
Shepherding at Mărginimea Sibiului (Romania); Past, Present and Future

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This article aims to highlight the impact on local development of traditional economic activities. The case study that the authors consider concerns an area in the Romanian Carpathians developed through transhumant grazing and forestry activities: Mărginimea Sibiului. As shepherding kept developing, forest-cutting intensified to make room for pastures and hayfields, thus stimulating activities connected with the processing of wood. As trade on the Danube was liberalized under the Peace Treaty of Adrianople and cultivated lands in the south of the country kept extending, transhumance steadily lost in importance, especially in the twentieth century, in the wake of the Second World War. This process was intensified by the collectivization practised in the socialist-type centralized economy period. Currently, transhumance at Mărginimea Sibiului is practised only in four villages: Poiana Sibiului, Tilișca, Jina and Rășinari. Sheep flocks and the herd of cattle are moved from the village to the mountain pastures, along age-old pastoral paths, strictly observed and known by the rural communities. Most pasture-lands lie far from the village hearths, in the highlands. The future development of Mărginimea Sibiului involves the revival of traditional economic activities, as well as the development of tourism as a representative economic branch for this region.

Introduction

Aim and Scope

In a society steadily globalizing, modernizing and getting technologized, transhumant shepherding tends to become an occupation of past times. Many causes, which varied from one region to the other, led to this evolution. Among the most common causes were the different quality of pastures and hayfields, sheep dynamics which produced fluctuations in the pasturing surface-area, and some conflicts connected

with the taxation regime and property of the agro-pastoral area. In addition, changes occurring over time in the feeding regime and in the type of clothes, a consequence of global trends, caused a considerable restriction in using shepherding-provided products.

Currently, transhumance is still practised, but with much lesser intensity and in far smaller areas (Velcea *et al.*, 2016; David *et al.*, 2021). Hence, this study is aimed at highlighting the dynamics of this occupation in a Romanian Carpathian region that is representative of pastoral activities, namely the region of Mărginimea Sibiului. Pastoral dynamics has been described from the early feudal times to this day, and future trends have also been outlined. In the past, this vast movement has entailed the population of most Mărginimea Sibiului villages: Boița, Fântânele (Cacova), Galeș, Gura Râului, Jina, Orlat, Poiana, Poplaca, Rășinari, Rod, Săliște, Sibiel, Tălmăcel, Tilișca, Vale. Today, transhumance is still a large-scale practice only in Poiana Sibiului, Tilișca, Jina and Rășinari. Concomitantly, sheep livestock and the areas in which they are moved have been great diminished (Shirasaka and Urushibara-Yoshino 2015).

The paper aims to contribute to the development of awareness regarding the current characteristics of shepherding activities in the Mărginimea Sibiului, a traditional economic area of this mountainous region in southern Transylvania (Romania), compared with the past, and to make predictions about their future evolution. Thus, our study joins and connects with similar studies developed for other regions in the Alps, the Pyrenees, the Carpathians and the Caucasus, against the background of increasingly globalized and interdependent mountain economies, which are also more vulnerable to global and regional risks, be they pandemics or wars.

Literature Review

The old traditional agricultural activity, namely, transhumant pasturing, was practised in the past on vast areas at many high and medium altitudes of Europe. This explains why studies on shepherding and transhumance, representative of the European area, have been developed since the beginning of the twentieth century (Fribourg, 1910; Demangeon, 1932 – with particular focus on the Spanish Pyrenees); Kubijovic, 1926 (referring to the Eastern Beskids); Dedijer, 1916 (on transhumance in the Dinaric Alps); Arbos, 1923; Evans, 1940 (on transhumant shepherding in Europe).

At present, pastoral areas have shrunk considerably due to changes in the local economies and the transition from extensive to intensive agriculture. Studies have been devoted to the pastoral activities in the local economies of the French and Italian Alps (Arbos 1922; Gallois 1923; Morariu 1942; Gardelle 1973; Cleary and Delano-Smith 1990; Brisebarre 2007; Avram 2009; Biber 2010), Austrian and Swiss Alps (Shirasaka 2004; Jurt *et al.* 2015), the Spanish Meseta (Lopez-Santiago *et al.* 2014), the Polish Carpathians (Berezowski 1964; Sendyka and Makovicky 2018), or to the comparison between European and North-American pastoral systems (Rinschede 1988).

In the Romanian Carpathians, transhumant pasturing is part of a much larger agro-pastoral area, extending southwards in the mountainous regions from the West Balkans (Isnard 1961; Matley 1968; Kobayasky 1974; Urushibara-Yoshino 2006 and Mihevc 2013), Bulgaria (Guechev and Dinev 2006; Hirata and Rakshieva, 2017), Albania, Northern Macedonia and Greece (Blanc 1963; Chang 2009; Hadjigeorgiou 2011), an area which is one of the most representative of its kind in Europe.

Studies on the pastoral activities in the Romanian Carpathians have an old tradition, the first studies being those of the French geographer Emm. de Martonne (1904, 1912) and poet and ethnographer O. Densușianu (1913). In the inter-war period, a study worthy of note is A. Veress' (1927) work on the pastoral migrations of those from Transylvania to Moldavia and Wallachia, and there is a series of regional pastoral monographs: e.g. Dan (1923) speaks about pasturing in Bukovina; Popp (1929) about the region between the Carpathian and the Subcarpathian Bending area, Subcarpathian Oltenia (Popp 1933), Argeș-Muscel area (Popp 1934), the Polish Carpathians (Popp 1935) and the plainlands (Popp 1941a). Opreanu (1930) describes pasturing in the Eastern Carpathians; Someșan (1934) in the Călimani Mountains and Romanian provinces (Someșan 1935); Kubijovic (1934) and Georgeoni (1936) in Maramureș; Nandriș (1934-35) deals with Romanian pasturing in the Northern Carpathians; Precup (1926) and Morariu (1937) in the Rodna Mountains, Conea (1937, 1939) in the Hațeg Land and mountain and Subcarpathian Oltenia (Conea 1943). In addition, Herseni's studies discuss pastoral organization in Romania (Herșeni 1936) and pastoral sociology (Herșeni 1941).

