



**CULTURE AND NATURE: THE EUROPEAN HERITAGE OF  
SHEEP FARMING AND PASTORAL LIFE**

**Theme 3: Pastoral life  
Report of Hungary**

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

*The following essay contains a short summary made by the given research points. To avoid any overlap in the topics of everyday life, feasts and place usage are only going to be mentioned briefly, since these will be developed as relevant parts of separate chapters.*

**Hungary** is located in Central Europe, in the Carpathian Basin surrounded by the Carpathians, the Alps and the Dinaric Mountains. The territory of the country is 93,030 square kilometres, covering about 1 per cent of Europe. Hungary is a mixture of eastern and western cultural influences together with the traditions of a 1000-year-old state. Pagan tribes arrived in the Carpathian Basin around 896 and assimilated the smaller and greater local tribes. Later on, throughout their history, Hungarian rulers invited priests, artists and teachers to enrich Hungarian culture. Monuments of the Roman Empire as well as spas from the age of the 150-year-long Turkish rule, medieval castles and magnificent cathedrals all bear witness to a stirring history.

Administratively, Hungary is divided into 19 counties. In addition, the capital city, Budapest, is independent of any county government. The counties and the capital are the 20 NUTS third-level units of Hungary.

Hungary is a member of OECD, NATO, EU and a Schengen state.

Despite its relatively small size, the country is home to numerous World Heritage Sites, UNESCO Biosphere reserves, the second largest thermal lake in the world (Lake Hévíz), the largest lake in Central Europe (Lake Balaton), and the largest natural grassland in Europe (Hortobágy).

Several million people of Hungarian nationality are living outside the current country borders, most of them in the surrounding countries (Romania, Slovakia, Ukraine, Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Austria). The most significant region – concerning sheep breeding – is Transylvania, which is a part of Romania. The review of Hungarian sheep breeding and herdsman's life is unimaginable without researching this geographical area.

### ***Different species – diversity of local species***

Since sheep's domestication took place before the use of writing, there are no written reports to inform about the species of wild sheep, whose domestication contributed to the development of the domestic sheep. There are, however several theories to explain the process. Although we don't know when the domestication had started, we have knowledge about the keeping of sheep – besides other domestic animals - by Neolithic man. Numerous local, specific species of sheep had developed, many species cover different regions and cultures as common element. Sheep are present in Europe, Asia, Africa and America – in every continent. Their economic and cultural importance has changed a lot but they play again an important role in the bio/eco/organic agriculture and animal husbandry everywhere in Europe, this is especially true for traditional, local species.

The species of racka, cigaja, curkan were the most important sheep in Hungary till the 19th century, when the merino sheep started gradually to outnumber them. Cross breeding of different species as a consequence of co-existence of peoples, the interbreeding of different flocks contributed to the creation of a multicoloured sheep-culture in Europe.

### ***Different forms of the keeping***

In springtime, generally on the day of St. George (24th April), seldom on the day of St. Joseph, or on the 1st May, the sheep were driven to a certain part of the fields, normally of lesser quality, which was not suitable for other animals. In earlier times, when farmers applied rotation of crops, sheep were driven to fallow land.

There is a difference in the ways and grades between extensive and intensive breeding.

The feeding of animals in extensive breeding is based on grazing; it is connected to migration, simple buildings, little investment of labor and low efficiency. Extensive breeding was widely practiced during the feudalism, mainly the young and slaughter livestock were bred this way. Work-, milking-animals and those which were used for transportation were bred more intensively; they were fed and kept better. The two types of breeding were present in Hungary simultaneously probably since the Conquest of Hungary. The intensive breeding grew slowly by degrees and because of this extensive decreased.

Differences can be made based on the constructions and on the owners of the flock (ownership by farms, manors, shepherds).

The forms of animal husbandry with and without permanent accommodation have developed.

In 1957, László Földes divided the sheep breeding in the Carpathian-basin to the following four regional and partly historical groups – mainly based on the type of buildings: 1. Alpine shepherding, 2. Kosarazó shepherding (moving the sheep-pen from one place to another so the sheep could fertilize the land), 3. Racka breeding on the Great Hungarian Plain, 4. Merino breeding.

The whole system of Hungarian sheep breeding changed with the introduction of the western merino breeds in the 18th century and their spread – because of the wool prosperity – in the first half of the 19th century.

Instead of the extensive breeding of racka, merino brought the change of breeding method and a new building type the sheep-cote appeared.

### ***Benefits of keeping sheep***

Keeping sheep had several economic reasons; keeping sheep allowed to produce numerous products. As a consequence of milk processing several local types of cheese were being produced.

The historical and archeological sources confirm that the consumption of pork became significant only in the last 100-150 years. Earlier cattle-meat and lamb had greater role in the alimentation of Hungarians. In sheep breeding households the most important period of consumption was between the harvest in the autumn and pig slaughter.

The curd-cheese culture and yoghurt making methods of Hungarians in the Middle Ages – which did not include rennet – was completed with the cheese-culture using stomach- or vegetable rennet.

One of the most important yields of sheep breeding was the wool, which appeared in clothing culture, household textiles and fine arts.

