

## Sheep Roads. Transhumance Itineraries Of Romanian Shepherds

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**ABSTRACT:** The mapping of sheep roads since the 18<sup>th</sup> century to date, exposed in chronological order and increasing complexity based on cartographic, archive and field-based materials, aims at creating an ethnographic map at national level, from which we reproduce, for now, the methodology and some essentials. The herds' winter roads were studied and mapped relatively recently. Only at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during his research on the South Carpathians, Emmanuel de Marton drew up a „Sketch of the main transhuman paths in Valahia”. Later, the sketches and maps made by Romanian or foreign geographers and ethnographers were more complex and complete. Here we mention the researches and maps made by N. Dragomir, T. Morariu, E. Muller, Mara Popp, S. Opreanu, L. Someșan, and others.

**Keywords:** transhumance, road, occupation, pastoral landscape, cultural identity.

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Transhumance is a practice that set in motion huge sheep herds over hundreds and thousands of kilometers and has generated, over the centuries, a pastoral landscape, a pastoral civilization that extended from its source area, from the Carpathian summering sheepfolds, to the distant wintering lands. Documentary attestation as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century, after some sources from the 13<sup>th</sup> century, show that transhumance reached its peak in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, after which it decreased in intensity in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.



Sheep's route to the plain areas, 2014, Arges, Romania

Practiced for more than half a millennium, it has imprinted a typical motion to the geographical landscape: pastoral roads doubled by salt roads, barges, sails and curtains to protect and shelter the herds from the strong winds; stone crosses raised at crossroads to guide the shepherds through the huge plains and to estimate the distance

traveled; a feeding system based mainly on cheese; a specific port, crafts and technical installations for processing wool, leathers and furs; seasonal townlets, closely related to sheep summering and wintering, in which the pastoral products were sold; numerous and prosperous villages, townlets and towns founded by the worthy shepherds married to the natives' or the cojenilor daughters. However, the material landscape was duplicated by the spiritual landscape whose importance for the history of Romanians is difficult to appreciate. We recall that, related to the pastoral landscape, the Romanian language has preserved an important native, Thracian-Dacian linguistic background, specific to livestock breeding (baci – the chief shepherd, căciulă – cap, țap – goat, stână – sheepfold, ghioagă – quail, țarc – fold, brânză – cheese, gălbează – fluke, căpușă – tick etc.); the original musical, choreographic and literary folklore; a pastoral calendar that has the same structure as the old Celtic calendar, as well as many other features (Ghinoiu Ion, 2014, Romanian mythology. Pastorals gods, Bucharest, Univers Enciclopedic Gold).

### II. FIRST MAPPING OF THE TRANSHUMANCE ROUTES

The transhuman ceruns exclusive to you side the village hearth. This is due to the lack of pasture and, so that the harvested hay is insufficient for the wintering of sheep. In search of pastures, the Romanian shepherds, people from Țara Bârsei (săceleni, brăneni, brețcani), and Mărginimea Sibiului (jineni, poienari, țuțuieni), to which those originating from the Sub-Carpathians and from the south of the Danube were added, went far through the plains of the Black Sea and the Caspian, Ionian, Aegean seas, the Ponto-

Caspiansteppes, beyond the Dniester and Prut rivers, as far as Crimea and northern Caucasus.



Shepherds' lunch, February 2015, Ilfov, Romania

The transhumance implies the movement of the herds and an extremely small number of people (shepherds), and that the hearths of the settlements where the herds started from and returned to have remained profoundly Romanian, back from the Middle Ages to date. The shepherds accompany their herds almost all the year round: „the house is the donkey, the house is in the weeds and the door is from where you live. That's our house (casa ț-e măgar, casa...casa iedânbălăriișușadincotro vii... aiaie casa noastră”, meaning „the house is your donkey, that house... that house under the weeds and the door you come through ...that is our house” says the responsible MiticăPârnuță from the village of Rucăr.

Transhumance is the altitudinal and latitudinal displacement of the sheep flocks over winter. It is of two types:

1. simple, the sheepskin is made together with the village cows at the sheep farms of the localities in the area, and the sheep autumn, wintering, and spring (the cows stay in the village) is made, for example, in the villages of Brănei, in ȚaraBârsei and ȚaraFăgărașului;

2. wide, the sheep grazing is done together with the cows from the village at the sheep farms of the localities in the area, and the autumn, wintering, and spring of the sheep (the cows remain in the village) is made in the Romanian Plain.