After the Second World War, more and diverse studies would deal with this topic. Pastoral history studies would continue (Rusu 1958; Constantinescu-Mircești 1976; Totoianu 2010; Emilciuc 2017, etc.), simultaneously with the establishment of some theoretical-methodological approaches (Dunăre 1956, 1963; Donat, 1966). A wide range of studies focused on pastoral typology (Vuia 1964, 1980), pastoral development (Hotea 2013), pastoral shelters (Vulcănescu 1965), pastoral migrations (Dunăre 1969, 1977; Canureci 2010; Budrală and Sterp 2006; David *et al.* 2021), or pastoral-connected toponymy (Vlad and Vișan 1996; Matei *et al.* 1998; Crețan 2000; Boamfă 2011).

Simultaneously, regional pastoral studies would continue: Morariu *et al.* (1973) for the lowland Banat area; Latiș (1993) Maramureș; Iosep (1995) the Câmpulung area; Idu (1999) the Carpathians of Maramureș and Bukowina; Buza (2000) the Cindrel Mountains; David (2016) the Rucăr-Bran Corridor, etc.

The identity of shepherding activities in the context of contemporary mountain economies and the claims issued by shepherds were highlighted in Triboi's (2017) work on how shepherding in Romania and Central and Eastern Europe has changed the lives of shepherding workers in small urban areas. The study shows that small urban settlements in Romania and Eastern Europe use shepherding as a form of sustainable development.

O'Brien and Crețan (2019) highlight the way in which Romanian shepherds protested in 2015, defending their rights. The authors criticized the fact that modernization imposed by the European Union limits the free and full-scale materialization of traditions and can even lead to their loss, such as transhumance, and shepherds have been forced to protest for the rights to label products as traditionally pastoral and of access to pastures. Additionally, shepherding dogs have borne the brunt in Romania in the past decade, due to the policy of eradicating stray dogs (Crețan 2015).

Issues related to investment and social risk in the disadvantaged areas of the Romanian Carpathians have been extensively studied by Crețan *et al.* (2018), who show how Romanian foreign investments and state programmes can help pastoral development, especially in economically disadvantaged areas, where former factories built during the centralized economy have been closed. The study by Rîșteiu *et al.* (2021) goes along the same lines, showing that, in the former mining regions, shepherding remains an alternative source of economic development, especially in places where the population emigrates and there is a demographic decline. Furthermore, the study by Vesalon and Crețan (2013) shows that mono-industrialization is a development limit for many rural mountain settlements such as mining communities, and that shepherding is a good alternative for the future.

Light *et al.* (2020) analyse the way in which pastoral products and festivals for the promotion of pastoral products influence the development of tourism, and even tourism in the big cities bordering pastoral areas (Sibiu, Brasov).

In view of this, given the importance and representativity of Mărginimea Sibiului for pastoral activities in Romania, this area benefited from several comprehensive studies: Hașeganu (1941); Irimie *et al.* (1985); Voicu-Vedea (1998); Conea and Badea (2004); Lupaș (2004) and Lăcătușu and Stanciu (2016) (with the emphasis on pastoral migrations); Buza *et al.* (2009); Cocean (2009); Ciangă (2009) (with the emphasis on tourism), Velcea *et al.* (2016) and Constantin (2019).

Methods and Data

For the purpose of this research, recognizable methods and approaches were used for collecting, analysing and comparing data. For data collection, different sources were employed: old censuses of Transylvania during the Austro-Hungarian Empire (1850, 1857, 1869, 1880, 1890, 1900, 1910 and the agricultural census of 1895), censuses from the interwar period (1930 and 1941), the agricultural census of 1948, population censuses from the period of the centralized economy in Romania (1948, 1956, 1966 and 1977), as well as the censuses from the post-communist period (the population censuses of 1992, 2002 and 2011, the agricultural censuses of 2002 and 2010 and the Farm Structure Survey of 2016).

Historical maps were analysed and compared with the present situation: the Siebenbürgen map (1:28,000), compiled on the basis of the Josephine topographic surveys (1769–1773); the Nagy-Szeben/Hermannstadt map (1:75,000) (1889–1890);



Figure 1. The dynamic of pastoral land use within the Poiana Sibiului village. Left: 1964 (source: the Archive of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore of the Romanian Academy, Collection I. Drăgoescu). Right: 2021 (photograph by M. Persu).

Sibiu – harta topografică/Sibiu – A Topographic Map (1:75,000) (1952), a reproduction of the Austrian map (1881–1893); the topographic maps of Romania (1:50,000, 1973 and 1:100,000, 1996) and the topographic map of *Hermannstadt/Sibiu und das 'Alte Land' aktualisiert, mit deutschen Ortsnamen* (1:50,000, 2010). In addition, the land use maps from Mărginimea Sibiului were analysed based on the works written by Voicu-Vedea (1998) and Cocean (2009).

Analysing the maps consisted of interpreting them in order to highlight the changes taking place at the level of land use during the past two centuries. These were correlated with changes in sheep numbers, as shown by the bibliographic sources analysed.

Comparisons have been made with past land use based on old photographs from the Archive of the Institute of Ethnography and Folklore of the Romanian Academy or, more recently, from the works of Cojocaru-Costea (2002), Shirasaka (2006), Akeroyd (2006) and Urushibara-Yoshino and Mori (2007). Photographs taken by the authors during the field research conducted in 2012 and 2021 were also used (see Figure 1).