Wool was one of the most important economic forces in the 19th century. Wool processing promoted the development of the textile industry everywhere in Europe. Wool is used for clothing and for household textiles

A special type of fertilization in the Middle-Mountain regions was the kosarazás; the land was fertilized by the transportation of the dismountable and movable sheep-pen. The great historical background of heating with manure is proved by not only the origin of the word, but also its geographical incidence. Heating with animal manure was very well known and the word tőzeg (turf) has Turkish origins before the Conquest of Hungary.

### ***Sheep breeding today***

Sheep breeding, like any other activity, is affected by several factors. The most important factor is the demand for sheep products, which is completed in Europe by the purposes of use of certain areas and landscape protection, furthermore by the necessity of providing jobs and preventing the migration of the population.

The importance and advantages of biodiversity and ecologic farming forms have to be highlighted. The economic geography of different regions can be studied from the view of sheep breeding and of tourism linked to sheep keeping: from environment point a sustainable rural development, which takes into consideration the most important, locally specific ecologic values, the regional structure of agriculture, the cultural traditions of the built environment and the touristic sector.

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The Hungarian man was born to be shepherd!<sup>1</sup> This supposition about Hungarian herdsman was often mentioned in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century by English and German travelers with special liking in their writings. Even today Hungary appears in the touristic offers as the home of *steppe, country taverns, horse-herder and outlaws*. Herdsmen framed a socially, culturally, mentally separate element of Hungary's society, which were more than just a professional group.<sup>2</sup>

## **1. PLACE – NATURAL AND CULTURAL ENVIROMENT**

### **1.1 Historical background and the main regions of shepherding**

Historic researches confirm that a great many herdsmen – servants and freemen – lived in the Hungarian society before 10<sup>th</sup> century. In the Hungarian language the word *Pásztor* (herdsman) can be found from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the word “*juhász*” (*shepherd*) appeared in the middle ages. Medieval pastoral tribes (Pecheneg, Cumanian, Szekely, Vlach) fitted in gradually into the Hungarian society.<sup>3</sup> Many of the herdsmen were servants in the Middle Ages. Paid herdsmen were employed by manors and citizens from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The “*pásztorrend*” (*pastoral order*) was the class of poor peasantry in the centuries of the modern era. The contemporary drafts did not manage the herdsmen separately, but reckoned them among cottars.<sup>4</sup> The so-called “pastoral villages” existed in the alpine region of the Carpathian Mountains until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the reasons for their existence were basically their livestock and pastoral occupation.

By some of the researchers the appearance of pastoral guilds were connected to the merino sheep and the profession of the “*bírkás*” *merino shepherds*. But guild sheep-farming appeared earlier in the western parts of Hungary than the merino sheep. By every indication pastoral guilds existed in Hungary as far back as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, following the organizational models of south-German and Austrian lands of the 15-16<sup>th</sup> century. The establishment of guilds aimed the religious and moral teaching, controlling, guarding of herdsmen, aimed their rising into the middle-class.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Certainly there are other statements about Hungarians, such as: they were born to ride horses, or they are natural born oenologists or that they are characterized by their knowledge of loading up a wagon!

<sup>2</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 117.

<sup>3</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1993a: 121–131, 159–164, 205–216

<sup>4</sup> Csetri E.–Imreh I. 1980: 67–68, 76–81

<sup>5</sup> Vö. Paládi-Kovács A. 1993a: 207–208, 307–310; Tálasi I. 1977: 176.

At the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the training and education of herdsmen in the western regions of Hungary was organized, connected to the spread of the merino breed. Modern, up-to-date knowledge of stabling, sheep aid, wool and dairy was distributed by popular publications for example: “Juhász Káté”-s and calendars. The guilds and “pastoral schools” enhanced the consciousness and syndical togetherness.<sup>6</sup> The herdsmen stick together even in those regions where there never was any organized, guild like communities. It was recorded in many lands, that they addressed each other with cousinly expressions. If two “számadó” (*head shepherds*) met they ceremoniously used formal language. It was thought that every herdsman had cousinly relationship with each other.

The solidarity of herdsmen was intensified by their initiation customs. It was of a guild origin custom that the shepherds living far away from each other exchanged the boys who were old enough to be “juhász bojtár” (*shepherd boys*) among each other. The exchanged boys had to serve for a determinate time by a flock and then they could be shepherd boys. After this they had to guard milking flock for a few years and then they were made shepherds by consuming a toast.<sup>7</sup>

The number of herdsmen of Hungary – since there is no employment statistics – at a given time can rather be estimated than be given accurately. A valuable source is herdsmen draft of 1796, stored by the counties. The eastern Hungarian Szabolcs county registered almost 2000 herdsmen. 503 of them herded treatable animals (cowherd, herdsman of pigs, milker), and 1401 guarded semi-extensive and extensive livestock.<sup>8</sup> If only one county had about 2000 herdsmen, then the pastoral class had about 100.000 members nationwide.<sup>9</sup> Considering the wives and populous families of the herdsmen this social class had about 500.000 members. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the number of herdsmen did not change significantly. But at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a remarkable decrease, in line with the plough and stricture of meadow. Herdsmen were employed in large numbers on large estates. The manors showed a preference for employing Hungarian herdsmen on the regions inhabited by national minorities. The main part of the Hungarian inhabitants of Burgenland, Slavonia and Bánság were herdsmen at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup>

