with few sheep practice shepherding near the village hearth even in the warm season. In autumn, they move to the neighbouring areas of the Apold Corridor and the Secaşe Plateau, coming back in spring near the village. As already mentioned, this form of transhumance is called small transhumance.

People who own large flocks practice oscillation shepherding between the village, the mountain and the adjacent areas. There are also shepherds going on big transhumance, moving to Banat, Crişana or the Bărăgan Plain in the cold season.

Land restitution poses difficulties in practicing transhumance over long distances and in this situation some owners moved their flocks permanently to lowland regions with a milder climate (Banat), buying agricultural land there, but keeping their residence at Poiana Sibiului.

Jina Village has a shepherding system as complex, due both to its geographical position (inside the mountain-hilly area) and the large number of animals. The movement of flocks in this area is very interesting. In winter, smaller flocks stay in the village sheepfold, or in the huts of the adjacent area (the Apold Corridor and the Secaşe Plateau), larger flocks being sheltered at longer distances, in Banat, Crişana or the Bărăgan Plain. In spring, they practice transhumance around the village, first on the *lower boundary*, where there are no huts, then they go to the *upper boundary*, in the area of huts and natural meadows. In summer, all the flocks move on the northern slopes of the Cindrel Mountains, to the alpine pastures, coming down to the village in autumn, using first the pastures from the upper boundary and then those from the lower boundary (Voicu-Vedea, 1998, p. 138).

In the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century, the sheep livestock of Mărginimea Sibiului registered fluctuating values.

With the exception of 1990, in all reference years the number of sheep exceeded 100,000 heads, highest numbers being registered in 2010 (almost 190,000 heads), with an increasing trend over the last 25 years. The revival of the shepherding tradition in Mărginimea Sibiului area was mainly the result of having state property replaced by private property after the political change of 1989, and the support given by the government to this activity; in recent years, shepherding has received financial support based on certain development projects for the Romanian rural area.

Overall, the number of sheep has generally decreased in the second half of the 20th century, lowest value being recorded in 1990 (under 90,000), but in the following two decades, their number

would double. It is an encouraging phenomenon, which shows the continuity of a tradition specific to the mountain-hilly area of southern Transylvania and, at the same time, the capitalization of the agricultural potential, which will contribute to the sustainable economic development of this area.

Outstanding settlements in terms of sheep number are: Poiana Sibiului, Jina, Răşinari, Tilişca communes and Sălişte Towns. In 2010, they totalled 158,240 sheep, that is 84% of all sheep registered in Mărginimea Sibiului. Only two communes, Jina and Poiana Sibiului, held 106,762 heads, or 56% of the total number of sheep in Mărginimea Sibiului.

Lower values (under 10,000 heads) registered the other settlements, and more than 4,500 – 7,000 sheep had those from Gura Râului, Orlat, Râu Sadului, Sadu and Tălmăciu.

These settlements own 14% of the sheep total in Mărginimea Sibiului. Sadu and Tălmăciu stand out with 12,503 sheep (46%), which belonging to the above group of five localities, or 7% of the total sheep livestock of Mărginimea Sibiului.

The communes of Boiţa and Poplaca have the lowest record, nearly 2% of the total number of sheep existing in the villages of Mărginimea Sibiului. Poplaca had only 846 sheep in 2010, the commune possessing the smallest pasture and meadow areas (under 900 ha).

It is estimated that the number of sheep is directly proportional to the size of the pastoral area, so that the number of animals depends on the pasture and meadow area of respective communes.

Looking at the village statistics, one finds a numerical increase of sheep in most settlements over 1941 – 1985, except for three communes – Poiana Sibiului, Tălmăciu and Tilişca; a steep decrease is recorded, head at Poiana Sibiului, which lost half of the flocks, from ca. 80,000 to ca. 35,000 heads.

This situation was determined by the nationalization of the main means of production and by the practice of socialist farming. However, in the other settlements, state ownership over the land led to livestock increases, yet not beyond 30,000 heads, except for Jina, where from 4,500 sheep, they reported over 26,000 in 1985; the other settlements of Mărginimea Sibiului had a modest record, only at Răşinari, Sălişte and Tilişca the situation looked better (more than 14,500 heads).

