



Theme 4: Routes of transhumance

Report of France

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Routes of transhumance

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Routes of transhumance

1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The history of pastoralism in France is very ancient and goes back to the neolithic period. Gaining knowledge about it comes up against an important obstacle, the absence of sources, even if much archeological research is still being carried out. Faced with the relative scarcity of data, it is necessary to make use of other sources of knowledge coming from other disciplines, paleo-environmental studies in particular. Thus, these approaches enable us to understand the processes of human impact on species affected by pastoral activity, and which have been made through a symbiosis between man, animals, vegetation and the cycle of the seasons.

It is estimated that the breeding and pastoral economy affected France from the VIth or Vth millennium BC. This evolution began in the South of France before spreading to other regions further west and north. Slowly shepherds transformed the natural environment and mountains to meet their specific needs for passages. They burnt forests of low and intermediate altitude to develop agro-pastoralism, which then extended to natural summer pastures beyond wooded areas. In 2500-3000 BC, animal farming and agriculture affected all of the Pyrenean chain and the Alps. This activity was developing rapidly and favoured peasant communities to become sedentary from 150 BC., land became scarce, deforestation increased, high altitude pastures were more and more in use. At the same time, cattle farming increased.

In Ancient times, and in particular during the Roman period, a more sophisticated system of pastoralism was set up. The discovery in the Crau plain (south east France) of large Roman sheep farms dating from the 1st century BC to the Vth century AD, all similar and 45m to 50m long, demonstrate a specialization of the economy based upon large scale pendulum movements between high, medium and low altitudes and not only upon permanent establishments with movements limited in space. More than 150 of these farms have been recorded with a total headcount of 100 000 sheep. According to the written sources, we know that great landowners employed a *magister pastorum*, to take care of the flock, probably the forerunner of the shepherd. These recent data corroborate Pliny the Elder who stated in his *Natural History*, in the 1st century AD that "in the *Plaines-de-Pierre* of the *Narbonne* province, thousands of sheep converged from far regions to graze."⁽¹⁾ Before these archeological discoveries, according to many historians, true transhumance only began in the Middle Ages, in the XIIth century in particular, since we have more written sources on this subject and it can be seen in iconography (cf. illustration 1) from this period. It is uncontested during this period. The long marches of flocks accompanied by itinerant shepherds deeply marked economic life and all of the social organization of the regions which were thus able to come into contact. It is no longer a "wiser form of nomadism" according to Fernand Braudel but becomes an ethnological and sociological reality which is more observable, this "admirable human construction" according to the expression of Georges Duby.



2. INTRODUCTION to the theme

During the Middle Ages, great journeys of flocks from the plains to the mountains had probably disappeared, through lack of favorable political conditions (territorial organisation and safety of the paths) and economic (markets to sell the products of the flocks).

Transhumance began again towards the XIIth century through the initiative of mountain communities, who were not able to feed large flocks in folds during long winters and had to look for grass in the plains. The great monasteries (Abbaye Saint-Victor de Marseille, Boscodon...), copy them from the XIIIth century by developing their properties in the High and Low countries. From the XIVth century onwards, great noble families do the same thing. It was at that time – and it is important to emphasize this – a transhumance from the plain to the mountain, with flocks of a thousand or more heads. Numerous notarized deeds appearing after 1380 bear witness to this mode of transhumance. In the XVth century, the great transhumance increased in number. Summer pastures of sheep became massive. Henceforth, great transhumance spread increasingly towards the north to encompass spaces and flocks which were further and further from mountain areas.

The great transhumance could no longer be equated merely to an act of movement, it became a true commercial circuit with a type of « commercialisation » of summer pastures. And far from being confined to the mountains “transhumance is as much the business of notaries and traders as of shepherds, it touches towns and villages. Transhumance is commerce. Moreover, it is the key to a whole system of business and social relations spread over and providing structure to a vast space”.(2)

The need to take account of other human activities, not to ruin agricultural production, nor to overload communication routes, increased the pressure on land and led once more to a decline in forests and even to complete deforestation in some sectors. Numerous conflicts also took place between shepherds and breeders, and communities and landowners who increased the number of taxes « droit de pulvérisage » for the dust raised, « droit d'abreuvement » for watering the animals; « droit d'average » for letting them graze. More often than not, breeders dealt with traders who played a very important part in the “summer pasture market” the shepherds whose knowhow could be well used sometimes in regions situated far from their birthplaces. They were the ones who followed flocks to the alpine pastures and ensured orderly transhumances. We see the emergence of professionals of the transhumance who during certain periods had a virtual monopoly of the activity.

