

GRAZING COMMUNITIES

Pastoralism on the Move and Biocultural Heritage Frictions



Edited by Letizia Bindi

Grazing Communities

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Pastoralism on the Move and
Biocultural Heritage Frictions

Edited by Letizia Bindi



berghahn
NEW YORK • OXFORD
www.berghahnbooks.com

First published in 2022 by

Berghahn Books

www.berghahnbooks.com

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

A C.I.P. cataloging record is available from the Library of Congress
Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Control Number: 2022014356

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-80073-475-3 hardback

ISBN 978-1-80073-667-2 open access ebook

<https://doi.org/10.3167/9781800734753>



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Contents

List of Figures	vii
Foreword	ix
<i>Tim Ingold</i>	
Introduction	1
<i>Letizia Bindi</i>	
Part I. Pastoralism as a Biocultural Heritage?	
Chapter 1. Transhumance in Greece: Multifunctionality as an Asset for Sustainable Development	23
<i>Athanasios Ragkos</i>	
Chapter 2. The Conflict of Itinerant Pastoralism in the Piedmont Po Plain (Collina Po Biosphere Reserve, Italy)	44
<i>Dino Genovese, Ippolito Ostellino, and Luca Maria Battaglini</i>	
Chapter 3. Between Two Different Worlds: Pastoralism and Protected Natural Areas in Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	61
<i>Jean-Claude Duclos and Patrick Fabre</i>	
Chapter 4. Reintroducing Bears and Restoring Shepherding Practices: The Production of a Wild Heritage Landscape in the Central Pyrenees	81
<i>Lluís Ferrer and Ferran Pons-Raga</i>	
Chapter 5. Transhumance in Kelmend, Northern Albania: Traditions, Contemporary Challenges, and Sustainable Development	102
<i>Martine Wolff</i>	
Chapter 6. Revisiting Transhumance from Stilfs, South Tyrol, Italy: The Everyday Diverse Economy of a Forgotten Alternative Food Network	121
<i>Annalisa Colombino and Jeffrey John Powers</i>	

Part II. Discontinuities and Transformations

Chapter 7. Transhumance Is the New Black: Fragile Rangelands and Local Regeneration <i>Letizia Bindi</i>	149
Chapter 8. Continuities and Disruptions in Transhumance Practices in the Silesian Beskids (Poland): The Case of Koniaków Village <i>Katarzyna Marcol and Maciej Kurcz</i>	174
Chapter 9. Contemporary Transformation of the Pastoral System in the Romanian Carpathian: A Case Study from Maramures Region <i>Cosmin Marius Ivaşcu and Anamaria Iuga</i>	203
Chapter 10. Mountain Pasture in Friuli (Italy): Past and Present <i>Špela Ledinek Lozej</i>	222
Chapter 11. From Nomadism to Ranching Economy: Reindeer Transhumance among the Finnish Sámi <i>Nuccio Mazzullo and Hannah Strauss-Mazzullo</i>	241
Chapter 12. Wandering Shepherds: New and Old Transhumances in Sardinia and Sicily <i>Sebastiano Mannia</i>	259
Chapter 13. The Coexistence of Transhumance Shepherding Practices and Tourism on Bjelašnica Mountain in Bosnia and Herzegovina <i>Manca Filak and Žiga Gorišek</i>	280
Afterword. Desire for Transhumance <i>Cyril Isnart</i>	300
Index	308

Figures

2.1.	Itinerant flock in a corn field after cultivation. Collina Po Biosphere Reserve, 2019. © Dino Genovese	47
3.1.	National park of Mercantour, 2019. © Patrick Fabre	69
3.2.	Natural regional park of Verdon, 2019. © Lionel Roux	72
4.1.	A single large flock guarded by a professional shepherd grazing in a mountain pasture, Sentein, 2019. © Lluís Ferrer	94
6.1.	The Stilfser Alm from the Upper Alm, 2019. © Annalisa Colombino	129
6.2.	Laura, the <i>Sennerin</i> of Stilfer Alm, making cheese in the summer, 2016. © Jeffrey John Powers	130
7.1.	Lu vic p'dent, Bojano, 2019. © Rossella De Rosa	154
7.2.	The route of transhumance, Amatrice, 2019. © Letizia Bindi	159
8.1.	The Shepherd's Centre, Koniaków, 2019. © Katarzyna Marcol	177
8.2.	An exhibition of shepherding utensils in the Shepherd's Centre, Koniaków, 2016. © Katarzyna Marcol	178
8.3.	The ritual of mixing of the sheep, Koniaków, 2017. © Katarzyna Marcol	193
9.1.	Spring grazing in the hay meadows situated in close proximity to the village, Șurdești, 2012. © Anamaria Iuga	209
9.2.	Before the sheep leave for grazing, the shepherds' leader plays the natural trumpet, Ieud, 2016. © Anamaria Iuga	211
9.3.	<i>Casă în câmp</i> (house in the fields) with <i>șopru</i> for hay storage and stables for cows. Sheep are kept under open sky and are moved on the terrain to improve the vegetation, Ieud, 2015. © Cosmin Marius Ivascu	213
10.1.	Herder and cheesemaker Angelo Tessin, Pian Mazzega alp (Malga Pian Mazzega), Piancavallo, 2016. © Špela Ledinek Lozej	230
10.2.	Fleons di sotto alp (Malga Fleons di sotto), 2017. © Špela Ledinek Lozej	233