The herdsmen participated in the big domestic migrations during the Turkish Occupation and then the 18<sup>th</sup> century exceeding their ratio in the population. Actually they were the most mobile, constantly moving elements of the society. With the great migrations, herdsmen even got to the Great Plain in large numbers from every nationality. Between the Danube and the Tisza mostly Serbians, beyond the Tisza Romanian herdsmen were employed in the 16-17<sup>th</sup> century. As the preserved reports confirm, the herdsmen of the Great Plain were admittedly formed by Hungarians.<sup>11</sup> Many Hungarian herdsmen from the highlands resettled to the Great Plain. They mostly became herdsmen of villages who received payment in kind and “feles juhász” (the shepherd was a part owner of the flock – the translator).<sup>12</sup> The herdsmen migration from north to south continued in the 19-20<sup>th</sup> century, because the reduction of pastures caused the reduction flocks and herdsmen. And the Great Plain still offered more field for herding, than the areas between the narrow borders of highland

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<sup>6</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 118-119.

<sup>7</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1993B: 68.

<sup>8</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 119.

<sup>9</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1993b: 62

<sup>10</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 120-121.

<sup>11</sup> Pl. Madarassy L. 1912: 16–17. Nagy Czirok I. 1954-55.

<sup>12</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1965: 154; 1977a: 393, 409.

villages. At the turn of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Czech, Moravian, German *merino* *shepherds* appeared on the Great Plain and on the southern regions of the Highlands with the merino sheep and other western breeds.

The national consistence of Transylvania's pastoral people, greatly transformed since the end of the Middle Ages. On the Saxon Land and the cities, manors and later the village communities on the territories of the counties employed more and more Romanian herdsmen. In the 19-20<sup>th</sup> century the Hungarians living in Transylvania hired Romanian herdsmen almost everywhere, except in Székely Land. The Hungarian pastoral class could remain mostly in the Székely Land, though the Székely people gladly hired Romanian shepherds from Transylvania and Moldova.<sup>13</sup>

By the decline of the herdsmen's status, their wage and prestige the number of real herdsmen decreased in Hungary since the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Primarily the village communities, who did not want to pay much money to herdsmen, were satisfied with the unqualified shepherds.

## 2. A MAN – SHEPHERD AND SHEPHERDS

### 2.1 Hierarchy of the pastoral community and the types of the ownership

The inner structure of pastoral society was formed differently, periodically and by region, and not by only one order. One of these was the order by profession. On the Great Plain the most respected is the cattle-herder, who guards the valuable cattle and the second is the horse-herder. The shepherd is more respected than the herdsman of pigs. The herder of extensive or semi-extensive flock is also matters more than the herder of treatable flock. It was a rule on the Great Plain that a herdsman should remain in the field he learned.<sup>14</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the shepherd, who herded the Hungarian sheep and the merino shepherd, who herded the western sheep breed, especially the merino sheep were distinguished. The pastoral society did not respect very much the merino sheep and the merino shepherd.

In terms of leadership and sphere of activities some kind of *work organization* and *hierarchy* was set. A *head shepherd* was responsible for the herd of a town. The *head shepherd* was a livestock owner himself, who had a house, a farm, wife and family. He could graze a determined number of livestock of his own among the flock he was responsible for. In case of any damage he was liable to compensate the farmers from his own stock. He was not only responsible for the stocks, but also for the shepherd boys whom he hired, paid and fed. The head shepherds of the Great Plain had 2-5 or more *shepherd boys* depending on the size of their flock. The shepherd boys could have some stocks in the flock so they could compensate possible damages.<sup>15</sup>

Discipline and strict division of labour was important among herdsmen. The head shepherd had absolute control over the herdsmen, hired by him. When he was away he was substituted by the “*öregbojtár*” or “*első bojtár*” (*elder or first shepherd boy*). After him came the other shepherd boys, who were named with numbers (second, third). At the end of the line there was the “*kisbojtár*” (*small shepherd boy*), to whom everyone could give orders.<sup>16</sup>

The financial status, the inner structure can be observed through the wages of shepherds. Money appears in the wage of herdsmen hired for a whole year from the

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<sup>13</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 121.

<sup>14</sup> Tálasi I. 1936: 21; Nagy Czirok L. 1959: 42

<sup>15</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 123.

<sup>16</sup> Madarassy L. 1912: 22; Tálasi I. 1936: 16–17; Nagy Czirok L. 1959: 41

beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. For a long time clothes and food made up the most of their wage. And in addition apartment and wood for the winter.

Usually the agreement with the herdsman was made for a whole year, calculating their shepherd boys, animals and dogs also. The fixation of wage was based on the number of stocks commended to the herdsman. In some cases bacon and other contribution-in-kind remained in the wage of herdsmen in the 1960s also.<sup>17</sup> The herdsmen's wage was amended with smaller or bigger presents, at big festivals with drinks, breads. The herdsmen with the flock sleeping outside received higher wage, than those who went outside and back daily. In case of some pastoral professions there were important additional income. In the milking shepherd's wage the profit on the *milk for Sunday* was at the first place.<sup>18</sup>

Possibilities of livestock breeding showed variances. The herdsmen of the villages in the Highlands and the Great Plain were scarcely allowed to keep own animals. The personal livestock breeding of the herdsmen in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century on the Great Plain was scantily limited. The herdsmen kept the donkeys and horses to transport his dairy products. He could have 15-80 sheep. His allowance let the herdsman to graze his own livestock together with the farmer's. On the great meadows of the Great Plain some herdsmen could graze 200 sheep of his own. This explains how several head shepherd could make his fortune. Those who were spending their time from spring to autumn on the distant meadows (steppe, alps) could overreach the farmer easier and could keep more livestock. Manors also gave more opportunity to keep their own livestock, than the villages.<sup>19</sup>

Some of the herdsmen had private house and croft. They formed the upper-class of pastoral society. They strongly twitted with certain villages, where their ancestors had lived, they formed actual herdsmen dynasties. The other group of herdsmen was the houseless cottars. Their families lived in the servant-apartments of the manors or in the shepherd's house in the villages. But the shepherd's family could only live there during the validity of the contract.<sup>20</sup> After the World War II. the shepherd's houses in the village and in the manor even the poor herdsmen moved to their own house. Their moving from one village to the other ended.