In the XIXth century pastoralism and the great transhumance were very important. Low profitability was counterbalanced by large headcounts of flocks. For example, 400 000 sheep migrate from Basse Provence to the high valleys of the Southern Alps. The Crau and the Camargue, which have poor soil, afforded numerous passages rented for a low cost. In the garrigues of Montpellier, cereal agriculture and extensive farming of sheep are connected. Great migrations went through phases of rise and decline, linked until the XIXth century to demand for wool. In the Gironde, the arrival of flocks from the Pyrenees enabled the vines to be fertilized.



In the time between the XIXth and XXth centuries, in France, three main periods can be distinguished. Around 1850, France attained a demographic peak and sheep farming was at its zenith. After 1860, whereas wool was the main product of sheep farming, the suppression of customs duties led to a drop in wool prices. Simultaneously, increasing urbanization induced stronger demand for meat products. These two phenomena led to the conversion of wool production to that of meat and a steep global decline in sheep production. Large landowners reduced headcount and turned to other types of farming (particularly wine making). From 1852 to 1955, the number of mother ewes went from more than 33 million to only 8 million. Everywhere arid plains were improved through drainage, filling holes and irrigation made possible by hydraulic works, thus profoundly transforming areas which were previously given over to flocks. Even though transport in cattle wagons spread, between 1870 and 1930, despite increasing consumption of meat, the French flock decreased by half. Its lowest level was reached in 1950, since rural exodus, profound changes in farming and the competition for land increased, and led to a decline in pastoral activity. In some valleys forests began to develop once more.

In the 1960s and 1970s a production based policy developed. Between 1955 and 1980, the number of mother ewes grew from 6 million to 8 million and lamb meat production increased by 60%. 80% of meat consumption was satisfied by French production and to satisfy demand, a great specialization of areas took place within the framework of the creation of vast production basins. This rendered regions dependent upon agro-food businesses which controlled production. They imposed economic rationalization based upon strict control of practices and reduction of production costs, in order to optimize farming and maximize profits.

These evolutions had an impact on the great transhumance. This was maintained in the Alps but considerably declined in the Massif Central and the Pyrenees and everywhere else. Everywhere, the length of migrations diminished and farming tended towards sedentary practice encouraged by the authorities. Downward winter migration declined the fastest. Shepherds abandoned distant journeys to the plains which became occupied by other types of farming and they sought to increase grazing in alpine and pre-alpine regions.

In the 1980s, the French meat market opened further, in particular through improvements in refrigerated transport. From 1982, sheep rearing began to decline once more. Low cost imports had a strong impact on French farming. Whereas meat consumption continued to increase, headcount declined by more than one million in ten years and meat production regularly decreased. Consumption was satisfied by massive recourse to imports mainly from the United Kingdom, Ireland, New Zealand and Australia. From 1985, whereas the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) encouraged reduction in structural costs, the relative decline in intensive systems of sheep farming led to a return of the highly specialized extensive model. When farms diversified, it was almost exclusively to add to breeding complementary hay making. In numerous cases, hay making took over from sheep production in terms of farm income.

Nowadays, pastoral activity is attempting to redefine its place in an agricultural economy in a state of upheaval. It is also necessary to overcome an old-fashioned folklore image to affirm its field of expertise and to preserve the originality of its

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practices on the cultural level. Furthermore, today's migrating sheep farmers have begun to take advantage, in the framework of various subsidies, and amongst the forerunners in the agricultural world, of the environmental function of their activity (cf. illustration 2). To this function, which needs to be fully recognized and developed, must be added another one, that of heritage and society particularly revealed by the success of transhumance festivals which are opening almost everywhere.

3. METHODOLOGY all partners edited by coordinator:

A. Compilation of inventory of objects

- **General overview of objects and architecture related to transhumance.**

See illustrations 3 to 11

C. Literature review, archives research, fieldwork as necessary

- **Pictures (historic and recent)**

See illustrations 12 to 15

- **Maps (end of XIXth/ nowadays)**

See illustrations 16 to 19.