12.1.	Transumanza in Sardegna, 1959. © János Reismann	266
12.2.	Transumanza, 2020. © Anna Piroddi	273
13.1.	Lukomir village, Bjelašnica mountain, 2014. © Žiga Gorišek	281
13.2.	Ismet while shepherding in Bare, with snowy Bjelašnica in the background, Hadžići, 2014. © Manca Filak	285
13.3.	New location of Lijetna Bašta at the main entrance of Lukomir, 2017. © Žiga Gorišek	288

CHAPTER 12

Wandering Shepherds

New and Old Transhumances in Sardinia and Sicily

Sebastiano Mannia

Preliminary Observations

The agricultural policies promoted in the second half of the twentieth century had the main purpose of modernizing and rationalizing the primary sector and intensifying the quantity of production to encourage economic growth, leading over time to the development and transformation of agropastoral farms but also leading to land exploitation, to an uncontrolled production of various agri-food products, and the dependence of shepherds and farmers on the dynamics of global markets. In this period, therefore, this sector has become more specialized and its general structure has changed: the number of companies has gradually fallen, the agricultural area has halved, and the countryside was gradually abandoned, causing various sociocultural and environmental problems. Such a development model has fallen into decline over the last decades, showing all its limits, and it has prompted the reorganization of the agricultural system in different areas through new forms of business planning and production, the so-called New Peasants model (Barberis 2009; Van der Ploeg 2006, 2009, 2018; Milone and Ventura 2009).

Within this general framework, specific cases such as Sardinia and Sicily show peculiar characteristics and they need to be properly contextualized. In Sardinia, since the end of the nineteenth century and especially after World War II, the number of sheep has progressively increased, due to favorable economic conditions linked to the sale of milk by the shepherds and to the increased sales of Pecorino Romano in the markets by cooperatives and dairy industries, which led to the specialization of the island sheep sector in a highly competitive monoculture that is made up to

day of about twelve thousand companies, mostly aimed at the production and sale of dairy products (Angioni 1989; Farinella 2018; Mannia 2014). In Sicily, on the other hand, pastoral farming faces various economic and structural problems, caused by erratic historical processes resulting in a favorable cycle at the beginning of the last century, a block from the World War I until after the World War II, and a recovery in the 50s and 60s, despite delays accumulated over time (Astuto 2011; Mannia 2013; Rochefort 2005).

The different dynamics that affected the Sardinian and Sicilian pastoral systems have contributed to the creation of well-defined economic structures and to the remodeling of practices and principles of traditional pastoralism. Several cultural traits have disappeared, others still persist, others have adapted. Among the latter figures also transhumance, and while in Sardinia nowadays pastoral movements, if present, constitute forms of mobility over short distances aimed at the exploitation of pasture resources, in Sicily, on the other hand, transhumance—short-distance here as well—still represents a necessary practice for many breeders, due to the high fragmentation of pastoral property and a poor rationalization of the sector.

Therefore, pastoral mobility is still a common practice in the above-mentioned contexts and in the last decades there has been a growing interest in this practice (Mannia 2010, 2018)¹ and more generally for pastoral cultures, which has led to the promotion of a varied and articulated regulatory framework aimed at safeguarding and enhancing environmental and cultural heritages. Locally, there is also a new attention to the multifunctionality of agricultural companies and to the development and enhancement of forms of sustainable tourism.

However, limited with respect to the current production direction, these new forms of use of rural spaces are significant. They are innovative methods of use and enhancement of pastoral areas created by breeders who have a strong connection to the territory, but also by entrepreneurs who have decided to focus on forms of ecotourism or by shepherds who have rethought rural realities and have returned to the countryside with new ideas related to typical productions, farm camping, and agritourism.² This change in heritage perspective opens up new horizons for transhumance as a cultural and touristic heritage, particularly in inland areas.³ If, on the one hand, pastoral systems are involved in the dynamics of contemporary markets and policies, on the other, the need to develop new models of pastoralism and new ways of enhancing its practices emerges more and more clearly, always focusing on pastoral communities as the main resource for local development and for the protection of environmental and cultural landscapes.

Pastoralism in Sardinia and Sicily

Ethnographic research carried out in Sardinia and Sicily⁴ has shown that the two forms of pastoralism, as they are structured today, are the outcome of the political-economic and sociocultural changes that have occurred since World War II. What emerges with particular evidence from the analysis of the two contexts is the clear contrast between pastoral farms employing traditional systems and modern enterprises. And even so, while in Sardinia the livestock sector—in all its components—is a main contender on the national and European scene due to its high level of competitiveness, the Sicilian livestock sector shows several problems due to an incomplete rationalization of the sector.⁵ In Sardinia, in the late twentieth century, there was an almost total disappearance of cereal farming and the definitive affirmation of pastoral activity. This process, spread to varying degrees on the island, is reflected in the shepherds who settle down, acquiring large land properties in areas once used for cereal farming and for the wintering of transhumant flocks. Pastoral development on the island is essentially due to the interaction between political intervention, with the allocation of contributions and subsidies, and the change of mentality of pastors—with obvious differences between the various segments of Sardinian society—in relation to the modernization of the sector. The mechanization of the countryside, the progressive disappearance of long transhumances and the consequent sedentarization (see the next section), the construction of modern infrastructures, and technological innovation are the main factors that have contributed to the epochal change in the island pastoralism in the last century (Angioni 1989; Mannia 2014; Murru Corriga 1990).

At the end of the nineteenth century, the arrival of dairy industries from the Lazio region was another significant factor that influenced, both positively and negatively, the growth and progress of the sector. Dairy industries, as already mentioned, have stimulated the expansion of sheep flocks (Idda, Furesi, and Pulina 2010: 64–72), causing a profound identity transformation of the shepherds and a remodeling of traditional roles: for breeders, in fact, direct sales of milk proved to be more profitable, and this has brought important economic and cultural changes that led the shepherds themselves to pass from cheese producers into milk sellers (Mannia 2014: 135–63).