Past and current laws and regulations concerning the topic discussed were examined (Law No. 8 of 1895, based on which the agricultural census of the same year was conducted: *A Magyar Korona országainak mezőgazdasági statisztikája, gazdacímter, vol. I*, 1997); the decree-law of 15 December 1918 on the expropriation and transfer of expropriated lands to villagers, which was the basis of the agrarian reform of 1921 (Cristea 1999); the agrarian law of 1945, the basis of the agrarian reform of the same year (Şandru 2000), as well as the Land Fund Law No. 18 of 20 February 1991, which was the stepping stone for the changes that have taken place in the way of land use in Romania in the past three decades (1991–2021) (Terzea 2007). The analysis focused on the content of these laws and on the impact that the agrarian reforms they have generated have had on land use.

The law on the management of stray dogs was also analysed (Law No. 258 of 26 September 2013), which had a major negative impact on shepherding dogs, underlying shepherds' protests in January and in September–October, 2014, as well as in December 2015 (Crețan 2015) and October 2018 (O'Brien and Crețan 2019).

Contributions to the evolution of shepherding in Romania, and in the Romanian Carpathians in particular, were reviewed with special attention to researches into politics and its impact on territorial planning and the rural physiognomy. Data and information on transhumant shepherding have been documented based on older (Evans 1940; Popp 1941b; Ionescu-Sachelarie 1941; Morariu 1963) and more recent (Voicu-Vedea 1998; Dănuleț 2006; Huband *et al.* 2010; Ișfănoni 2010; Preda 2016; Velcea *et al.* 2016; Mathe-Kiss 2016 and David *et al.* 2021) bibliographic sources. Moreover, the websites of the town halls of some communes from Mărginimea Sibiului are representative of shepherding activities (Poiana Sibiului, Rășinari, Sadu) and provided the authors with useful data and information on the use of land and sheep herds, as well as the distribution of grazing land.

The findings were compared with statistical data and publications by Romanian and international authors discussing this problem.

Study Area

Mărginimea Sibiului – Regional Individuality

Mărginimea Sibiului lies in the south-east of Sibiu County, where the Sibiu Depression and the Cindrel Mountains meet. The term 'Mărginimea Sibiului' has historical connotations, referring to the villages situated between the mountain and the relatively smooth depressions, with a plain-like aspect on the 'margin' of Sibiu Land, an area centred on Sibiu city. The inhabitants of these villages are named *mărgineni*, being famous for their shepherding (Irimie *et al.* 1985: 14).

Mărginimea Sibiului extends between the Olt Valley in the East and the Sebeș Valley in the West, covering about 1335 km² (Velcea *et al.* 2016). It includes 17 localities (16 villages and one town) with a population of 31,034 inhabitants (census data: 2011) and about 30,000 inhabitants (estimation: 2021) who belong to eight functional typologies: pastoral, pastoral-agricultural, agricultural and forestry, agricultural and with hydro-energy industry, agricultural with textile industry, agricultural with food industry, agro-tourism and complex (Figure 2).

The *historical unity* of Mărginimea Sibiului derives from the region's function during the Austro-Hungarian and subsequent Habsburg periods, basically a border area with Transylvania, having a defence role for the Empire. This role went on mostly in the eighteenth century when Empress Maria Theresia decided to set up a Border Regiment at Orlat, this locality becoming then the polarizing centre of Mărginimea, and the inhabitants of the villages under the Orlat influence, situated on the old Imperial border from the south of Transylvania, were given the name of *mărgineni*. So, in the case of Mărginimea Sibiului, the term designates a marginal

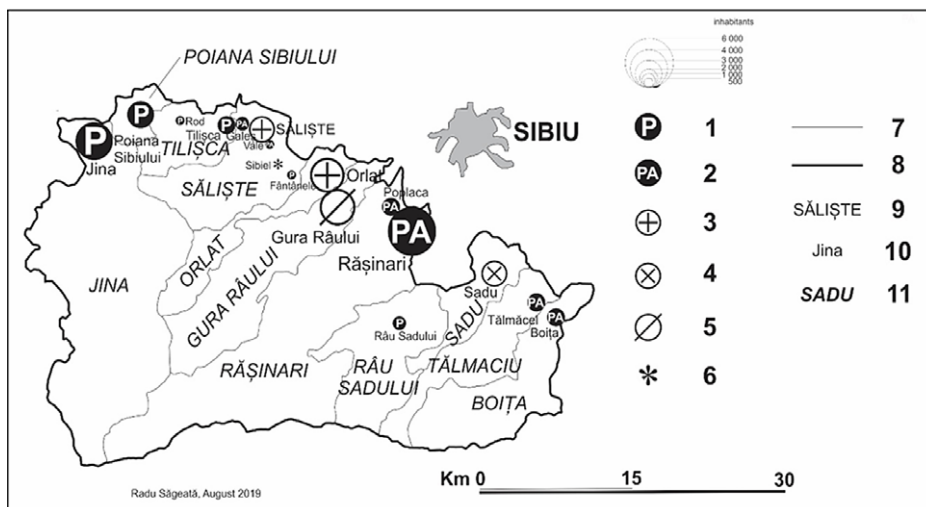


Figure 2. Demographic size and functional types of human settlements in Mărginimea Sibiului.

Legend: 1. Pastoral villages, 2. Pastoral-agricultural, 3. Forest settlements, 4. Settlement with hydroenergy industry, 5. Settlement with textile industry, 6. Agro-tourist village, 7. Commune boundary, 8. Mărginimea Sibiului boundary, 9. Town name, 10. Village name, 11. Commune name.

border area of the Habsburg Empire, featuring a functional unity: the frontier and defence area of the Empire (Conea 1965).