4. DESCRIPTION all partners edited by coordinator:

4.1. Constituent parts (how is the theme testified – material and immaterial heritage)

4.1.1. General aspects :

Definition of the term “transhumance”/nomadism: what kind of transhumance :

The term “transhumance” was only introduced at the end of the XVIIIth century into the French language. It is derived from the Spanish *transhumar*, made by the latin *trans* (on the other side) and *humus* (earth, the country). Transhumance is the periodic migration of some cattle (cattle, deer, horses and sheep) from the plains to the mountains or from the mountains to the plains. The meaning can be extended to bees which migrate from one flower region to another depending on the season, to find the means of subsistence.

The “great transhumance” joins over a long distance the low plains to the “lawns” of the mountains. The so-called “local” transhumance designates the climbing up to summer pastures on local alpine grazing, by the flocks from mountain villages or from the piedmont zones. Two types of transhumance can be distinguished: summer transhumance (or normal transhumance) which is the climbing to high altitude pastures such as alpine pastures, the montagnes (in the Massif central) of flocks originating from low plains. Winter transhumance (or inverse transhumance) which is made by



mountain flocks, which in winter, escape the rigours of the mountain climate by going down to temperate plains.

Transhumance is different from nomadism in that the former term only designates a seasonal agricultural practice existing within a more vast and complex society and of which it is only one of many components, whereas nomadism refers to a type of society in its own right, which moves – women and children included – with the flocks, therefore profoundly, if not fundamentally, determined by mobility.

Plain to plain ? Plain to mountain ? What altitude/height ?

See illustration 20

seasonal period (winter/summer) or other period ?

In all regions where transhumance is carried out, it is necessary to move flocks and this is generally strictly organized. Traditionally, the dates were decided by town councils of the places involved to avoid ascending too early which would have harmed the altitude prairies before grasslands had time to grow. In general, it was during the month of June that the ascent to the mid- and high-altitude mountains of the flock took place. As for the descent, it took place in September, or even in October when weather conditions in the mountain no longer allowed the flocks to remain.

At All Saints' Day, flocks were lead onto pastures in the plains to spend winter, this was inverse transhumance.

In the South West, whilst the majority of flocks stopped north of Pau, on the Pont-Long plain belonging to the town, some continued as far as the Gironde, to clean and fertilise the Bordeaux vineyards after grape harvesting. That represented one week of walking. In the following June, the flocks went back up towards the mountains for a new transhumance.

Duration and kilometers covered ?

Depending upon the type of transhumance and the wintering regions involved, the routes, distances and length are very varied from one shepherd to another. Over a long amplitude, the transhumance can stretch over several departments and lead the shepherd and his flock to cover several hundred kilometers. The type of journey also influences the duration and route according to whether it is made on foot or by truck. By truck, one day generally suffices, on foot it is another story.

Foot transhumances are rare nowadays. When they still exist or have been reintroduced they are deliberately integrated into an action for identity and tourism connected with a festival. Stages and periods of transhumances also become supports for cultural activities, music festivals, storytelling events, or street theatres for example (cf. illustration 21). In many remote regions, sheep farming and transhumance thus become powerful elements of local identity and festivals associated with them are devoted to the promotion of the region and tourist development of the territory.

In South west France only one foot transhumance is realized over a route of more than 190kms departing from the Hautes-Pyrénées and reaching the Gironde. More precisely, the journey starts in the heights of the Estaing lake in the val d'Azun, above Lourdes as far as Aillas (33) near Langon/Bazas. This transhumance corresponds to 16 days of walking at a speed of nearly 16.4 kms per day (cf. illustration 22).



Types of routes ? Fixed or temporary routes ?

Transhumance routes are often designated by words from the occitan language such as "draille" or "carreire". The "draille" is generally marked by stone walls (cf. illustration 23) which sometimes broaden to leave wider spaces enabling the flock to be grouped together. Some of them have been reused as rambling paths such as the GR 60 which passes over the Aubrac plateau (Massif Central) and uses the route of the *Grande Draille du Languedoc*, or the GR 700 also called the *Chemin de Régordane in the Cévennes*. The paths have long remained the same and have had work done on them in some cases to facilitate movement as with the *montjoies* to direct the journey (cf. illustration 11) or the *calades* (stone pavement allowing a better stability of the land). However, it should not be forgotten that many variations have existed throughout time, connected with the desires of communities or landowners, the variations in the amounts of duties, the knowledge of shepherds themselves such that it is very difficult today to find the exact route of a draille.