Sicily, on the other hand, has followed a rather different path: cereal farming and horticulture have expanded and been rationalized, elevating the island to one of the most important agricultural realities in the Mediterranean; pastoralism, on the other hand, does not seem to have benefited from, or only marginally, the advantages offered by the inno-

vation processes which, following World War II, were introduced for the revitalization of local economies. Many pastors, still today, do not benefit from the annual contributions allocated by the European Union, refuse any subsidies for the modernization of companies, and make very limited personal investments to rationalize their activities. For these reasons, Sicilian pastoralism presents several problems, especially in inland areas, and in certain contexts, for example in the Madonie Mountains, pastoral activity is gradually disappearing. The companies, mostly based on purely traditional business models, present a series of structural deficiencies and limitations—in some cases now historical (Astuto 2011; Rochefort 2005; Uccello 1980)—relating to the organization and business management, which emerge clearly in relation to the modernization process which has taken place in the last sixty years, as in many other Mediterranean countries.

The lack of functional zootechnical structures persists, as does the fragmentation of land and property, the modest number of sheep per farm, the lack of technological innovation, and the lack of technical training, all due to a lack of economic-zootechnical and sociocultural innovation but also to a low anthropological attention from the institutions. In many cases the company structures are incorporated in the old farms, where the shepherd takes care of milking, the transformation of the milk, and the cheese conservation. Both electricity and water supply are often a problem, the premises are often inadequate, and the equipment used to process cheese sometimes does not comply with the hygiene-sanitary directives imposed by the European Union. From a commercial point of view, moreover, the products are uneven and variable both in terms of quality and quantity. The rental of pastures is widespread, and the lack of owned land together with the constraints imposed on grazing in different mountain areas lead to frequent pastoral mobility. For these reasons, Sicilian pastoralism is predominantly wild and transhumant (Giacomarra 2006; Mannia 2013).

Some data better clarify, in a comparative perspective, the current reality of the two types of pastoralism. Since the last census in 2019, 3,067,522 sheep have been bred in Sardinia, 813,525 in Sicily (the two regions occupy the top two positions in Italy for sheep flocks). In Sardinia, out of 15,001 herds, the dairy ones are 11,126, the breeding ones 86, and the mixed ones 3,431 (the remaining 346 are for self-consumption production); in Sicily, out of 8,759 farms, the dairy ones are 1,097, the breeding ones 5,565, and the mixed ones 1,531 (the remaining 554 are for self-consumption production).⁶ The data highlight, on the one hand, the historical path taken by the Sardinian shepherds in the specialization of dairy farming, and on the other, the diversified orientation of Sicilian farmers aiming at the production of milk and meat, with a greater, however recent, inclination towards the latter.⁷

From the cases analyzed in Sicily, it emerged that the coexistence of the various production orientations can be related to a type of inherited traditional management rather than related to the result of a rational choice aimed at creating added value. In Sardinia most of the milk production is reserved to the production of the three PDO (*Pecorino Romano*, *Pecorino Sardo*, and *Fiore Sardo*), destined for international markets and in particular for the American market. In Sicily, only a marginal share of milk is reserved for the production of the three PDO (*Pecorino Siciliano*, *Piacentinu Ennese*, and *Vastedda della Valle del Belice* [D'Amico 2011]). Most shepherds prefer to make their own cheese and sell it on informal markets. Milk is also processed in local industries, even though it is not very profitable for the shepherds. Basically, while in Sardinia pastoralism is aimed at the production and sale of milk from shepherds to dairy industries and cooperatives, in Sicily traditional forms of pastoralism still aim at the sale of cheeses, ricotta, and meat in local markets (Mannia 2013, 2014, 2016).

Transhumance in Sardinia and Sicily

This brief overview is useful to understand how the transhumance phenomenon is collocated in the two islands. In Sardinia and Sicily, pastoralism has historically been structured around two fundamental constants: the lack of land for grazing animals—due to the fragmentation and dispersion of property derived from environmental, historical, and sociocultural factors—and the climatic variables that still influence the quantity and quality of available resources. To cope with these inevitable constraints, shepherds have developed specific cultural and economic strategies, and among these, transhumance is certainly the most significant outcome (see Angioni 1989; Caltagirone 1986; Giacomarra 2006; Mannia 2013, 2014; Meloni 1984; Murru Corrigan 1990, 1998; Ortu 1988). In the Sardinian case, pastoral mobility has become a necessary practice, and, due to the progressive and over-sized increase in the livestock population, a process that began at the end of the nineteenth century. The search for pasture lands became urgent, especially between the 1950s and 1970s, when the number of sheep increased further following a new development of the markets and political interventions which, starting after the World War II, although with alternating results, were directed in favor of the sector. The resulting relationship between animal capital and the carrying capacity of the land used for grazing has thus been severely disrupted, on one hand pushing many shepherds to emigrate—many of whom, for example, have occupied the land abandoned by the Tuscan sharecroppers (see Meloni 2004; Solinas 1989–90)—and on the other to find an appropriate solution

to the problem of wintering livestock—since municipal and/or private pastures were no longer sufficient to sustain the number of animals. These are the reasons why until the 1970s, before the process of sedentarization of shepherds began, in the autumn-winter months, it was possible to see thousands of sheep crossing the rural roads of the island, from the mountains to the plains and coastal areas.