Its *ethnic unity* is due to the fact that Mărginimea Sibiului, a rural border area, did preserve over time the Romanian ethnical element, in opposition to the urban-type German and Hungarian cities from the south of Transylvania. Most soldiers belonged to the Romanian autochthonous population, while the officers, by far fewer, were of Hungarian and German origin. Thus, in time, an ‘island’ of predominantly Romanian population emerged, distinguishing this region by assuming some autochthonous denominations by the Feudal administration in the fourteenth century and translating them into Latin, German, or Hungarian documents (Săliște, Orlat, Săcel, etc.) (Irimie *et al.* 1985: 75).

Mărginimii Sibiului Economic Unity

The region has a predominantly Romanian population; the relief is rough, surrounded by mountain massifs. In time, the area has preserved an old occupation: transhumant shepherding. While, until 1918, the military function was imposed by historical and geopolitical events, the pastoral function is the outcome of the natural environment in which the traditional rural communities of Mărginimea appeared and developed. Therefore, the region’s shepherds were called *mocani* or *țuțuieni*. The Sibiu Saxons named them ‘Gebirgswalachen’ (Walahi or mountain

Romanians), or ‘Die Tzuzuianen’ (‘Zuzuianen’), a toponymic argument that proves the ethnical unity of this population group.

The pastoral function, transmitted from one generation to the next up to this day, is characteristic of the area, a linking feature of the area which individualizes it in connection with the neighbouring lands; Mărginimea Sibiului appearing in time as Romania’s most characteristic pastoral region. The inhabitants of Mărginimea would periodically cross the Carpathian Mountains with their flocks, a situation that contributed to maintaining constant relations between the Romanian communities from the north and the south of the mountains due to the population movements (Conea 1960: 90–91).

The practice of transhumance in Mărginimea Sibiului was also stimulated by the economic cooperation between the Romanian villages and towns from the south of Transylvania. The area’s traditional textile industry was for centuries determined by this important economic potential between the urban economic development and the expansion of transhumance in the eighteenth century, both being closely inter-connected (Pascu 1954: 152–153). That is why the Mărginimea shepherds found a protector in the Transylvanian towns directly interested in securing some advantages and removing some restrictions on transhumance (Moga 1939; Constantinescu-Mircești 1976: 21). Transhumant shepherding became a large-scale practice beginning in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, and also determining a certain homogeneity and anthropization of the landscape, with land-use having a greater share of meadows and glades (Buza 1974).

Cultural and Ethnographic Unity in Mărginimea Sibiului

The area has preserved in time an exceptional wealth of customs and traditions. The area stands out as a distinct ethnographic zone with an individual folk costume, a traditional architecture, and painting on glass – an occupation that got momentum in the eighteenth century due to the introduction of glassware items by the Austrian Imperial authorities.

Connected with the traditional occupation, namely shepherding, the inhabitants used to make a number of traditional cheese items which in time became local brands, contributing to the development of a homogeneous local mental entity entailing all the inhabitants in spirituality, traditions and occupations.

The cultural and spiritual background is reflected in a wealth and variety of tourist objectives (ancient wooden churches, ethnographic museums, a museum of glass icons, memorial houses, archaeological complexes). Mărginimea Sibiului is also a *unitary tourist zone*, having its own historical and cultural identity.

Results and Discussions

Shepherding at Mărginimea Sibiului: Past

According to sociologist T. Herșeni (1941), agriculture and shepherding are the oldest forms of social life and Romanian civilization, with shepherds preserving the old traditions and folk culture.

The first mention of the Mărginimea Sibiului shepherds is made in *the Andrian Diploma* (1224) which gives the Saxons the right to use, together with the Romanians, the mountains and forests (Voicu-Vedea 1998: 127). According to Conea and Badea (2004: 55), the old-time practice of pastoral activities made Mărginimea Sibiului ‘certainly one of our Carpathian sectors where the local Daco-Roman population stayed in place and continued to develop in connection with the mountains even after the Roman rule left, beyond the Danube’. What contributed to it was primarily the exceptionally favourable background of the ‘sub-mountainous lowland’ which ends northwards with the Sibiu Mountains, their altitudes by far lower southwards, leaving in place a wild hilly relief propitious to grazing. Dragomir (1938) described them as ‘massive mountains with bridges extended as a table over huge distances [...] rich in pastures and springs up to the top’, hence favourable to intense human pressure. Therefore,

within the northern slope of the Southern Carpathians, the Sibiu Mts. and together with them and their western neighbours, i.e. the Șureanu Mts. Looking very special, primarily because they are by far the most inhabited ones of all the mountains of this slope, that is, from Caransebeș to the Întorsura Buzăului ending area (and perhaps more than that, the most inhabited one even in the past), also showing the same physico-geographical conditions, the groundwork of the same historical and human geography. (Conea and Badea 2004: 56)