The routes came from the need to take account of other activities, either agricultural with the respect of harvests and meadows, or commercial with the need not to disturb the movements of men and products. Unfortunately, when space is full, the possibilities of passage are few, and as long as transhumance is carried out on foot, numerous conflicts have opposed shepherds and breeders with communities and adjacent landowners. As is confirmed by many documents, the existence of drailles has always been contested and particularly since the Revolution. When adjacent landowners cultivate them or fence them off, shepherds have no other solution than to use roads. This became more and more frequent towards the end of the XIXth century. Thus, public authorities who could not recreate the drailles, encouraged shepherds to use the railways and finally, trucks. Since the end of the 1950s, this has become the main mode of transport of migrating flocks in the Alps. Donkeys have specially adapted boxes, dogs are locked in cages built in the sides and three or four hundred sheep are loaded. The journey starts at dawn, and the animals arrive in the mountain six or eight hours later. Furthermore, the new users of the drailles (summer tourists, new owners) are not aware the rights, customs and necessities connected with flock movements. Some people who live beside these paths, or these routes, as new owners of unused pastures, do not willingly (or in consideration of disproportionate amount of money) allow the animals to spend time in the meadows.

4.1.2. What kind of material and immaterial heritage : architecture ? objects ? rules (what kind of rules - oral and written) ? Music ? Legends ?

Transhumance obeyed strict rules throughout the country, such as the many customs duties to which the breeders had to bow. (4). In the South West, there were "bedalers" which had to climb up to the summer pastures to note whether the grass was long enough to graze the flocks. They were able to establish the "devête", the date of opening and ascension to the summer pastures and the "bérat" date of closing and descent of the flocks. The bedalers also checked whether any flock had ascended without permission. Other rules existed such as the prohibition of cows and sheep grazing together. One traditional rule which is still complied with today, relates to the



use of summer pastures during the summer by the shepherd and his flock. Where the shepherd is not the owner of the land he uses, he is obliged to pay to the village authority (which is generally the owner) a sum of money called "bacade" which corresponds to rent. If the shepherd does not come from the village, in this case the amount of the bacade is higher.

4.2. Where in the country – regional component

4.2.1. *Main transhumance regions in the country, short justification.*

There are three great regions connected with transhumance in France, the Alps, the Pyrenees and the Massif Central. Other regions still experience this phenomenon, but to a lesser degree. We will speak respectively of "alpages" for the Alps, "estives" for the Pyrenees and "montagnes" for the Massif Central. People are generally more interested in the first two regions. The pastoral domain which concerns transhumance covers an area of 3 to 4 million hectares of which 1.5 million are alpages or estives.

In the South East of France and in the **Alps**, the "great summer transhumance" joins the low Provence plains and the Mediterranean coast with the alpine grasses. The flocks are made up of breeds called "rustic": merino from Arles, préalpes du sud, mourérous, from long and careful selection adapted to long journeys and to difficult weather and feeding conditions.

Meat coming from migrating sheep has a very good texture. To meet consumers' increasing demand for food safety, for traceability, for guarantee of origin and farming method, breeders have chosen production under the official marks of quality: Product Conformity Certification (" Agneau de Manon "), Label Rouge César, Indication Géographique Protégée - Protected Geographical Indication - (" Agneau de Sisteron "). Other local initiatives specific to migrating or mountain farming also exist: Agneau des Estives (Alpes-Maritimes).

The traditional land of summer grazing is represented by the Alpes de Provence and the southern mountains of the Dauphiné (Vercors, Briançonnais). Only certain flocks, representing approximately 75 000 heads which spend winter in the Var, les Alpes-Maritimes or the Alpes-de-Haute-Provence, continue to go on foot to the closest alpine pastures.