Therefore, for centuries transhumance has been a practice characterizing the agropastoral economy of Sardinia and Sicily, with similar elements among the numerous communities, in particular with regards to the rules and functions underlying the social structure. To clarify, long transhumances—or long-distance displacements—have disappeared, while short-range transhumances persist, i.e., forms of mobility of animals from one pasture to another usually within the same territory with journeys of a few kilometers, helping to define local pastoral practices, and the rural landscapes and sociocultural references of the communities involved (Bergeron 1967; Giacomarra 2006; Le Lannou 1992; Meloni 1984, 1988). For greater clarity, we will discuss first the Sardinian transhumance and then the Sicilian one.

Long-range transhumance in Sardinia was an inverse transhumance and involved the movement of animals from the mountains and high hill areas to the plains and coasts where climatic conditions were more favorable. The Sardinian transhumance has mainly affected the counties surrounding the mountain areas of the center of the island; in fact, the shepherds moved from the communities of Gennargentu, Supramonte, and Montalbo. The routes were variable: towards Iglesiente the route was about 100–150 km; for Oristanese the route was about 80–100 km; for Sarabus the route was 100–120 km (Caltagirone 1986: 44). More widely, the Campidani, the Nurra, the plateaus of Bonorva and Macomer, the plain of Chilivani near Ozieri, the valley of Coghinas, the coastal areas that extend from Olbia to the Gulf of Orosei, the Baronies were the main arrival places of transhumant shepherds of the mountain areas of central Sardinia.

In turvoera, a turvoare, in tràmuda, tramutanne are the terms and ways in which transhumance was designated depending on the place. *A nos ponere in caminu*, or “to walk,” was the common reference for those who annually moved with the flock. For the people of Fonni the transhumance was *s’isverrare* (to winter) or *s’istrangiare* (to go among foreigners), while the return to the community was *sa muda* (the renewal) (Murru Corrigha 1990: 29). Antoon Cornelis Mientjes pointed out that “the term transhumance does not exist in the dialect of Fonni, although currently shepherds understand its meaning. The expression *in viaggiu* was used to indicate the seasonal transfer of shepherds and flocks to distant places” (Mientjes 2008: 200).

The departures—and this seems to be the most significant fact—were planned on the basis of defined economic-productive times, in particular on the births of lambs. Between the end of June and the beginning of July the sheep were mated, and the births were planned for when the animals would reach the winter pastures. They always tried to leave before the sheep gave birth in order not to have problems during the journey, even if the fatigue of the journey often hastened the births.

Moreover, the periods of departure for transhumance varied annually according to climatic and environmental conditions. In some cases, transhumance was already taking place in October, although the months in which the animals were to be moved were November and December. The duration of the transhumance depended on the distances that had to be covered and the unexpected events that could occur on the way. From Austis it took two or three days to cover the approximately one hundred kilometers that separate the mountain village from the plains of Campidano (Meloni 1984). The shepherds of Fonni who traveled towards Solarussa took two or three days of walking, crossing the countryside of different communities in addition to the towns of Neoneli, Busachi, and Fordongianus (Mientjes 2008: 202). A shepherd from Orgosolo reported:

Transhumance was in November. To go to Isalle [wintering area] we started from the Orgolese plateau, descended into the countryside of Mamoiada and slept there. The following day we went down to Oliena where we spent the night, and on the third night we arrived in Isalle. It took three days because the road was long. The overnight stops, for just a few hours, were already planned because they were places we knew well from years of *tràmuda*, and we also had to avoid thefts and trespassing. We often knew someone, the so-called *sos cumpanzos de posata*, that would host us and help us with the flock. (N. P., Orgosolo, interview of 28 December 2015)⁸

The return from the wintering places was scheduled for May—usually between the 15th and 20th of the month—and the date changed in relation to the geographical position of the mountain pastures, the expiry of the lease of the land where they overwintered, and especially the conditions of access to municipal pastures. The time of return was also planned on the basis of economic variables and depended on climatic and environmental factors, the needs of the flock, and the cereal cycle. In many communities, in fact, the pastoral year was intersected with the agricultural one and the return from transhumance coincided with the work of reaping, threshing, and wheat harvesting. After the harvest, the land was opened for grazing *s'istula*, or stubble.

Despite the fact that the return journey included the duties and uncertainties of the outward journey—to which was added, among other things, the milking of the sheep and the delivery or processing of milk—



Figure 12.1. Transumanza in Sardegna, 1959. © János Reismann

the return to the village was characterized by a relaxed and festive climate. In Fonni the day of return was *sa die primargia*, while in Desulo it was *sa die prima*, that is, the first day, to define a specific temporal span typical of the beginning of a new cycle. In several communities it was common to donate the milk of the first milking to all the families when they returned from the pastures. In Orgosolo, I am told, “we came the 20th of May. Before going up to the municipal lands, people milked inside a ruined church at the entrance of the village and while shepherds presented their milk (in Sardinian, *presentavan su latte*) or rather offered the milk to neighbors, friends, and relatives, women brought *sos macarrones lados* which were consumed in a joint lunch” (B. S., Orgosolo, interview of 4 January 2016). On this particular day, the village was reunited, and a large part of the male population reintegrated into the sociocultural and economic community.