Historical documents from the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries mention the intensification of human pressure in the mountains through transhumant shepherding, practised especially by the Romanian population, concomitantly with the development of crafts connected with the processing of wool. At the same time, more shepherding led to forest cutting in order to extend pastures and hayfields, which also favoured wood-processing activities. This situation is attested by the presence of many local toponyms standing for deforestation. The most representative of these is the toponym Poiana Sibiului (from the word ‘poiană’, meaning ‘clearing’ – a place in the forest devoid of trees and covered with grass and flowers) (Vlad, 1996: 104–105), which is a standout village for shepherding activities in Mărginimea Sibiu. This name also engendered toponyms in the mountains bordering Mărginimea Sibiu, where the shepherds of the area would lead the flocks: Poiana Brăneasa, a peak in the Șureanu Mountains (1131 m), Poiana Făgețel and Poiana Tisa, slopes in the Lotrului Mountains at an average altitude of 1500 m. Oașa Depression, located between Șureanu and Cindrel Mountains (1260 m average altitude) and Oașa Mare Peak in Cindrel Mountains (1731 m) (from ‘oaș’/deforested slope – a place in a forest, cleared of vegetation to be cultivated) are other representative toponyms which prove deforestation. The Șureanu Mountains, with large grazing areas, used by the people of Mărginimea Sibiului, abound in such toponyms: Curata Mare (peak, 1326 m) (from ‘curătură’ – a name bearing the same meaning); Ciungu (peak, 967 m) (from ‘ciungi’ – trees with branches cut or defoliated by intentional or accidental burning); Prisaca (peak, 1219 m) (from ‘prisacă’ – also with the meaning of ‘clearing’); Preluca (ridge, 1200 m) and Prelucele (peak, 1225 m) (from ‘preluță’/glade –

deforested land ploughed and ready to be sowed); Pleșu (peak, 996 m) (from ‘pleș’, ‘pleasă’ – bald, naked, devoid of vegetation); Runcuri (peak, 788 m) (from ‘runc’/clearing – meaning a place in a forest where trees have been cut down, burned or felled by the wind; deforested place used as pasture or agricultural land); Smida Mare and Smida Mică (peaks, 1774 and 1509 m, respectively) (from ‘smidă’ – small, cut forest) and Seciuri (peak, 993 m) (from ‘seciu’, ‘seciuri’ – name given to places where the forest was cut down and a grazing ground was left behind). In the Loviștei Depression and the Lotru Mountains, located in the east of Ținutului Mărginimii, deforestation is indicated by the names of various villages: Lazaret, Boița commune, Sibiu County, (from ‘laz’, ‘lazuri’/clearing – cleared land, transformed into hayfield or arable area) and Priloage, Căineni commune, Vâlcea county (from ‘prilog’ – clearing), as well as by the toponym Dealul Runcului (a peak in Lotrului Mountains, 1200 m).

The intensity of deforestation in the Sibiu area was documented by Crăcea and Crăcea (2010), who demonstrated, on the basis of cartographic documents, that in two centuries (between 1769/1773 and 1973) the forest areas in the Sibiu Depression were reduced from 24% to 14% of the total land area (that is, from 79.6 km² to 48.9 km²).

Transhumance appeared at the beginning of the feudal period and got momentum in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, becoming a specific form of pastoral economy (Conea 1960; Laffront 2006; Brisebarre 2007). It developed mostly in those local communities where animal breeding was the main living resource, and where grazing was not sufficient (Popa 1979). Transhumance led to the considerable expansion of the shepherding area, the Mărgineni shepherds travelling long distances. Thus, in the nineteenth century, special consulate offices were opened at Hârșova (Dobrogea) and Rusciuc (presently Ruse in Bulgaria) for the Transylvanian shepherds, Hârșova hosting ‘Starostia Mocanilor’ ever since the seventeenth century (Vălsan 1928). The apex of transhumance was in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, when the number of sheep kept growing, with transhumance being practised freely on vast territories, beyond the present borders of Romania, as far as Croatia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine (Voicu-Vedea 1998: 140), Caucasus, Crimea and even North America (Dragomir 1938) (Figure 3).

By the Treaty of Adrianople (1829), trade on the Danube was free so that cultivated areas expanded into Wallachia and Oltenia. The importance of transhumant shepherding was constantly diminished, especially after the Russian–Turkish War (1877–1878) which led to the independence of Romania, to the drastic limitation of migrations in the south of the Danube, and to the economic conflict with Hungary (1885–1896) that caused the closing of the old border with that country. The shepherds who remained at Mărginimea Sibiului sold their flocks and turned to additional activities (Buza *et al.* 2009) (Figure 4).

The downwards trend of pastoral activities in Mărginimea Sibiului continued in the twentieth century, first because of the destructions caused by the two world wars, then because of collectivization during the socialist-type central-based economy, and finally traditional products and activities could not compete with the products of the global consumption market. For all that, shepherding has been going on to this day



Figure 3. The shepherds’ roads from Mărginimea Sibiului to the north of the Black Sea, the Caucasus, Central Asia and North America (according to Dragomir, 1938).

as one of the main traditional forms of the rural economy in the Mărginimea Sibiului villages, giving the region a particular ethno-culture. In the commune of Rășinari, for example, the number of sheep had decreased in 1899 to only 10,429 head. In the years 1910–1920 there was an increase reaching 35,000 head; in the period 1920–1940 there were 150,000 sheep declared, but the real number was, according to some estimates, about 30,000 (source: file no. 346 from the Rășinari City Hall archive). After the Second World War, the number of sheep had dropped to 21,000 head (in 1948) and even 14,964 head (in 1955). In 1957 there were 16,000 sheep in the village, in 1959 their number was 12,085, reaching 17,645 head in 1960 (idem., <https://primaria-rasinari.ro>)

Shepherding at Mărginimea Sibiului: Present and Future

While, in the past, shepherds owned large flocks and took part in transhumance over great distances, usually in the Romanian Plain, the Oltenia Subcarpathians or the Dobrogea Plateau (Popp 1933), in the contemporary period this occupation has been considerably reduced. Thus, in the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, when pasturing was flourishing, there were over 1,000,000 sheep heads in Mărginimea Sibiului, at Poiana Sibiului, with annual variations between 150,000–300,000 head (Voicu-