During the last period of communism, livestock continued to decrease in almost all the villages from Mărginimea Sibiului. It was again, Poiana Sibiului that registered biggest decreases, from 35,000, little more than 11,000 sheep were left. These figures show the difficulties of the Agricultural Production Cooperatives in the monitoring and management of livestock in the conditions of the central-based economy and state ownership over the land.

After 1990, when the state-based economy was replaced by private property, livestock increased in almost all the settlements. Once again the two villages – Poiana Sibiului and Jina, where sheep-breeding is a traditional occupation, are outstanding with 2.5 time increases at Jina and 5.4 times at Poiana Sibiului. Highest increases had Tilişca Village, by 7.7 time more sheep in 2010 than in 1990. The two driving forces that stimulated animal breeding in Mărginimea Sibiului area were the replacement of state property by private property and the implementation of government projects for the development of this sector.

Transhumance routes covered various distances, depending on the size of flocks. Shepherds with smaller flocks practiced the so-called *small transhumance* on small distances, in the adjacent area of the residential neighbourhood. Winter was spent mostly in the localities of Sibiu County, or of the neighbouring counties of Mureş, Braşov and Alba, especially on some Hârtibaciu Plateau villages: Nocrich, Cornăţel, Nucet, Marpod, and Roşia; Sibiu Depression: Şura Mare, Mică, and Cristian; Apold Corridor: Apoldu de Sus, Apoldu de Jos, and Călnic; Târnave Plateau: Micăsasa, Sânmartin, Zagăr, Aţel, Viişoara, etc.

Big transhumance was practiced by shepherds with large sheep flocks over long distances from the residential settlements (hundreds or even thousands of kilometres) to the Romanian Plain: the Oltenia Plain, the Danube Floodplain and the Brăila Plain, the Dobrogea Plateau, the West Plain and Hills. The Cindrel and the Lotrului mountains were crossed through passes and gorges (Turnu Roşu–

Cozia Gorge, or Loviștei, Arefu, Horezu, Novaci, Olteț lands, etc.). From the Subcarpathian area shepherds would follow along the roads situated in the main valleys (Fig. 2).

The main routes followed by shepherds practicing big transhumance across Romania went as follows:

– west and south-westwards to Crișana and Banat: Mărginimea Sibiului – Apold Corridor – Sebeș Valley – Mureș Corridor – Deva – Ilia – through Lipova, Arad or Timișoara, or through Margina – Lugoj towards the same destinations; those who went to Crișana, travelled from Deva to Brad and farther on to Oradea;