In the second half of the last century, one of the most important transformations of the Sardinian zootechnical sector was completed: the seden-

tarization. In the lands purchased by the shepherds—many of which were first reserved for the wintering of animals—the systematic rationalization of the sector began. Mechanization and, therefore, the cultivation of grasslands, the construction of infrastructure and technological innovation are some factors that have favored the modernization of the island's pastoralism and the subsequent disappearance of long transhumances. They are gradually abandoned in the 1940s and 1950s, although the process was completed in the 1970s and 1980s together with the frequent use of trucks to transport animals. There are sporadic episodes of transhumant shepherds even in the following decades (see Mientjes 2008: 205), but today there are very few who resort to pastoral mobility and in most cases, vans are used to greatly reduce the hours of travel. Thus, one informant: "From the mid-Seventies people put a stop to transhumance, someone continued still in the 80s, but really a few people, and by the way they moved them by the truck. Since the 80s, there were a very few people who did transhumance by walking. Me too I did my last transhumance with a truck, that was the last year I took them in the Nurra" (B. R. Orune, interview of 20 December 2015).

The lands that became property—and not just the flat lands purchased in the Campidano, in the Nurra, etc.—have allowed us to express the capacities and productive potential of pastors and companies.

Basically, the Sardinian pastoral economy has changed from a transhumant to a sedentary model. This is an important change that is not just economic but mainly cultural. From the words of those who have transhumed for many years emerges a sense of revenge against an emigration that annually pushed the shepherds to abandon the community, the family and, more generally, their own microcosm of reference. A shepherd from Orune told me that "today everything is changed, what people have bought: there are very large rooms that allow you to winter; then there is the animal feed. The time in which you knew when you would leave but not when you would come back it's over" (C. B. 1954, interview of 20 December 2015).

Despite the fact that today in Sardinia there are more than three million sheep, the movement of thousands of sheep from the mountains to the pastures is a practice of the past that only remains in the collective memory of the different pastoral communities. Instead, what is still possible to observe are the short displacements, which follow the seasonal climatic trends but above all the availability of pastures and fodder crops. In addition to owned and rented land, municipal lands take on particular importance: to every shepherd who requests it—through the payment of a sum of money that varies in relation to the number of sheep to be fed in the pastures—a pasture quota is assigned. So, for example, an Ogliastrian shepherd told me:

In May I leave from Arzana, where I have a farm with the barns, the sheep milking machine, the vehicles, and I move to the municipal lands, where the sheep can graze. I do it every year in May and October. It is a 12 km-long journey and it takes a couple of hours, always on foot. Other shepherds do the transhumance as well, in October-November (the winter pastures are called *s'accordiu*)—depending on lambing periods. Some go as far as Tortoli, Cea, Quirra, Villassalto but they move the animals on trucks. Then they go up to the mountain, in May-June, some bring their sheep to the Gennargentu mountains. The land is either owned or municipal. Among the shepherds who have pastures far from Arzana, some sleep in the countryside because they have the sheep pen and maybe return every three days. Others travel every day because they have assistant shepherds who live on the farm. Transhumance to Trexenta, Campidano, Baronie no longer exist; before there were no barns or pasture, today you can have forage delivered on trucks. (V. L., Arzana, interview of 9 June 2020)

A shepherd from Lula told me: “Unfortunately, I don’t have a single, large land, and I have to move the sheep from one pasture to another, which are my property. To get to the farthest one, however, it doesn’t take more than a couple of hours. I usually move them in October-November, the first months of the year and in summer after the forage harvest, although I am trying to invest to avoid moving so frequently” (D. M., Lula, interview of 3 January 2016).

Even in Sicily the long transhumance, *mutari l’armali*, was an inverse transhumance, with the movement of the animals from the mountains to the coastal areas (each change of grass was called *muta*). Depending on the altitude, the grazing areas were divided into plain (*marina*), hill (*minzalina* or *mezzalina*), or mountain (*muntagna*) pastures and the flocks were moved in winter, autumn, and spring, and in summer. The departures and the stops of the shepherds were planned in advance depending on the availability of pastures and shelters, as well as in relation to the temperatures: “Autumn was the least reliable period: the organization completely depended on the intuition and the experience of the shepherds and their predictive ability” (Giacomarra 2006: 47). Therefore, in September-October pastures were grazed in the hill areas, in November-December the flocks were led to the coast, in March they returned to the hill pastures and in late spring they were moved to the mountain areas until August. During the summer, after the wheat harvest, many shepherds led their animals to the fields for stubble grazing. The traditional day of shifting of the winter flocks was 25 November, the anniversary of Saint Catherine of Alexandria. As the shepherds’ proverb goes: “*Ppi Santa Caterina, vacchi e pecuri a la marina*” (On Saint Catherine’s day, sheep and cows leave for the *marina*).

The diverse conformation of the island has led to the identification of specific grazing areas and to the establishment of an extremely articu-

lated road network, the *trazzere*. From Agrigento, for example, for winter transhumance the shepherds moved in October to the coastal areas of Porto Empedocle, Sciacca, Licata, and to the flat pastures of Catania and Gela. Here they stayed for a few months, usually until December-January, after which they returned to the hill pastures. Conversely, the internal mountainous areas were reached in late spring and summer or by going up the western side to the mountains of Cammarata and Lercara Friddi (some shepherds went as far as the Madonie) or following the eastern internal side towards the Peloritani, the Nebrodi, Etna. Depending on the weather, these shifts could begin in May. Even the shepherds from the Nebrodi—due to the orographic characteristics of the area—moved on long routes, in some cases reaching the flat areas near Catania and Siracusa: from May-June to October-November the animals remained in the mountain pastures of the Nebrodi, while in the remaining months they were moved towards the plains and coasts. In the Madonie, in addition to the mountain routes, there were essentially three itineraries of movement: the first, to the north, led to pastures that approach the sea; the latter departed towards the medium and low hills of Nisseno and Agrigento; the last, mostly chosen by the shepherds of Sclafani and Caltavuturo, descended towards the valleys on the west. These routes extend about ten to twenty kilometers north and sixty to seventy kilometers south (Giacomarra 2006: 44–45). Here is what a shepherd told me: “Usually my father was in the mountains from June to September, then he returned to the pastures near Polizzi for a short time and from September to December he moved in the Nucedda district, about 12 km from the town. From January to March he brought the flock downstream, and then he returned from April to May to the lands of Polizzi in Sciumiranni. My father had many animals, sometimes he stopped for a whole week” (G. G., Polizzi Generosa, interview of 12 July 2009).