The wealth of the herdsmen showed a diverse picture in every era. Even in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century there were serfs without private land, who lived on animal breeding alone, and their income reached the level of the wealthy peasants'. They were the so-called "*magatarti*" (*independent*) and *farming shepherds*, who bought meadows and houses. Between the independent and the hired shepherds were the "*részes juhász*" (*sharing or partner shepherds*). The sharing breeding spread with the merino shepherds in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was quite common in the Middle-Tisza region. The "*feles szerződés*" (*half and half contract*) was made for two years.<sup>21</sup>

In case of peasantry's sheep husbandry the sheep breeding farmers of the village gave their animals into one or more village flock. They together hired a shepherd, and it was led by the elected board of the farmers association. The grazing of the village farmers' collective sheep flock from spring to autumn was done at the borders of the village. If the meadow was close to the village, it was possible that the milking flock was driven home for the evening. The milking was done in the morning and in the

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<sup>17</sup> Private research for example. Gyöng (Tolna county), or Szokolya (Pest county), Mocsá (Komárom county).

<sup>18</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 124-125, 128.

<sup>19</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 125.

<sup>20</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1965: 161; Bodó S. 1992: 174–175

<sup>21</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 127.



evening. Cheese making was done by the families at home. From the driving out in the spring to the driving home in the autumn, the sheep flocks were mostly out on the pastures. They lived in traditional buildings and shelters. In this case the milk was processed in the shelters by the shepherd.<sup>22</sup>

Autonomous animal husbandry farmsteads of sheep breeding existed throughout the whole country. Belonging to the community was run in the family. Every farmstead was lead by a “*listás gazda*” (*head farmer*). He supervised the accounting, they hired the herdsman, trimmed the sheep, drove home the flock to the owner at his house, and sometimes he organized the feasts called “*juhtór*”.<sup>23</sup>

Hungarian sheep farmers kept up common milking-pens in Transylvania. In the Székely villages milking-pens were organized by the different parts of the village by the owners. The leader of every *eszténatársaság* (*milking-pen association*) was the “*eszténa biro*” (*milking-pen mayor*) who was elected from the members and who managed the affairs of the community and supervised the shepherd, and he was rewarded with some allowance.<sup>24</sup> The milking-pen association built up the shelter buildings. The equipments and tools were common.

Sheep farming of the manors was done within independent scope of operation. The head shepherd hired his young shepherds by himself. The sheep farming of the manors introduced the western breeds and new breeding methods. In summer and winter, animals were usually accommodated in sheep pens for the nights. On the manors a new type of sheep keeping appeared, it was called half and half system, which harnessed the free pastures. Shepherds with a flock were given an apartment and wage, meadow, fodder for the winter and stable was provided for their flock. In return all gains and profit (from the wool or milk) was common during the validity of the contract and after the expiry of the contract the whole livestock was halved.<sup>25</sup>

The individual sheep keeping spread in the eastern parts of Hungary. These enterprising sheep farmers usually came from those people who had no or a small land, who could hardly keep their families but they wanted to advance somehow. They used their income to buy lands and many of them left shepherding. A wealthy individual shepherd could have 300 own sheep. They did not have their own meadow, so they had to graze their flock stealthily, for example alongside the roads they often pretended to drive the flock to the fair, a more rightful solution was to rent a pasture with proper size for the livestock.<sup>26</sup>

However shepherds were acknowledged member of the community the social partition between the shepherds who grew rich and the farmers remained almost until today. Despite that, it was possible – and there were also examples for this – to rise to noble rank for the shepherds.<sup>27</sup> Farmers also objected to get into cousinly relation. Peasants and shepherds despised each other vice versa, and impeded even the possibility of their children getting closer. In many regions shepherds were considered to be bull-headed, itchy people, so even the poor peasants did not allow their daughters to marry a shepherd.<sup>28</sup>

Shepherding usually ran in the family. In some families all the ancestors were shepherds, as long as they could remember. The remarkable shepherd dynasties were

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<sup>22</sup> Szabadfalvi J. 2001b. 709. This topic is covered in a separate chapter.

<sup>23</sup> Ecsedi I. 1931: 254–255; Földes L. 1962; Szilágyi M. 1968.: 361–363; Paládi-Kovács A. 1993b: 304.

<sup>24</sup> Imreh I. 1973: 181–185; Kós K. 1976: 123–124; Tarisznyás M. 1982: 85–90. Földes L. 1961.

<sup>25</sup> Szabadfalvi J. 2001b. 709.

<sup>26</sup> Szabadfalvi J. 2001b. 709-710.