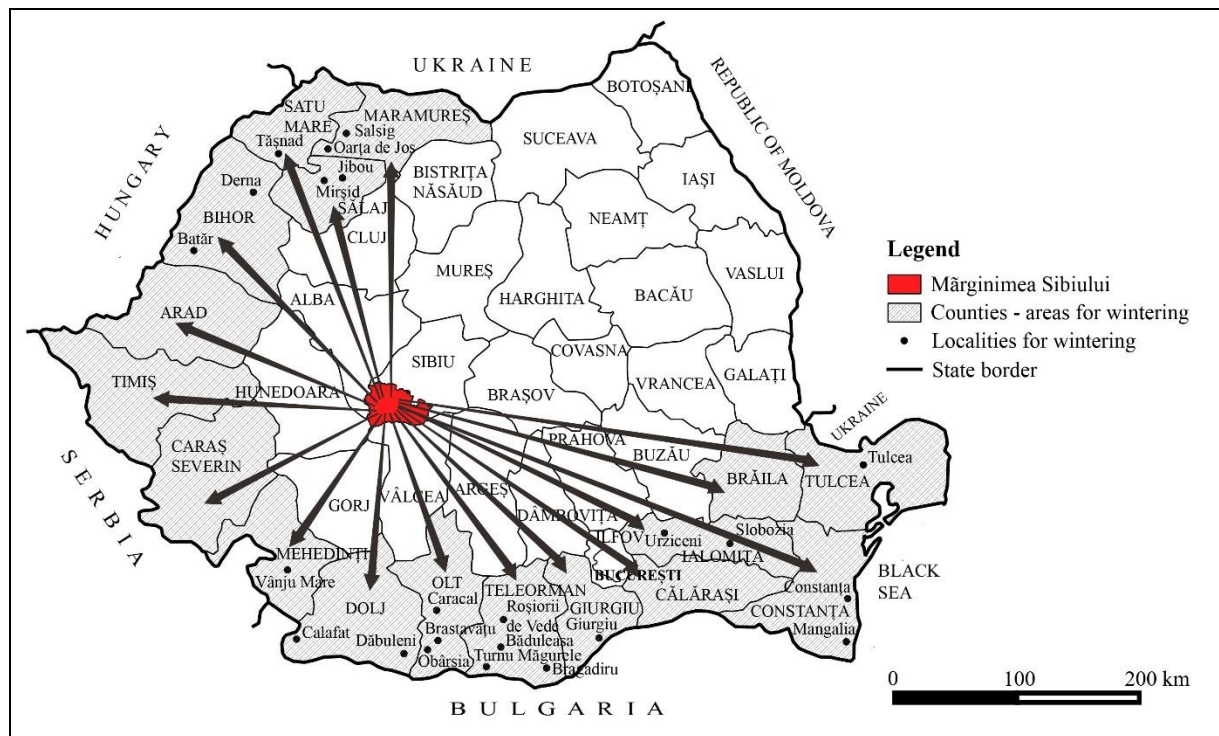


Fig. 2 – Transhumant movements in the country.

– north-westwards the itinerary went through Miercurea Sibiului – Blaj via Secașe Plateau – Ocna Mureș – Câmpia Turzii – Turda – Cluj-Napoca – Oradea or Dej – Jibou – Baia Mare – Satu Mare;

– south and south-eastwards they followed the Hârtibaciu Valley – Rupea – Brașov, farther on to the Prahova Valley towards Ploiești – Urziceni – Slobozia and crossing the Danube at Giurgeni – Vadu Oii. Another route followed the Olt Valley through the Făgăraș Depression, farther on through Brașov Depression and Bratocea Pass, arriving either in Buzău County, or in Brăila County. From this point, some shepherds continued the way to Dobrogea, either in the north at Tulcea, or in the south at Constanța. Another route followed the Olt River towards Râmnicu Vâlcea – Drăgășani – Roșiorii de Vede – Zimnicea or Turnu Măgurele – Suhaia.

In general, moving to wintering places began in the second half of September and lasted minimum 30 days, depending on the distance.

Until 1878, many shepherds crossed the southern borders of Wallachia and led their flocks for wintering in Bulgaria and Turkey.

However, after the War of Independence (1877–1878), the main directions would be eastwards, on the territory of Basarabia, up to the Crimean Peninsula, at distances of 700–900 km and to the

Caucasus area, at about 1,200 km. The first inhabitants who led their flocks towards the east, beyond Romania's borders, were the shepherds of Rod Village. First, they entered the territory of Ukraine, after which some of them ended up in the Crimean Peninsula and the Caucasus area, where they would marry and become integrated with the local population. There were groups of shepherds from Mărginimea who moved to the remote region of Astrakhan, attracted by the famous Karakul breed. After the establishment of communism in 1917, they would also fully integrate with the local population, settling permanently there (Irimie, Dunăre, Petrescu, p. 204, 1985) (Fig. 3).

In this case, the annual movement of flocks was impossible, so that the flocks stayed in those areas for longer periods of time. After 1990, the process of transhumance declined as state property was replaced with private property, a phenomenon that hindered the movements. However, in the settlements of Poiana Sibiului and Jina, which have a small area, transhumance is practiced in the transitional seasons, even today.