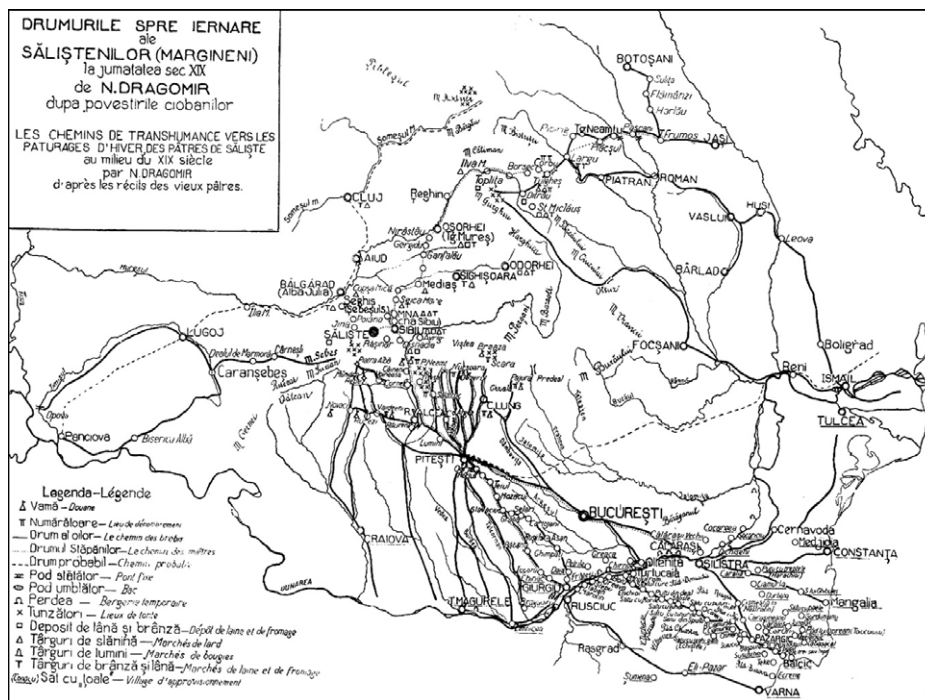


Figure 4. The wintering roads of the shepherds from Săliște (Mărginimea Sibiului) in the middle of the nineteenth century (*Drumurile spre iernare ale săliștenilor (mărgineni) la jumătatea secolului al XIX-lea* by Nicolae Dragomir, according to the shepherds' stories) (source: Dragomir, 1926).

Legend: (from top) customs, sheep counting place, sheep road, the way of the Masters, probable road, fixed bridge, mobile bridge, temporary sheep fold, place for shearing sheep, wool and cheese warehouse, bacon fairs, light fairs, cheese and wool fairs, supply villages.

Vedea 1998). Sheep flocks began decreasing at the beginning of the inter-war period, rising to a maximum during the central-based economy period and after the 1989 Revolution, with a historical minimum in 1990, down to a total of 90,000 head. Legislative protection measures for traditional activities started being introduced in the 1990s (Shirasaka 2007), and the number of sheep doubled in Mărginimea Sibiului in the next two decades up to nearly 190,000 head in 2010 (Velcea *et al.* 2016), proving the effectiveness of this traditional activity in the current social-economic conditions.

Given the industrial decline between 1990 and 2010, the Romanian foreign investments and state programmes have contributed to the rehabilitation and development of various traditional economic branches, whose viability was confirmed over time, and which contributed to the mitigation of social risks (Crețan *et al.* 2018). Thus, shepherding remains an alternative source of economic development in regions such as Mărginimea Sibiului, which were severely affected by emigration and

demographic decline (Triboi 2017; Rîșteiu *et al.* 2021). The centralized economy has shown that mono-industrialization is a limitation in the development of many rural settlements or small towns in mountain areas, and shepherding is a viable alternative to economic reconversion (Vesalon and Crețan 2013). In addition, pastoral products and festivals promoting them contribute to the development of tourism both in the respective rural areas and in the large cities bordering said pastoral areas (Sibiu and Brașov, etc.) (Light *et al.* 2020).

The largest sheep flocks were and continue to be at Rășinari, Tilișca, Poiana Sibiului, Jina, Tălmăcel, Sadu and Râu Sadului, these villages hold 77% of all the head of sheep. Sheep flocks are directly proportional to the size of the pastoral area, the number of animals depending on the share of pastures and hayfields in the agricultural use of the communes (Bărbulescu, Motcă 1983). Thus, in Sadu commune, for an area of 963 hectares of hayfields and 703 hectares of natural pastures (45.9% and 33.5%, respectively, of the agricultural area of the commune) in 2016 there were 9,500 sheep, 110 more than in 2011. The commune has two pastures in the lowland (depression) area with a total area of 400 hectares and seven pastures in the alpine area totalling 659.7 hectares (<https://sadu.ro>). Rășinari commune, one of the most representative settlements for shepherding in Mărginimea Sibiului, had 33,977 sheep in 2020 (of which 30,146 were females), owned by 157 breeders. Their number had decreased slightly compared with 2004, when the village had 40,000 sheep, but increased substantially compared with 1982, when there were only 18,000 head (<https://primaria-rasinari.ro>). In 2018, in the commune of Poiana Sibiului, there were 8147 head of sheep and goats with a grazing area of 1,418.79 hectares (872.79 hectares of pastures – 38.8% of the agricultural area of the commune – and 546 hectares of hayfields – 24.3% of the agricultural area) and a stable population of 2894 inhabitants (of which 96.3% were engaged in agriculture and animal husbandry) (<https://comunapoianasibiului.ro>). In Jina commune, there were 1700 sheep and 58 families involved in sheep husbandry, out of a total of 168 families (<https://comunajina.ro>). Over the entire area, the number of sheep from Mărginimea Sibiului total around 200,000 head, in relation to a grazing area of 40,400 hectares (Velcea *et al.* 2016).