Careful to preserve the pastoral potential of the space they use, breeders and shepherds who migrate put into place extensive grazing practices which are all the more respectful of the environment which they have largely contributed to create. No other practice is likely to maintain for so little cost, such a large area and to ensure the upkeep of such a rich biodiversity. Properly leading the flock contributes to the enrichment of biological diversity and to the prevention of erosion, avalanches and returning to scrubland. Natural spaces devoted to pastoralism fashioned by grazing flocks occupy enormous areas in the Southern Alps and the Provence: approximately 800 000 hectares from the forests or the steppes of Crau of the coastal zone, as far as the alpine pastures of the high altitude valleys (400 000 hectares of high altitude grassland) passing through the scrublands and garrigues of the mid-country.



A future under threat? A fundamental element of the system of migrating flocks, alpine pastures are subject to many claims: ramblers, horse riders, cyclists, hunters, nature protectors.... In the alpine pasture, a peaceful space for shepherds and their flocks, anxieties and distress have also erupted with the introduction of large predators (wolves, lynxes). Everyone wants to use the alpine pastures according to their needs, without understanding that the future of a varied range of landscapes is attained by the upkeep and redevelopment of sheep transhumance.

The Pyrenees represent 10% of French pastoralism, i.e. 6 000 pastoral farms recorded in the country. In the year 2000, the Pyrenean headcount was 676 000 cattle and sheep. 45% of pastoral farms were in the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, i.e. 2 700 breeders, 300 000 ewes, 40 000 cows. The Ariège with about 50 summer pastures has the largest number of pastoral groups (80). The departments of the Haute-Garonne and the Aude only have 9 summer pastures. The upper Pyrenean pastoral land represents 123 000 hectares, i.e. ¼ of the total area of the department. Each year, 2 400 breeders migrate over this space which represents 35 000 cattle, 120 000 sheep, 210 goats and 2 300 horses. They mainly come from the Hautes-Pyrénées department but also from other departments (some of which are relatively far away such as the Aveyron) or from Spain. Traditionally, the Hautes-Pyrénées summer pastures received flocks from all over the south west of France. Over the last fifty years, this great transhumance has almost disappeared and the headcount of flocks in the mountains has diminished, which poses many problems for the upkeep of the area.

Furthermore, many summer pasture managers refused to allow their land to be grazed by external flocks. After having convinced these managers of the importance of maintaining a high load rate, a "summer pasture market" has been organized to allow networking between breeders who want their flocks to migrate and managers who are ready to accept them. Formerly very present in summer pastures, shepherds and cowherds had all but disappeared by the end of the 1980s. Once more considered as one of the pillars of modern pastoralism (reduction in labour on farms, better management of the hay potential, better health care of the flock, return of bears...), watching over flocks is now the object of a certain number of helpful measures. Moreover, pastoral surfaces are more and more touched by other interests: tourists, (ski resorts, high number of visits in the summer period), environmental (reintroduction of brown bears, Natura 2000 habitats Directive, nature reserves, central area of the National Pyrenees Park...) or cultural (site classified as a heritage site by Unesco: Gavarnie – Monte Perdido).

Transhumance in the **Massif Central** and the **Languedoc-Roussillon** is an activity which is intrinsically linked to the Mediterranean geography and climate. It is reinforced by the presence of pastoral resources which are sufficiently close between the low areas and the mountains and constitutes an adaptation of leading the flock. This activity has survived despite the revolution in hay production and an "old-fashioned" image: a large number of breeders of sheep and cattle in the coastal departments of the Languedoc-Roussillon still carry out transhumance, whether for the great transhumance, mainly of sheep, or for going to summer pastures (short distance transhumance from the bottoms of the valleys of the Pyrenees or the Cévennes towards high altitude pastures).



Transhumance is still a necessity for many breeders : growing grass and green crops in summer remains a technique which is difficult, expensive and requires a lot of water and labour in the Mediterranean regions. On the contrary, transhumance constitutes an adaptation to nature and the natural rhythm of the vegetation of the route and supplies food often in abundance and relatively cheaply.

In the Languedoc, the "great sheep transhumance" still exists, which consists of taking flocks of sheep on foot from the farms situated on the coast, in the garrigues and in the lower Cévennes, to the high altitude pastures situated in the mountains of the Aigoual, of the Mont Lozère, or the limestone plateaux of the Causses

In **Corsica** the seasonal movements of flocks, mainly sheep, can be classified in the type that geographers define under the term « double transhumance », characterised by two successive movements. The first happens in winter from mid-altitude mountains where the villages are situated, towards the plain and the second at the end of spring until mid-summer towards high mountains ("ammuntagnera"). The winter transhumance is long: 7 to 8 months, from October to May, whereas the summer transhumance is fairly short (June and July). The villages which the shepherds associate themselves sociologically are more often situated at an altitude of between 600 and 900m.