Sheep breeding on the field, February 2015, Ilfov, Romania

The herders' winter roads have begun to be studied and mapped relatively recently. The first sketches were presented in the form of synthetic maps, general representation, rarely analytical, with material content.

Steward Constantin Cantacuzino made a detailed map of Muntenia, printed in Padua (1700) in Greek, later in Latin and Italian. Regarding the content, the differences between the Greek edition (Padova 1700) and the Italian edition (Venice 1718, Del Chiaro) of the stewards' map are small. Historian Constantin C. Giurescu (1943, StewardContantinCantacuzino's Map, p. 12) wrote in an article in the Romanian Historical Magazine that, if the steward's map did not provide the route of the roads, „it shows us, in return, a precious indication, where were the bridges over water: more than 24”. In contrast, Marin Popescu-Spinei, in his paper Romania in geographical and cartographic sources (1978, p. 174), mentioned the fact that the map illustrated: „the main roads, the sheep roads, the salt roads, and the tunroads”. We tend to agree with the historian C. C. Giurescu, because at that time the roads were in fact simple highroads, and were not paved with stone. The shepherds did not go on these roads directly, but followed parallel routes, sometimes at great distances, to find places suitable for sheep grazing.



The map of steward Constantin Cantacuzino, Italian edition (Venice, 1718)

At the drawing up of the Austrian military maps of the „Little Walls” (map of Schwantz of 1722, of Specht of 1791 and of Frigely of 1855-1857), cartographic indications were given on the pastoral constructions (sheepfolds) and riding roads (up in the mountains, leading to the sheepfolds). According to the secar to graphic indications, a number of local shepherd roads can be only partially reconstructed.

It was not until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, while investigating the Carpathians, when Em. de Martonne drew up a „Sketch of the main transhumance paths in Wallachia”. In this sketch Em. de Martonne schematically illustrated the transhumance paths of the shepherds from the Alpine level of the Southern Carpathians, which descended down to the steppe and Danube meadows.

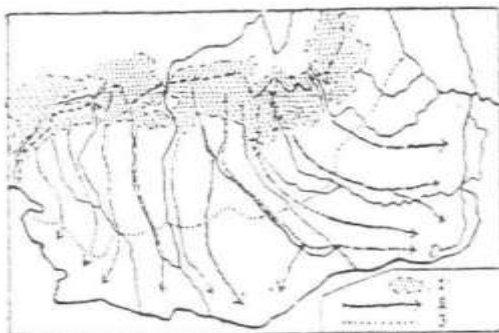


Figure 3. Esquisse des principales voies de transhumance en Valachie.  
1. surfaces supérieures à 1000 mètres d'altitude. —  
2. voies de transhumance. — 3. limite de la région de ces voies.