The life of Sicilian shepherds was characterized by a permanent mobility which inevitably influenced family and social relationships. In addition, the constant movements required the presence of many people to control and take care of the animals. The largest flocks were divided into groups of about two hundred sheep, the so-called *guardia*, entrusted to a guardian, *picuraru*, helped by an assistant, *cumpagnu*, or by an apprentice, *garzuni*. For the transhumance, some shepherds used horses, but most moved on foot using mules and donkeys for the tools they needed for milking and making cheese and for arranging shelters. Often the shepherds formed associations of medium or large companies, to optimize the workflow on the one hand, and also to save on the rental of pastures, on the salaries of the shepherd assistants, and on the transfer on the other (Giacomarra 2006). Long transhumances gradually disappeared in the

years following World War II and the shepherds who still own or rent land far from their farms mostly use trucks to move their flocks. Conversely, short-distance journeys often influence the decisions of shepherds much more than in Sardinia. Seasonal cycles and environmental variables, ownership and/ or land rental regimes, the presence or lack of infrastructures are elements that influence individual farms, and the shepherd must possess a set of knowledge and skills that allow him to guess and consequently plan the movements of livestock and the periods of grazing in certain areas, especially in relation to the cycles of vegetation and crop rotations.

Transhumance is also widely practiced by shepherds who have their own land, and this underlines how this practice is intimately linked not only to the search for pastures but also to climatic variables. A shepherd from Polizzi Generosa reported:

Sheep need transhumance to produce. If you *muti i piecuri* (move the sheep), they always make milk. If you leave them in one place, it's different. Today I move less because the animals are fewer, but the transhumance is still there. Finally, the park has influenced the pastoralism with the constraint of the land. The mountain pastures are bound and the forest ranger no longer rents, so we have to move, this is why in the summer I bring the sheep in Contrada Gagliardo, which is higher. Therefore: from October to December, I bring them near Polizzi, from January to March in Scillato, in the valley pastures, from April to June I come back to the village. (V. G., Polizzi Generosa, interview of 10 April 2013)

Even in the province of Enna transhumance is still practiced, both by the landowners and by the shepherds who rent the land. One of them reports that he practices transhumance in May and September, moving in May by car and in September on foot, towards Leonforte. These are short-haul trips. Long-range walking transhumance, on the other hand, has disappeared, and some shepherds say: “both because of the laws and because there are few animals. Before the land was not all owned, most rented land and then moved. Now, thanks to the public funding and to the devaluation of the land anyone can buy it and then will not have to move” (A. B., Villarosa, interview of 14 June 2018).

The main objective of the shepherds, in the past as well as today, has always been to optimize milk and meat production. In this perspective, the continuous movement of the flocks and the perennial search for pastures are justified, which is why the movement of animals is not exclusive to the hilly and mountainous pastoral systems. Field research carried out in Palermo and Trapani also confirms the use of transhumance in these areas, which is still practiced mainly by shepherds who carry out their ac-

tivities on a traditional basis. A shepherd of Ventimiglia di Sicilia told me: “In the summer, but already at the beginning of May, we take the sheep to the mountains because in Ventimiglia, if it doesn’t rain, everything is dry. The pastures are not far away. They stay there until June and then we bring them back here. From October to December, they are moved again to the mountain pastures and, in January, we bring them back here. We often move them and it is mainly because of the lack of pasture” (S. C., Ventimiglia di Sicilia, interview of 30 April 2013). Similarly, a shepherd from Marsala told me: “Depending on the availability of grass, we move the animals. Usually, when it is necessary to move, the sheep are divided into groups from September to March, while the whole flock is moved in the spring. The movements do not take longer than a couple of hours; they range from 2–3 km to the neighboring pastures, to 11–12 km to the pastures I own in a nearby town. When the lands are not enough, I rent them” (S. C., Marsala, interview of 21 November 2016).

The most rationalized farms, at least the ones I analyzed, do not practice transhumance: the flock is grazed on lands close to one another or in rented pastures close to the farm. While today many shepherds have invested in the modernization of their farms, in general the percentage of businesses that have modern equipment for the cultivation of lands, the production of fodder, and premises to housing the animals is still low. Transhumance, in fact, continues to play a fundamental role in the organization of Sicilian pastoralism.

The New Paths of Transhumance

As seen in many other forms of pastoralism in the Euro-Mediterranean area, in Sardinia and Sicily transhumance is still common in local breeding systems and in recent times—especially following the candidacy process that led the movement of flocks to be inscribed by UNESCO among the Intangible Cultural Heritages of Humanity—it is increasingly becoming a touristic attraction. In Sardinia, the first real property interests⁹ date back to the early 2000s, when the traditional transhumance routes attracted the interest of the LAGs (Local Action Groups) Barbagie and Mandrolisai, Mare Monti and Ogliastro, who, with the collaboration of political institutions, local authorities, and scholars, started the *Tramudas* project, with the aim of making transhumance known, to promote the communities involved through the rediscovery of places (the routes wind through archaeological emergencies, places of worship, natural oases, landscape peculiarities, museums), to promote rural identity and create an opportunity

for tourism and cultural development through the recovery of ancient pastoral routes and more extensively of the culture of the pastoral world. The programmers have also prepared a guide to let visitors know the routes and steps to follow. A further initiative, launched in 2006 by the Region of Sardinia, is *Camineras de tramuda* (The paths of transhumance) which encourages the collaboration of different partners in the implementation of an integrated design of horseback trails along the shepherds' paths. A more recent project named *Sardegna Sentieri*, includes the section, "Places of transhumance," which proposes four "places of interest": one in the geographical area of Baronie and Montalbo, one in Barbagia di Seulo, and two in Sarcidano. The routes include visits to the *pinnettos* (the traditional shepherds' sheepfolds) restored and equipped for tourists, to farms where the agropastoral activity is carried on, as well as picnic areas and places of particular naturalistic, cultural, and historical-religious interest.