<sup>27</sup> Vajkai A. 1959: 47.

<sup>28</sup> Luby M. 1942: 62–63.

known in many areas. The togetherness of shepherds appeared in many fields of social life. Usually they married between each other. It was rare that a girl from another type of herd's family or peasant family married a shepherd boy. Shepherds usually had large families, with a lot of children. They were not afraid of breaking their wealth up into small pieces, because most of them had no wealth at all. Moreover boys became working member of the family at the age of 10.<sup>29</sup> The result of shepherds' endogamy was that they choose their wife from far areas. They traveled not to a village but a certain land, that they lived in, and which they knew more well because of their cousinly relations than the peasants.

Herding is typically men's job, and women rarely appeared on the far away pastures. The extensive herds of the old times in Hungary were usually single, and they spent their whole life in the shepherd's shelters far away from the settlements and villages. The meaning of the word in the Hungarian language *Rideg* is 'single, has no wife' can be found from the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and definitely it must be a takeover of a German word with similar meaning.<sup>30</sup> The love life of these Extensive herders and "*betyár*" (*outlaws*) was connected to country taverns, the prostitutes who lived on the edge of villagers' society. Judicial reports also deal with the deviant violations of social norms by herdsmen (homosexuality, sodomy).<sup>31</sup> dynasty

In shepherding it was possible that a shepherd's wife helped in during the milking and cheese making, but milking was the job of the men, so the women could do the curling, and processing the milk. On Székely Land and other Transylvanian regions herding was also a typical men profession. Women could at best make dairy products, but only at home in the village. During the grazing period they only visited to the milking-pen once or twice.<sup>32</sup>

The wives of the herdsmen formed a totally separate group on the edge of villages' women society. They made friendships and helped each other within this group. They formed a residential community, cooked in collective kitchens. The wives and daughters of the herdsmen had to sit in the rear seats, separately from the others in the church. They went to the market, fair and saint's-day together. Herdsmen and peasants had totally different customs of the rules of social decencies. Herdsmen, since they had to leave their wives for long periods, were particularly sensitive about their faithfulness. They did not tolerate, if the shepherd's wife, left alone in the village had a lover.<sup>33</sup>

Herdsmen kept the patriarchal character of familial relations: the women were not allowed to eat with her husband, on the street she had to walk behind her husband and not next to him, she did not sit next to him on the cart, etc. But the herdsmen's wives did not have to do so much hard work as the wives of poor peasants on the lands. Their job was to collect the herds' salary from the farmers, to feed the family and to look after their 6-8 children.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> For example: The *Jenei family* is one of the herder-dynasties of Kunmadaras. One of their ancestors is mentioned by the records as a local flock shepherd in 1781. A still living herder-dynasty in Kunmadaras is the *Eszenyi family*. In 1795 three men represented them. Fazekas M. 1979: 30–31. Summary: Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 129-130.

<sup>30</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 130.

<sup>31</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 130.

<sup>32</sup> Szebeni G. 1962: 62.

<sup>33</sup> Luby M. 1942: 76–77; Gunda B. 1974: 238. Summary: Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 130-133.

<sup>34</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 133.

### 3. PATORAL LIFE

#### 3.1 Annual life cycle

Working with the sheep flock kept the traditional methods. In the spring animals were driven out to the meadow at 8 in the morning and was driven back home at 7 in the evening. Because of the dew in the early summer period, animals were driven to graze later, lest they heave by the wet grass. But in high summer they started at dawn and grazed the animals till 11 a.m. The shepherds drove the herds to the cool pens for the warmest hours. The milking of the flock took one and a half or two hours.<sup>35</sup>

The most important and traditional pastures of sheep flocks is the original grass. The shepherds of the highlands and even more of the hill-country usually stayed here from the spring to the drive home in the autumn. But the meadows of the plane regions and even more of the steppes usually ran dry by the end of the summer. So on these areas complementary grazing possibilities were necessary. On the big grass-meadows of the Great Plain the meadows of the sheep flocks were accurately marked out. Within its borders the shepherd divided the field into *districts*; and the grazing was done on one after the other, so the grass could regenerate on the used areas.<sup>36</sup>

Because the grasslands run dry on the Great Plain, if it was possible sheep flocks were driven to the stubble meadow, after the harvest. Here they could graze the shed spikes and seeds, and also the weeds, like *spike-grass*. The stubble meadows were willingly gave up by their owners, because the shepherds manured the field in return for the grazing opportunity.<sup>37</sup> In the autumn sheep were grazed also on the harvested fields of other cultivated plants, the most significant were the cabbage-stubble and the harvested but not cut cornfields. The watering of the sheep on the pastures was dictated by the available possibilities. On the pastures of the highlands and hill-countries, which had natural waters, wells and ponds, daily grazing was organized so they reached these natural watering places at the necessary time. Shepherds drank from the wells with their richly decorated “*csanak*” (*drinking cup*), which was usually crafted by themselves. Salt grew the hunger of sheep, so they gained in weight faster. At the shepherd’s shelter, animals were given salt by putting ungrounded salt pieces on flat boards, low branches or *salting mengers*.<sup>38</sup>

The shepherd without permanent shelter was called the “*gúnyáspásztor*”. He brought all his important equipment – called *gúnya* – on his shoulder with a crook or by a donkey. The *gúnya* contained a “*szolgafa*” (*staff*), a *stew-pot*, a *leather sac* – which contained his food – his “*szűr*” (*long embroidered felt cloak of Hungarian shepherd*) and a *fur coat*.<sup>39</sup>