If one can wonder about the future of winter transhumance, in decline, summer transhumance does not appear to be under threat. One can distinguish today in Corsica, about ten "pastoral ranges" which cover a total of 135 000 hectares, i.e. one sixth of the surface of the island. The zones are extensive routes in summer, used by 844 breeders situated in 86 villages (out of 360); 132 villages if account is taken of certain villages which partially receive pastoral units). The production of cheese and of "brocciu" in the mountains, together with a growing number of projects connected with tourists in the mountains, designates, in the present and near future, a positive profile, made up of tradition and opening up. One transhumance exists also in a small area in the East of France, in the **Champagne**, but it is of less importance compared to the other regions mentioned. In the Champagne, transhumance is horizontal as this region is not mountainous.

4.2.2. Map : Distribution of main routes of transhumance within the country

see illustrations 24 & 25

Tradition of the theme and its heritage



5. Material heritage

5.1. Huts and surroundings

- Types of huts (fixed, mobile) ? In what kind of material ? Are they watering places (built or natural) ? milking areas? Enclosures ?

In the South West, an **orri** is an former building in high- and medium-high altitude summer pastures in the Ariège and Catalan mountains, used for milking ewes or goats and for the production of orri cheese (see illustration 10). In the Pyrénées-Orientales up to the mid XXth century, the Catalan term orri designated in the broad sense, an area of grazing for sheep and in the restricted sense, a hut with no roof, whereas the shepherds' cabin was called barraca (in French barraque with two r's in the archive documents of the XVIIIth century cf « *l'orri avec les barraques qui y sont construites pour la demeure des gardiens* »). The orri was therefore the equivalent of the jaca of the high Couserans, of the *couyelà* of the Bigorre, of the *cujalà* of the Béarn and of the *cayolar* of the Basque country, summer pasture establishments which included one or more shepherd's cabins, a yard enclosed by a dry-stone wall for milking or for resting the sheep and various small buildings for cheese making.

A remue in the Alps is a small building entirely made of wood and which can be dismantled, situated towards an altitude of 800 to 1400m. It was used as a staging post on route to summer pastures. The remues could also have their walls in stone with only the roof made of solid planks of wood. They were built and used by shepherds as nomadic dwellings dismantled and rebuilt at each of their transhumance journeys, from which we derive the name of remue, from the verb remuer. Remues in use were generally marked by a cross. Beside each remue, one could also find a smaller cabin of the same type. These small remues which were used as milk cellars were called "gardet". Shepherds stored the milk after milking before it was used. The gardets were built near a spring whose water was used to bathe iron containers; called "gerles". If they were made of wood, they were built on benches with spaces. Close by the remues, one could also find a rustic trough cut into a tree trunk into which was poured the whey from the production of alpine pasture cheeses (cf illustration)

5.2. Landmarks

Are they landmarks (boundary stones) to delimitate pastures (or other type of landmarks) ?

The montjoies are signs for shepherds during transhumance, but the term can cover a wide variety of very different objects. It can designate stones loosely piled up (one speaks of a cairn, well-known to mountain rambler), vast mounds (sometimes dolmens or tumuli) which, placed in very visible spots, can be seen from afar, even though they had not been built as a guide, or a large stone pushed into the earth... The term in French is probably derived from southern expressions (*monjoia* in Catalan, *montjoia* in Occitan...) (cf illustration 11).



Are they traces, marks, messages let by shepherds (on stones, wall, huts..) ?

- in Ossau Valley (Pyrénées) there are many shepherds' signatures and marks; for instance, "it's 3 days I didn't ate, I am hungry", or just signatures of shepherds' name and date.

- Use of « salt stones » : Salt stones are necessary to prevent salt deficiency in animal food (cf illustration 2)

- Natural shelters or semi-natural ?