While the initiatives described above have had a rather marginal practical development and have resulted in the identification of the transhumance routes, in the preparation of guides, brochures, and advertising materials and in the installation of signs along the routes, in some areas transhumant practices are being becoming touristic attractions by promoting walks on foot, on horseback or with donkeys on the paths traveled by the flocks. Equestrian tourism is one of the main driving forces of the tourism industry and represents an alternative to the classic and inflated routes, with the aim of developing the economy of the areas concerned and of safeguarding and enhancing the rural, environmental, and cultural heritage of the island. In this regard, the project promoted by the Sardaighe en Liberté ecotourism agency is particularly interesting. Its main purpose is to promote eco-responsible, ethical, and fair tourism through the enhancement of rural landscapes by reducing the impact of tourist activity on the environment, supporting the consumption and sale of local products, and promoting the role of communities and their culture.

Among other activities, the travel agency also offers trekking with donkeys, an eight-day tour that traces the roads of transhumance in Ogliastra. The director of the agency told me:

The idea of transhumance arose because foreigners expressed interest in this practice and in the pastoral world. Transhumance is a phenomenon that has always allowed sustainable activities, the fight against fires, the protection of the environment. Enhancing it today means enhancing the territory and local communities, improving the environment, promoting local products, helping the shepherds develop a brand of transhumance products with an added value. It is a political matter that should be made heard in Sardinia. In addition to the tours we offer, we have been working on a project for al-



Figure 12.2. Transumanza, 2020. © Anna Piroddi

most three years and in 2019 we organized the first transhumance in which more than 100 people participated. In 2020, because of Covid, we could not repeat it and we created a live broadcast on Facebook: more than 12 thousand people followed the event. We hope to organize it again next year, in different periods and in different areas of Sardinia. (J.-L. M., Paris, interview of 12 June 2020)

The shepherd leading the transhumances promoted by Sardaigne en Liberté is a thirty-five-year-old young shepherd, who says:

What I have been doing in October and May, I have been doing for 13 years every year. In 2019 there were a hundred tourists who followed the flock and me and the guide answered their curiosities. After a couple of hours, at 12:30 p.m. we arrived at the farm, my relatives waited for them with drinks and sweets, then we had lunch with sheep meat and roasted goat and cheese. Now many are taking an interest in transhumance, especially after the boom in live streaming on Facebook. As soon as possible, once Covid is over, we will do it again. We want to organize a kind of transhumance village festival with the mayor of Arzana, while with a friend of mine we were thinking of doing a transhumance in May with my animals and one in June, a little longer, with his. (V. L., Arzana, interview of 9 June 2020)

In Sicily, pastoral mobility is bound to strict norms that regulate it, aimed at containing epizootic diseases. To date, the entire island is subject

to a plan for the eradication of brucellosis that imposes the control of animal movement. For reasons of health emergency, at the end of May 2018, the event “La transumanza da Gioiosa Marea a Longi” (Transhumance from Gioiosa Marea to Longi), scheduled from 1 to 3 June and organized by some cultural associations, was cancelled. The event is part of a large project involving several coastal and inland locations of the Nebrodi affected by the routes of the flocks, it started in 2016 and it is called “From the shores to the mountains: for the rediscovery of ancient traditions.” It included an excursion on foot and on horseback, following the transhumance of animals, on the *tratturi* (tractors) of nine villages from Gioiosa Marea to Longi. The event was created with the intention of expanding the tourist offer of Sicily and in particular of the territory of Messina.

A similar event, “La Transumanza—Un’Esperienza da Pastore nei Sicani,” was proposed by some associations in Santo Stefano Quisquina on 21 May 2018. The description of the event reads:

That’s right: the great attraction of transhumance, a unique opportunity to stay in close contact with the shepherds and their flocks, between stories and lots of fun until you reach the farm where we will taste cheese and ricotta prepared on the premises as it once was and where we will experience the festivities of transhumance as real protagonists.

It will be a journey not only for the body, but also for the mind: during the slow journey we will learn about the widespread organization that, over the centuries, has characterized the Civilization of Transhumance. A journey during which we will follow shepherds and herdsmen from the pastures of the mountains to the valley and that will give us the opportunity to rediscover our spirituality through contact with nature and slow movement. (Sicilia on Press 2017)

While the events mentioned above are mostly incidental and aimed at enhancing transhumance through excursions and tastings of typical products, the town of Geraci Siculo in the province of Palermo has been presenting more articulated projects for several years. Here, the herds of cattle and the flocks of sheep are moved to the mountains in the summer months and to the pastures downstream in the winter: from 24 May to 20 November the shepherds *sgavitànu ‘a muntagna*, i.e., they access the closed public pastures, *u gavitatu*, from 6 March to 24 May. In 2009 the local publishing house Edizioni Arianna, supported by the municipality, the regional province of Palermo, the Madonie Park Authority, and Geraci associations, decided to transform transhumance into a moment of cultural rediscovery and tourism promotion and created “The festival of the transhumance of the shepherds of Geraci Siculo, *Si sgavità a muntagna*,” which reached its eleventh year on 18–19 May 2019. The event aims to support the safeguarding and enhancement of pastoral mobility and more

extensively of the intangible cultural heritage of Geraci Siculo. Among the planned activities are guided tours of some farms where you can attend the gathering of the animals and tasting of dairy products, and participate in conferences and nature excursions.