Shepherds who had permanent shelter also kept donkeys. The shepherd put his equipment on the “*tergenye*” (*donkey saddle*), which looked like a saw-horse. Behind his fur coat covered equipments the shepherd could hit the back of the donkey. Before dairy sheep farming became widespread a shepherd could have 3-5 sumpter-donkeys. Keeping donkeys lasted longest among the shepherds with rambling lifestyle.<sup>40</sup> Donkeys became so important because the councils of the counties and towns prohibited the shepherds of the Great Plain from keeping horses. But shepherds could not live without saddle- and packing-animals, especially the shepherds who herded barren flocks and spent the whole year on the fields, and had no permanent shelter. A “*juhtömlő*” (*sheepskin sac*) was hung on each side of the packing saddles. The bigger

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<sup>35</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2010. 99-100.

<sup>36</sup> Balogh I. 1958.

<sup>37</sup> Varga Gy. 1956; Szabadfalvi J. 1970.

<sup>38</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1910. 109.; Béres A. 1965.

<sup>39</sup> Ecsedi I. 1914.

<sup>40</sup> Béres A. 1962; Nagy Czirok L. 1959; Madarassy L. 1912. Kemecsi 1999.

one on the left contained the bread, the smaller on the right contained a canvas bag of paste and a bag of bacon. The sacs were covered with leather and with canvas and they were tied down. So rain and sunshine could do no harm to the food of the shepherd. A water container called “*csobán*”, an iron stew-pot and its accessories (wooden stick, pan) were tied on the top of the canvas.<sup>41</sup> The other sumpter-donkey carried the “*gúnya*”, which contained the big and long fur coat made of Hungarian sheep (racka), the “*szűr*” (*long embroidered felt cloak of Hungarian shepherd*), the wide white linen trousers and shirts, and also an axe, a sheep bell and other equipments of a shepherd.<sup>42</sup> Occasionally shepherds also used a barrow with two wheels, which was pulled by a donkey.

On the pastures, sheep needed to be driven and herded. Two methods emerged for this: driving and shepherding. It is a natural attribute of sheep that they always follow those who are going before them, they recognize the sound of their sheepbell, bleating and smell. That is why the breeding and using of the so-called *vezériürü* (*head-wether*). The big-bodied, barren rams, or wethers were habituated to the shepherd from the day they were castrated, and he trained them to follow him on call. Every wether had a sheepbell tied to his neck. There could be 4-6 head-wether in every flock. The head-wether usually got a name as well: *Szácsa, Rigó, Pillangó*.<sup>43</sup>

On the pasture, besides of the sheep we can always find a shepherd's dog. They guarded the flock day and night, and in case of danger they warned the shepherds with their barking. From the Conquest of Hungary to the 18<sup>th</sup> century big-bodied shepherd's dog were preferred, like komondor and kuvasz. Their task was not to shepherd the flock, but to guard it. On the big pastures – often divided by water-courses, where wolves lived, and the public safety was also not so good – especially under the Ottoman occupation.

The most famous herding dogs – the *puli, pumi* and *mudi* – were domesticated from the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The *merino shepherds* brought with them these types – and also the German Shepherd Dog – from their homeland. The small-bodied dogs, which were mainly trained for shepherding, appeared to be great at guiding the sheep. Shepherds always kept three or four pulis and there was always one young which was still learning, or one who was pregnant or breeding puppies. They shepherded the grazing sheep particularly with their barking. The sheep flock which was relatively easy to lead could be shepherded into one group fast, by running around or they could easily move the flock by barking and running at one side of the flock. The shepherd gave his orders to the dog by words or by gestures and waving. The dog looks back several times to his baas during his task seeking for new commands, or approval.<sup>44</sup>

Shepherd's staff was also used for shepherding. Its length was set to the height of the shepherd, but its thickness was optional. It must have been made of hardwood, and was long toughened. A known type of shepherd's staff is the *shepherd's crook*, which had a natural an applied iron crook on its thick end. This tool was also a symbol of shepherds. They did not only use it for work, but also carried it on festive occasions. It was used for shepherding, but its most important function was to take out the sheep from the flock by clamping the crook onto its back leg.<sup>45</sup> The shepherd's crook came into Hungary in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century with the merino sheep. The racka shepherds did not know this hook, so they grabbed the sheep by its long hair. Their

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<sup>41</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2001. 898-899.

<sup>42</sup> Ecsedi I. 1914: 105–106.

<sup>43</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1965: 98.

<sup>44</sup> Szabadfalvi J. 2001a. 800-810., Bereczki I. 2011. 20-21.

<sup>45</sup> Béres A. 1962; Bodgál F. 1957.

shepherding tools were the *staff* and the *bullwhip*. They bought the crooks along with bells, sheep-bells on the fairs.