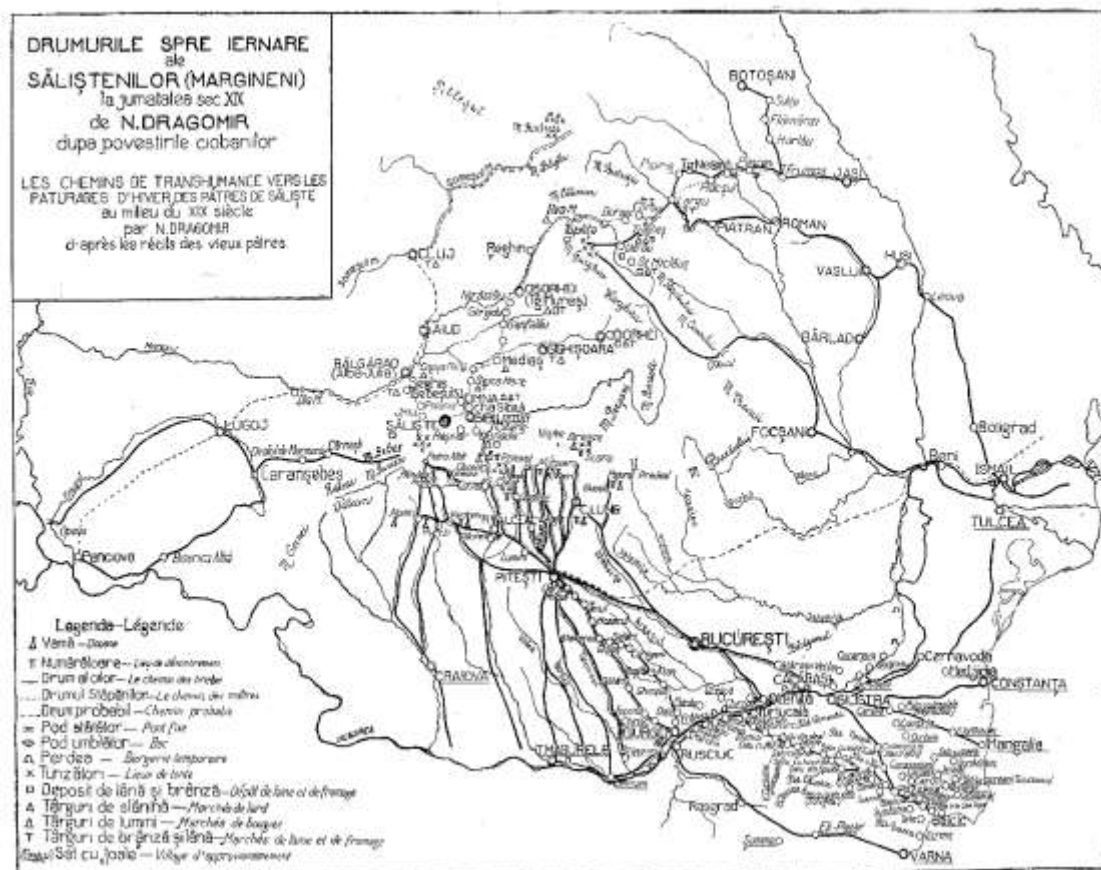
Emmanuel de Martonne, 1904, *La vie pastorale et la transhumance dans les Karpaten méridionales; leur importance géographique et historique*, în „Zu Friedrich Ratzels Gedächtnis”, Leipzig, Seele, p. 227–245

### III. THE TRANSHUMANCE MAPS

Subsequently, the sketches and maps made by Romanian and foreign geographers and ethnographers were more complex and complete. Here we mention the research and maps made by: N. Dragomir, T. Morariu, E. Muller, Mara Popp, S. Opresanu, L. Someșan, and others.

Dragomir (1926) also studied and mapped „The winter roads of Săliștenii people (Mărgineni) in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, after shepherds’ stories”. The map drawn on this occasion shows the wintering routes of the Mărgineni people, from the Southern Carpathians to Bărăgan, the Danube meadows, and Quadrilateral, as well as from the Moldavian (East) Carpathians to the South of Bessarabia.

Pitești town was an important hub of the transhumance routes. Dragomir (1926) states that „[...] As the herders were entering Pitești, they were almost triumphing. Everybody was going on the street to see them, and the women carrying little children were unceasingly pressing upon them and requesting to give them donkey milk or droppings to smoke their children sick of cold”.