We wanted to give greater visibility to something that already existed and that everyone already knew, yet somehow it often went unnoticed, as if it only concerned the shepherds. So, we wanted to make people focus on the cultural value of such a historical practice, choosing a different theme every year to inspire artists, visitors, and writers. The festival was held from 2009 until 2019, this year we had to cancel because of Covid. Shepherds, producers and local associations are involved: the whole Geraci community is deeply invested. (A. A., Geraci Siculo, interview of 16 June 2020)

Basically, the historical-economic and sociocultural dynamics that affected Sardinian and Sicilian forms of pastoralism in the last century have influenced and transformed pastoral mobility practices. Transhumance, in the two contexts, is a phenomenon with a double function: on the one hand it continues to represent a necessary and fundamental practice within the annual pastoral cycle; on the other, even if it is just the beginning, it is becoming an asset to be valued and used in the development of an alternative tourism which, especially in inland areas, helps the protection of rural areas, the creation of alternative incomes for local operators and in particular for the shepherds, and the expansion of the offer of agri-food products linked to the pastoral tradition. In this regard, within two forms of pastoralism whose objectives are based on the creation of income through the production and sale of milk, meat and derivatives through the dynamics of contemporary capitalistic markets and in which the new peasant model occupies a marginal position precisely because of the structural characteristics on which the two pastoral systems are based, transhumance becomes more and more an icon that collects and re-functionalizes a cultural heritage, through an effective process aimed at recovering, safeguarding, and endowing the constitutive features with a new sense of the past to adapt them to new needs. Equipped with symbols that have the power to attract and convey specifically researched messages, transhumance thus becomes an important resource that catalyses symbolic practices, common practices, and capitalization processes.

Sebastiano Mannia is Assistant Professor at the University of Palermo, where he teaches cultural anthropology, history of popular traditions, and intangible heritage. His publications include: *Il pastoralismo in Sicilia* (2013); *In tràmuta. Antropologia del pastoralismo in Sardegna* (2014); and *Questue e figure vicariali in area euromediterranea* (2015).

Notes

1. The discussion is not limited to Sardinia and Sicily only. See in this regard: Ballacchino and Bindi 2017; Bindi 2019a, 2019b, 2020; Fossati and Nori 2017; Nori 2016, 2018; Verona 2016. More generally, transhumance has historically characterized and influenced farming practices and social structures in the Mediterranean area (and beyond) and on these aspects a large literature has been consolidated which I would like to highlight, among others: Aime, Alluvio, and Viazzo 2001; Arbos 1922; Braudel 1976; Brisebarre 2007; Davis 1980; Fabre, Molénat, and Duclos 2002; Petrocelli 1999. For further bibliographical references see Mannia 2014.
2. On multifunctionality and rural development see: Balestrieri, Cicalò, and Ganciu 2018; Idda and Pulina 2006; Meloni 2006; Meloni and Farinella 2013; Meloni and Pulina 2020; Tola 2010.
3. On the development of inland areas I refer, among others, to: Carrosio 2019; Cois 2020; De Rossi 2018; Marchetti, Panunzi, and Pazzagli 2017; Meloni 2015.
4. The research on pastoralism in Sardinia started in 2005 and is still ongoing. Interviews, company surveys, and informal conversations were conducted in numerous communities in the four historical provinces. In Sicily, the research, started in 2011 and not yet completed, has involved several towns near Palermo, Agrigento, Enna, and Trapani. The information in this chapter is the result of a multilocation search (see, among others, Falzon 2001; Marcus 1995).
5. It is necessary to clarify that in the Sicilian case, unlike the Sardinian one, numerous companies coexist, and they are characterized by a traditional pastoral management system with few modern and rationalized enterprises. The company typologies, of course, are not homogeneous but rather diversified in terms of production, land property, technology, etc. For these reasons, from the analysis of the data collected in the course of my ethnographic research, an attempt was made to trace representative models of the two pastoral systems, given that the dynamics and problems are common to both individual contexts. For a comprehensive framework of the two forms of pastoralism, see Mannia 2013, 2014.
6. Data provided by the BDN of the Zootechnical Registry established by the Ministry of Health at the CSN of the “G. Caporale” Institute of Teramo, retrieved 3 June 2020 from <http://www.izs.it/IZS/>.
7. On 30 April 2015 the composition was instead: 1,072 dairy farms, 3,585 breeding farms, and 3,582 mixed farms (National Zootechnical Registry of the Teramo Zooprophyllactic Institute of Teramo, <http://www.izs.it/IZS/>, retrieved 5 August 2015).
8. To ensure their privacy, I will report only the initials of the interviewed shepherds.
9. In the last decades, the discussion on the safeguarding and enhancement of cultural and landscape heritage has broadened new perspectives for the involvement of local institutions and communities in the management of human and land resources. In particular, the Local Action Groups, but also local

institutions and associations, have been involved in various types of projects with the aim of promoting a new development of rural territories, pastoral practices and identities, and transhumance routes.

10. I attended and documented the second annual Festival of the transhumance of the shepherds of Geraci on 22–23 May 2010.

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