Axe was also an important utensil of woodland shepherds, who used a long shafted axe. In summer foliage, in winter mistletoe was cut down with it. The shaft of the axe was usually decorated with carvings. The name of copper small axe on long halve – called *fokos* – also referred to the shepherds – in most regions it was called “*juhászfokos*” (*shepherd’s small axe*). They did not use it for work, but it was essential part of their festive wear on fairs and parties.<sup>46</sup>

The head wether or those animals which were liable to prowl received some small sheep bells or bells. The sound of these gave information about the location and movement of the sheep.<sup>47</sup>

### 3.2. Daily life cycle

The end the economic year, the driving home of the flocks from the pastures was connected with the statements and the hiring of herdsmen. Traditionally the herdsmen were hired from Demeter to Demeter (26th of October) for a whole year. The cult of Demeter, supported by the church spread all along Hungary with the eastern Christianity in the Middle Ages. The day of hiring a herdsman was split between many illustrious days, depending on the region. In many regions the end of the contract was *Mihály* day (29th of September). The early driving home was reasoned by the spread of merino sheep keeping and stabling.<sup>48</sup> The *dömötörözés* (the end of the old contract and making a new) of the shepherds of the Great Plain was a big event. A few days earlier the flocks were driven near to the villages and they started the preparations. There were sheep- and shepherd-markets, which was followed by pledge, feast and shepherd’s ball. The catholic shepherds gifted the church with sheep, and listened to a mass in honor of Dömötör, the patron saint of shepherds. By means of the Catholic Church the cult of western animal-patrons, and shepherds’ patron saints spread. This is how the cult of *Lénárd* spread in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century on the western parts of Transdanubia and the cult of Saint *Vendel* in the 18<sup>th</sup> century through the whole county.<sup>49</sup>

A know custom was the *shepherd’s baptism*, in the Middle Tisza region. The authorities, to avoid disorderliness forbid the “*shepherd’s baptism*” and the requisite “*carnivals*” in 1827. But the shepherds’ appetite from baptism could not be rolled back by caning. This custom was kept even in the beginning of the 1900s, and sometimes it was held together with the shepherd’s wedding. The young shepherd chose a “godfather”, usually a appreciable shepherd, who was more than 60 years old, and to whom the shepherd could go for help and support. The one who was baptized gained a name, but could buy off himself by bringing 5 or 10 liter of wine or a barrel of beer, so he could keep his old name.<sup>50</sup>

The shepherd’s wedding was an illustrious merriment. The groomsman was the farmer, head shepherd; the best man was the shepherd boy. Not only shepherds were invited to the wedding, but also cowherds and wranglers. In the 1870s the newlyweds went to wedding at the church by a donkey team. After them the donkeys came in pairs with the shepherds on them. In the front a *sheep-leather flag* was brought, which was tied or nailed to a pole.<sup>51</sup> The flag the badge of guild shepherds. On processions

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<sup>46</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2010. 106-107.

<sup>47</sup> Szabó K. 1942.

<sup>48</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 133.

<sup>49</sup> Szabadfalvi J. 1964: 19–64; Paládi-Kovács A. 1993A: 216; 318.

<sup>50</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1993a: 310. Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 134-135.

<sup>51</sup> Fazekas M. 1979: 215.

and the funeral of their deceased fellows they marched corporately under their flags. Other festivals were the account in the autumn, and the hiring of shepherds on the day of shepherds' patron saint. On the eastern Transdanubia, shepherds celebrated the saint's-day of shepherds on the day of Mihály (29<sup>th</sup> of September) in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century. They brought their wives and daughters with them so besides the jolly these gatherings had a significant role in endowing the daughters.<sup>52</sup>

Herdsmen played an important role on other festivals as well.<sup>53</sup> On Christmas they went to the church and sang. They marched all along the village together and chanted gracious songs at the house of the farmers and wished them a rich sheep breeding. They received wine, pálinka (schnaps) and scone from the rich. This custom was called *kántálás* (*chanting*), *koledálás* (*Christmas carol*), and sometimes *suprikálás* (*whipping*) (mostly where they brought birch and willow branches, and the people hit the back of the shepherds with these, while they were jumping to support the health of their animals with this magical act). On the day New Year, Easter, Pentecost and driving out it was a custom to give gifts to the shepherds. Their whip-clapping on the illustrious days, their blasting on the weekdays, their skirl, flute, zither service on wedding were all part of traditional local social life.<sup>54</sup>

As a part of traditional wear, they wore long hair in 3-4 plaits. In winter they wore lambskin cap, in summer they wore a picture hat. They wore loose linen shirt and trousers. The leather trousers, which they wore above their boots were also popular. The poor herd boy wore sandals or moccasins, but the wealthier had boots with a pointed end. The fur lined short overcoat, called *bekecs* was a winter cloth, they sewed it themselves and it was made of lambskin. The shepherd coat, which was richly embroidered and was made of Hungarian long-fur sheep, was a status symbol. Among the poor shepherds the long embroidered felt cloak was the most popular. The shepherds could easily carry their small equipments in its sewed-in sleeves. Shepherds left their traditional wear by the middle of the 1900s. From this era their staff and their bag remained their characteristic sign. Shepherds usually used leather sac, which was often sewed by them from bootleg and they embossed it with yellow brass clasp. Another characteristic of shepherds was their long stalk pipe, and the tobacco was kept in tobacco-pouch made of the scrotum of a ram.<sup>55</sup>

On the Great Plain most herdsmen had a nickname in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century. Shepherds were in the first place in having these adjectives. It was not only because of their great number, but also because of their behavior. These to-names referred to their nationality, place of origin, but mostly to their personal attributes and the waggishness of their fellows; for example: Bujdosó János alias *Toppants Juhász* (Stamp Shepherd), Vargha András alias *Tarhós* (*a kind of dairy product from sheep milk similar to yoghurt – the translator*), Nagyorrú Matyi (Big Nose Matyi), *Pörkölt* (Stew) Horváth Ferencz, *Pinczékentekergő* (Wimpling In The Cellars) Istók.<sup>56</sup>

Shepherds were competent in veterinary by necessity and they also proved to be good surgeons. They more likely used rational cure based on experience than magic. The most known sheep disease, the staggers was cured by operation.