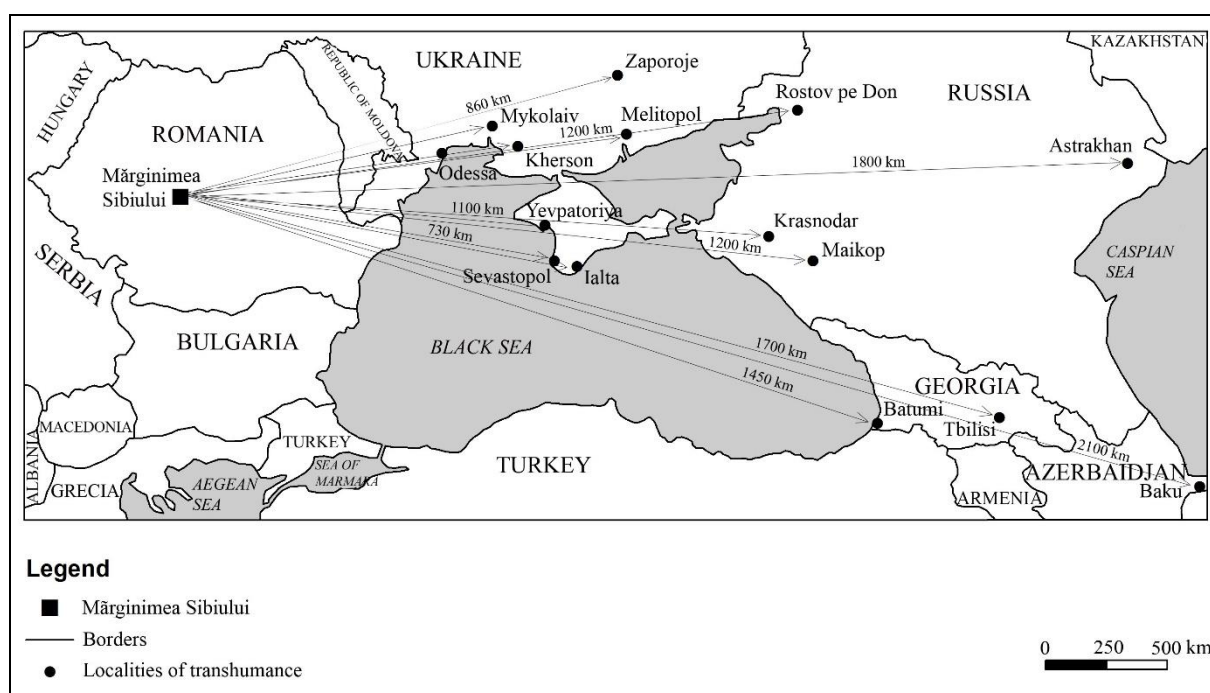


Fig. 3 – Transhumant movements abroad in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Even if the annual movements face a series of difficulties, there are many sheep-owners who bought land in the western areas of Romania, i.e. in Timiș, Arad, Bihor, Satu Mare and Sălaj counties, where they have permanently moved their flocks to, while preserving their old residences.

In the autumn of 2014, mentioned is made of the transhumant movements of four owners from Jina, with flocks that totalled 2,750 sheep, to settlements in Bihor, Maramureș and Sălaj counties.

The Sibiu Veterinary and Food Safety Department approved the following movement routes:

- Jina (Sibiu County) – Teiuș (Alba County) – Lana (Cluj County) – Hezecclean (Sălaj County) – Tria-Derna (Bihor County);
- Jina (Sibiu County) – Ocna Mureș (Alba County) – Florești (Cluj County) – Jibou (Sălaj County) – Oarța de Jos (Maramureș County);
- Jina (Sibiu County) – Blaj (Alba County) – Bontida (Cluj County) – Jibou (Sălaj County);
- Jina (Sibiu County) – Blaj (Alba County) – Turda (Cluj County) – Mirșid (Sălaj County).

The transhumant movements of nine owners, from Poiana Sibiului commune, with a flock of 3,500 sheep, are recorded on the route: Poiana Sibiului (Sibiu County) – Ocna Mureș (Alba County) – Jibou (Sălaj County) – Satul Barbar Village (Bihar County) – Tășnad (Satu Mare County) – Salsig (Maramureș County).

Pastoral life in the rural area of Mărginimea Sibiului has a cyclic character, in terms of the four seasons. The cold season is the most difficult one for shepherds, because vegetation missing, sheep maintenance is expensive.

Wintering lasts from November or December (depending on snowfall time), and March (when the first blades of grass appear). During this interval, small sheep flocks are usually sheltered in household sheepfolds, enclosures, inside or outside the village hearth, in huts, where hay is stored for the winter. Large flocks spend the winter at greater or smaller distances from the village, either in the village neighbourhood counties (small transhumance), or in the plains (big transhumance).

The pastoral year begins in spring, usually in April, when the flocks are brought around the village hearth, being sheltered in moving sheepfolds, on the adjacent pastures and meadows. For those who participate in big transhumance, it is the season of return to the residential village to prepare for the warm season.