The reinvigoration of the shepherding tradition in the Mărginimea Sibiului rural area was determined primarily by replacing state property for private property after the socio-political changes in 1989, and government support. In view of this, this agricultural branch has, over the past few years, benefited from financial support through economic development programmes for the Romanian rural area (Drăgănescu 2006; Juler 2014; Triboi 2017). Thus, during 2016–2020, Romanian farmers received some €5 million (24 million lei) to buy rams and goats under a support scheme to raise the efficiency of meat-and-milk production in the zoo-technical sector (Revista Fermierului 2016).

The villages that have a large number of sheep are Poiana Sibiului, Jina, Rășinari and Tilișca, and the town of Săliște, with 158,240 head, i.e. 84% of all the sheep registered in Mărginimea Sibiului in 2010. In Jina and Poiana Sibiului alone they totalled 106,762 sheep – 56%. Elsewhere, values were below 10,000 head; it is

noteworthy that another group at Gura Râului, Orlat, Râu Sadului, Sadu and Tâlmăciu, had 4500–7000 head (Velcea *et al.* 2016: 92).

At Mărginimea Sibiului transhumance involved all the 17 settlements, with intensities varying in terms of period and number of animals.

Currently, transhumance is practised only in four villages Jina, Poiana Sibiului, Tilișca and Rășinari, and it takes on two-types (Huband *et al.* 2010):

- *large-scale transhumance* (mountain-lowland), summering in the west plain area (Banat, Crișana and Satu Mare) and south plain areas (the Bărăgan, the Danube Floodplain and Dobrogea), differing from village to village in terms of the land possessed. The large-scale transhumance begins after 15 September, traditionally lasting for 30 days; the luggage is carried by donkeys or horses; and the return is after 15 April. According to European norms, sheep must be carried by car (Popa 2010) (Figure 5).
- *small-scale transhumance* is practised in Spring and Autumn, yet over far smaller distances, usually in the settlements around Sibiu County and the neighbouring counties (Alba, Mureș, Brașov), in depressions and tableland areas (the Mureș, Târnava Mică, Târnava Mare valleys, Sibiului and Apold depressions, Hârtibaciu, Târnavă and Secașelor hills).

The shepherds that have few animals do not go on transhumance, but alternate between mountain and valley (residential village). Transhumance can be simple, i.e. over small distances (mountain–village), or twofold, when in transitional seasons (spring or autumn) the flocks reach the pastures or hayfields at certain distances from the village, then they go up or down, depending on the season, along the mountain–valley route. Representative of pastoral activities among Mărginimea villages are Poiana Sibiului and Jina, boasting complex mechanisms of moving the flocks and practising large-scale transhumance (Voicu-Vedea 1998) (Figure 6).

After 1990, transhumance declined as private property replaced the state-owned property, a situation that made movement more difficult. And yet, despite reduced territorial areas versus the sheep flock size, Poiana Sibiului and Jina are still engaged in transhumance during the transitional seasons (Figure 7).

The modernization imposed by the accession to the European Union has contributed to the considerable limitation of several ancient traditions, such as transhumance (O'Brien and Crețan 2019) and, in the absence of measures to stimulate shepherding, this can even lead to the disappearance of transhumance. In addition, the adoption of the Law on the management of stray dogs (Law No. 258/2013), although having a positive impact on urban areas affected by demolition during the communist period, in pastoral areas such as Mărginimea Sibiului it contributed to the decrease in the number of shepherding dogs, leading to protests, which occurred in January, September–October, December (Crețan 2015), and October 2018 (O'Brien and Crețan, 2019).

Even if the animal movements have to cope with several difficulties, many sheep-owners who had bought terrains in the west of Romania, in Timiș, Arad, Bihor, Satu



Figure 5. The summering in the Cibin Mountains (*văratul în Munții Cibinului*) in 1937 (P. Begia and I. Fishner collection), a reproduction of the Romanian Ethnographic Atlas (vol. II – Occupations, 2005).



Figure 6. The large-scale and the small-scale transhumance in the current period.



Figure 7. Temporary shelter for sheep in the Cindrel Mountains (Jina Commune) (photo: M. Persu).

Mare and Sălaj counties, where they permanently kept their flocks, preserved their old residences (Velcea *et al.* 2016).

Pastoral activities led to a specific territorial organization in the villages practising this activity, adapted to the particularities of the natural environment (Cocean 2009). Thus, in each village, each household tends to benefit from all natural areas (forest, pasture, hayfields, cultivation sites, settlement, tall mountains), thus giving the opportunities for developing complementary economic activities. The villages of Mărginimea Sibiului have the following economic areas: village built-area, cultivation terrain, hayfield places with huts, grazing area, forest and tall mountains (Irimie *et al.* 1985: 119).

In the past, when transhumance was a large-scale practice, cultivated lands – agricultural rotational systems (with two or three fields) (Figure 8(a)-(c)) – were used. This solved soil recovery on the one hand, and annual grazing, on the other. Analysing the structure of village territories, of the estate – built-area relations in terms of their regional layout – and of the complexity of each village, coupled with oral statements gathered by interviewing the local population, with toponymic measurements and documentary attestations, it can be proved that Mărginimea Sibiului villages have evolved throughout history from the social-historical units of the traditional peasant community.