In the head of sheep, which was infected by the worm of dogs, a blister develops. The skull becomes thinner above this blister. On this softened area the healer shepherds cut the skin and the skull in a semicircle shape, and using a wooden stick with flat end

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<sup>52</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1993b: 67–68.

<sup>53</sup> The folklore of shepherds is covered in a separate chapter. Here we only had a chance for a short introduction.

<sup>54</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2000. 136.

<sup>55</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2010. 177-181.

<sup>56</sup> Tálasi I. 1936: 21; Nagy Czirok L. 1959: 44

they removed the blister, which could cause stagger. Then they restored the bone and with a few stitches they sewed the skin.<sup>57</sup>

If it was necessary shepherds intervened at the lambing – they could cut the belly of the dam to take out the lamb.<sup>58</sup> The *rot in the sheep* was also a dangerous disease. Sheep could catch it on the wet, marshy pastures. After they become sick they are lack of appetite, become underweight. This disease could not be cured, so they avoided the wet pastures; the sick sheep was removed from the flock. Another ruinous disease was the *lameness*. In summer the nail of the sick sheep could inflame and their nails could fall off. The shepherds took out the lame from the flock with the crook; they cut the inflamed part out and treated with *blue vitriol*, or lately with formalin.<sup>59</sup>

The manginess of sheep was a dangerous cutaneous disease. The animals are scratching themselves, their hair is falling out; later they become underweight and die. Sheep with manginess are immediately sheared and after the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they are cured by bath with *kreolin* and oiled several times. Traditionally they were bathed in a barrel or a tub, the bath contained herbs, and then they were smeared with *mange grease*. This grease was stored in box made of cattle's horn, which was often decorated.<sup>60</sup> *Tapeworm* was the disease of the young suckling lambs. The shepherds tried to cure it with copper powder, the dried and grounded leaves of herbs like bittersweet (*Solanum Dulcamara*), or fern-root extract. The maggots under the skin were purged with a "*nyűvező fa*" (*small wooden tool*). *Small-pox* which was one of the most dangerous sicknesses was tried to be cured by only healers with special knowledge.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Vajkai A. 1943.

<sup>58</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 2010. 112.

<sup>59</sup> Szabadfalvi J. 2001b. 731.

<sup>60</sup> Szabadfalvi J. 2001b. 730.

<sup>61</sup> Paládi-Kovács A. 1965.

#### 4. PASTORAL LIFE TODAY

In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the transformation of the Hungarian socialist village, the change of production line, the private farming ceased to be as a primary activity. The peasantry farms disappeared and the conditions of traditional herding were eliminated. Technically the large scale work organization made the agricultural work similar to the industrial work. Breed changes passed off in sheep breeding, the technology changed; stables, lambing- and isolating places were built and set up. The radical change of production's technique and the large scale division of labor depreciated that traditional knowledge, which was preserved for generations among the herdsman. These traditional methods could be used in the household farming and other small farms, partially sustaining the traditional herdsman's culture and work ethics. The events of local communities partly discontinued and changed. The traditional shepherd gatherings got to the range of the governed organizations. Studying the change of consuming customs we have to mention the spread of modern consuming patterns as well. Those communities which insisted on the traditions, "shepherdized", reshaped the new customs to their own standards, which were taken from "outside". At the same time the raise of living standards, the new job possibilities in the villages and because of this the mobility and the income from various different sources decreased the significance of shepherds. It was a problem for the shepherds to meet their roles in this changed society, where it was the responsibility of the family's head to keep and support the family, which also meant the basis of power. For this reason many shepherds welcomed the employment of their wives with great resistance. The importance of privacy grew against the community. This tendency can be observed through the functional transformation of herdsman's festivals: those "middle" types of festivals lagged which earlier were between the heartfelt family and big representative festive events. The first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century was the time of partial fulfillment of private organizations which aimed to preserve the traditions of shepherding.

The yearly "*Juhász találkozók*" (*Shepherd's meetings*) were perfect opportunities to preserve some parts of herding lifestyle, but mainly as a touristic attraction, which were considered to be a value of traditional culture against the challenges of the modern era. Researching the Hungarian villages and herdsman's communities of the socialist era and the last two decades, we can see the general fall back of moral aspects. It is an important change that while moral elements had a significant role in the order of traditional statuses and social ranks, in the last decades we can observe grew of the importance of material successfulness. We can say that the values of the villages and former shepherds are not uniform. The traditional rank scale assumed great personal fame, which ceased in the last decades; the rural communities lost their earlier unity. This process can be arranged with the weakening social control. In the last decades in the Hungarian village the transformations changed the traditional values, and as an effect started the nationwide change of behavioral principles. But these changes did not end up in a unified system of values, which could be connected to the finished, fixed hierarchy of achievable statuses. And because of this the former differences of statuses were not erased even from the shepherds' descendants.



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