Summer represents the most favourable season for pastoral life, then the flocks are led up to the alpine pastures. It is the period when milk products, especially cheese, are prepared. For shepherds, summer lasts from May – June to August – September, depending on the weather. More specifically, this pastoral cycle begins on the 21st of May, when the Orthodox calendar celebrates the Saints Constantine and Helena and ends between August the 15th (Assumption of the Virgin Mary) and the 8th of September (Birth of the Virgin Mary), when the weather starts cooling. The most important pastoral events of this period are: Shearing Lambs on the 20th of July (St. Elias) and the First Sharing of Cheese on August the 15th.

In summer, pastoral activities are going on around the sheepfold, in the alpine area. Autumn spans the interval between September – October and November – December, until snow begins falling. Now, the flocks are ushered from the mountain back to the village, where they move in enclosures or sheepfolds to fertilize the soils.

The most representative villages for pastoral activities in Mărginimea Sibiului are Poiana Sibiului, Jina, Tilișca and Rășinari. There are a series of customs and traditions practiced in these villages, which denote the pastoral specific and man's integration with nature. The Jina oscillation movements, or annual transhumance, is reflected by the so-called *custom of the huts*, where the shepherds use to stop on their way to the mountain pastures, staying at the huts until the beginning of summer. Women and children remain in the village and after the school-year ends, they also go up to *the huts*. In late June-early July, they mount to the pastures. Another custom, commonly practiced in Jina, is connected with the return of the flocks from the mountains to the pastures around the village, at the beginning of autumn; it is called *slobozatu hotarului de jos* (descending to the lower boundary) and is held on September the 8th, on the feast of the Birth of the Virgin Mary.

In Poiana Sibiului, when shepherds prepare to take the sheep go up the mountain in spring, villagers mark the event by a *Country Fair on the 5th of March*. This is the moment when shepherds wean the lambs and usher the flocks to the mountain. Another fair is held on their return in autumn, on the 19th of September. At Tilișca, the movements of flocks between village and mountain are also marked by customs and traditions, such as *the Feast of the Shepherds from Tilișca*, held on the 15th of August, on the occasion of the Assumption of the Virgin Mary. Therefore, all human activities in these villages with pastoral tradition show the permanent relationship with nature, the dependence on nature and, at the same time, the perfect integration of man into this system.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The hilly-mountain rural space of southern Transylvania is characterized by the great expansion of pastures and meadows to the detriment of agricultural land, a phenomenon that justifies the practice of primary activities, especially animal husbandry. Shepherding is the traditional occupation specific to the villages from Mărginimea Sibiului, a phenomenon that has influenced the social life and the economic characteristics of this region. A key element for the preservation of sheep-breeding traditions is the absence of forced collectivization in some localities which have very little arable land.

Transhumance is a process that has established certain links between generations engaged mainly in animal husbandry, an occupation practiced ever since the Antiquity, with a peak period in the 18th and 19th centuries. Small transhumance goes on in Mărginimea Sibiului neighbourhood and in the neighbouring counties (Alba, and Mureş); there is also big transhumance, when shepherds and their flocks use to spend the winter in the lowlands, both in the west and in the south or southeast of Romania. Some sheep-owners used to move their flocks abroad, travelling on the territories of other countries, such as Bulgaria, Turkey and Ukraine, and occasionally as far as the Caucasus area.

The modernization of society in the 20th century, industrialization and urbanization, along with the establishment of a restrictive political regime and a central-based economy, had considerably reduced the phenomenon of transhumance, which became increasingly rare. The decline was exacerbated after 1990, when land owned by the state was restituted to their former owners, and private property was instituted, thus hindering shepherds from travelling over long distances.

However, there are still sheep-owners who currently move the flocks annually, especially in the West Plain and Hills, in the counties of Timiş, Arad, Bihor, Sălaj, Satu Mare and even Maramureş. Most of them come from Poiana Sibiului, Jina, Răşinari and Tilişca, where grazing grounds are limited by the presence of vast forest areas, or reduced communal territories. There are families who, although have kept their residence in Mărginimea Sibiului, used to buy agricultural land in the West Plain, moving their flocks there permanently, where the climate is warmer and the vegetation period lasts longer.

Therefore, transhumance remains a traditional phenomenon specific to the rural Carpathian space, where the ecological advantage of preserving and conserving the pastoral vegetation is closely-related to the ethno-cultural characteristics engendered by discharging pastoral activities.

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