Shepherding at Mărginimea Sibiului is the result of a complex of natural and socio-historical factors that have characterized this area, triggering its economic functionality. Given the context, this study highlights the viability of this traditional activity in the current economic and social context, marked in 1990–2000 by the decline of industry as a result of the transition from the centralized economic system to the market economy, and later by the impact of the global economic and financial recession (2008–2012), by the pandemic crisis (2019–2022) and by the geopolitical tensions generated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

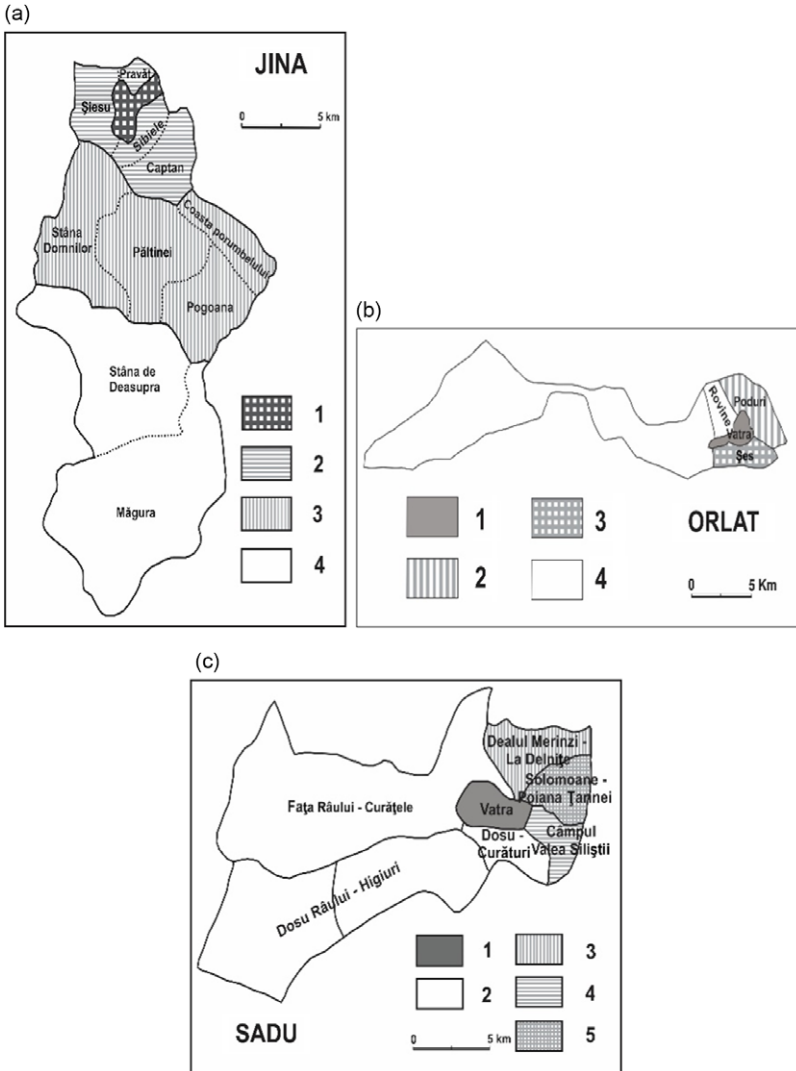


Figure 8. Patterns of village territorial organization in Mărginimea Sibiului. Legend: (a) Jina: 1. Village hearth; 2–3. Pasturelands; 2. ‘Lower Boundary’ – with lower altitudes close to the village hearth, pasturing small flocks; 3. ‘Upper Boundary’ with higher altitudes, situated close to mountain area, pasturing large flocks; 4. The mountain – pasturing in summertime. (b) Orlat. 1. Village hearth; 2–3. Alternative rotation cultures (‘The two fields’) fields; 4. The mountain (pastureland, hayfields, alpine void). (c) Sadu. 1. Village hearth; 2–3. Alternative rotation cultures (‘The three fields’) fields; 4. The mountain (pastureland, hayfields, alpine void).

This article complements, develops and updates similar studies for this region by Irimie *et al.* (1985), Voicu-Vedea (1998), Cocean (2009), Buza *et al.* (2009) and Velcea *et al.* (2016). The lack of current data and information regarding the

shepherding activities pertaining to the entire studied area was the main limitation of our study, the latest data being provided by the websites of the town halls of some communities being representative of the shepherding activities in Mărginimea Sibiului and by the field research performed by the authors.

The future research directions that this article can engender are related to the enhancement of the challenges generated by the pandemic crisis, which triggered a decline in tourist activities in the area and in pastoral tourism in particular, as well as those related to the need to develop the Romanian agricultural-pastoral sector against the backdrop of the conflict in Ukraine and the diminishing contribution of this country to the world's agri-food market.

Conclusions

Mărginimea Sibiului villages have a threefold function imposed by environmental factors: transhumant shepherding, forest exploitations and tourism.

Shepherding is the traditional occupation specific to Mărginimea Sibiului inhabitants, a phenomenon that has influenced the region's social life and economic particularities. A basic element that preserved local traditions was the absence of forced collectivization in certain villages with a very limited arable surface area.

The deep twentieth-century social changes, including modernization, industrialization and urbanization, the coming to power of a restrictive political regime relying on a centralized economy, considerably diminished transhumant shepherding, which became rare. This decline was enhanced after 1989 when land restitutions replaced state property with private property, making it difficult for shepherds to travel long distances.

The future development of settlements in Mărginimea Sibiului requires relaunching traditional economic activities, shepherding and more tourism, potentially a representative economic activity in the area. It is mountain tourism and ecological agrotourism in addition to classical tourism, which should benefit from a substantial contribution of management knowledge and financial facilities (tax reduction, advantageous credits, subventions to farmers, European projects, etc.).

Changing feeding practices for ecological practices would increase the demand for traditional agricultural products in Bucharest, Romania's capital city, and in other cities, that also have export opportunities. It is therefore necessary to increase the popularity of the region abroad, its particularities and specific products.

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