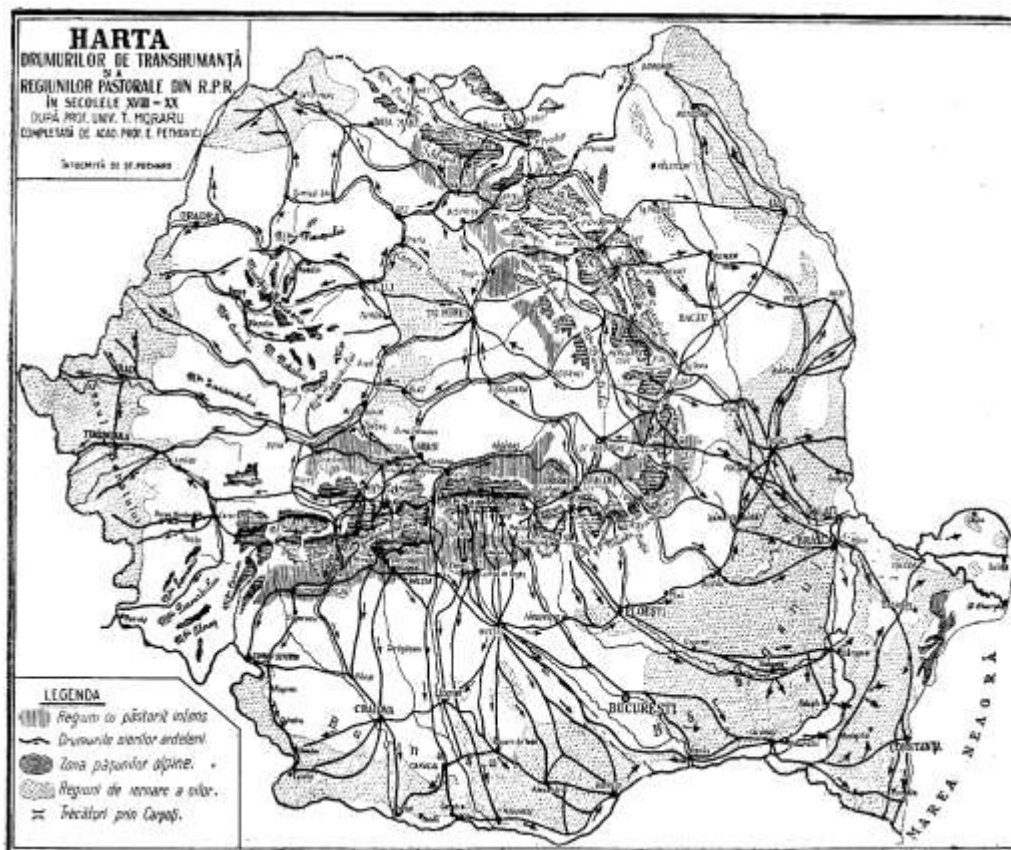
Dragomir Nicolae, 1926, From the past of the Romanian sheep herdsmen from Săliștean from the surrounding communes, in „Works of the Institute of Geography of the University of Cluj”, vol. II, 1924–1925, Cluj, Tiparul „Ardealul”, p. 195–251.

Gradually, the mapping of transhumance pathways turn out to be more accurate. Mara N. Popp mapped the transhumance roads in western Oltenia to Tismana-Ungureni. The sheep route to the Ungureni on the right side of the Olt river

originates at the foothills of Vâlcan Mountains, goes parallel downstream the Jiu valley reaches the Danube meadow in the villages between Jiu valley and Calafat.



Based on the maps made by Morariu (1942, Sheperding in the French Alps and Carpathians, in *Romania Sociology*, IV, no. 7-12, Bucharest, p. 375-393) and Petrovici (1956), Poenaru (1960) drew up a new „Map of Transhumance Roads and Pastoral Regions in the P.R.R. during the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> centuries” published in the book „From the history of Transylvania”, vol. I (Bucharest, RPR Academy Publishing House, Daicoviciu, C., Past. Pascu, V. Cheresteșiu, T. Morariu, 1960), in which no other cartographic changes regarding the sheep roads were made. The two general maps of the transhumance roads, designed and published by Tiberiu Morariu, made a substantial contribution to the ethnographic mapping of the pastoral roads in Romania, both in terms of mapping and their overall classification in the national road network. Although the two mentioned maps are synthetic, they are illustrative for the cartographic highlighting of the Romanian shepherding.



#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

From the comparative presentation of all these pastoral maps, it is clearly that different mapping methods of the transhumance routes were used throughout the centuries. This mapping diversity is due either to different sources of information (archives, specialty literature, field data) or the natural flux oscillations of these roads due to objective conditions (administrative, sanitary, agrosilvical etc.) that have occurred in time, from one mapping to another and which, in a minor way, mirror the great repeating oscillations, which probably took place over a longer historical period.

The favorable natural environment, the variety of landforms and soil, the floristic species diversity and the hydrographic network, etc., as

well as the extension of pasturelands and meadows, were the ideal drivers for shepherding development, which evolved from subsistence practices to intensive pastoralism. Thus, the shepherds from the Carpathians, wandered with their flocks the whole Romanian land, but also the neighboring areas (Bessarabia, Serbian Banat etc.) or far away (Crimea, Caucasus), also contributing to the unification of all Romanians and the creation of Greater Romania, by marking its borders centuries before with their roads. The temporary migration of the shepherds played an important role in the spread of the ancestral language, customs and traditions, concepts about life etc., determining in this way, the foundation of a unitary concept regarding the historical aim of Romanians among the peoples of the world.

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