Still witnessed by place names and some vestiges falling into disuse, the quèbes or toues were crevices under rocks roughly arranged as temporary shelters by shepherds in summer pastures. Under the place name translated into French of quève, is the expression from the Béran quèba, which is similar to the Spanish cueva (cavern, cave cellar) or the French "cave". According to the remains encountered during prospection, the quèbe could be closed by a protecting dry-stone wall, sometimes with an evacuation hole for smoke from the fire and a cut-out used as a cupboard. If there was no wall, a sail cloth, held down to the ground by sticks, covered the crevice. Under the confined rock, a stone was used as a seat and some sheep skins laid out on the floor were used as mattresses. If some quèbes were used as temporary dwellings, others were mere surveillance posts during the day or shelters from storms in spring or autumn. Finally, certain cavities used to be used not as dwellings or sheltering posts, but as places for salting cheese.

5.3. Heritage related to the flock

Bells : use of bells in the flock : which bells for which sheep ? are they specific harmony ? who makes the bells ?

There are collars without bells, but no bells without collars (cf. illustration 4). The primary function of bells is to provide an audible signal, the second is visual. In certain cultures, it is a means of magic protection. Bells and collars are prestigious and sought-after objects. Medieval iconography does not show sheep with collars, except for a favourite ewe or sheep. There is certainly a link between a wide collar and a heavy bell. Melted or beaten, sheep's bells are made by specialized craftsmen. In the Pyrenees, bells produced by Daban are among the last still being made. (cf illustration 27)

Up to the 1950s, collars were made by shepherds but nowadays this is less and less the case. There are two types of collar: round collars (Pyrenees, Spain) and curved or flared collars (Alps).

6. Heritage related to the shepherd

Shepherd's cane ? umbrella ? shepherd's mantle ? Gourd ?

see illustrations 3,5,6,7,8,9

Immaterial heritage:

-What kind of rules (written or not) – for ex: are they different taxes for local and foreigners ?

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(cf. the « bacade » page 5 and taxes « pulvération ; avérage, abreuvage », page 2)

-Are there legends related to transhumance ?

Numerous legends are connected with transhumance. The special nature of the activity, placing it on the fringe of the world of humans, close to nature, mountains in particular for a long time being considered as dangerous places, was a ripe terrain for the development of themes questioning the relationships between man, nature and animals. In the Pyrenees for example, many legends concern the Bear both as a danger to men to flocks but also as a marginal figure on the boundary between mankind and the animal kingdom. Elsewhere, the most common and the most respectful nickname given to bears is "Lou Moussu", i.e. the "Gentleman".

Are there whistlers (what is /was used to communicate among shepherds) ?

In some Pyrenean valleys, shepherds communicate amongst themselves by using very specific whistling. Thus, even several kilometers apart, they can communicate. Unfortunately, this typical form of communication has now disappeared. The most famous ones were in the village of Aas, where not only shepherds but also the villagers shared this specific mode of communication by whistling from one side of the valley to the other. The valley does indeed form a real guide for waves which enables this mode of communication to be used between grazing land and the villages. (cf illustration 12)

feasts and festivals ? religious aspects ? (blessing of the flock / ex)

An increasing number of festivals take place in France every summer. They take on a mantle of folklore and are a time of popular socializing. They are recent and were created by villages or departments which wanted to put a spotlight on their human heritage to encourage and develop local tourism, whilst affirming a strong identity (cf illustration 21)

7. Related aspects (technological, livestock...), where applicable

8. Transport: way of transportation used for transhumance : trucks, walk, boat ?

Present transhumances make increasing use of transport, by truck, which enables the flock to go much farther and quicker in a shorter period of time. They are transported in cattle trucks which can contain on three or four levels nearly 400 heads, with spaces dedicated to donkeys and dogs (cf illustration 28). Gaining time, independence and energy, shepherds are therefore better equipped to organise their journeys. In this way, they leave the final part of the journey, the last kilometers when they are already in the mountain, to walk with their flock which is able therefore to become acquainted (once more) with the land. However, journeys on foot still remain a firmly anchored tradition and it is not unusual that local festivities or events are created around a foot transhumance event. Finally, even if nowadays it has practically disappeared, rail



transport constituted an original form of transhumance. The railways participated in the reforming of French sheep transhumance and to feeding town populations at the end of the XIXth century until around 1970.

9. Flock

Names of the breeds concerned by transhumance ? what specificity ?

In the 1960s, there were about thirty different breeds of sheep, each having an official or traditional name. Moreover, one encounters some flocks with British breeds, with transalpine breeds along the Italian border and with sheep from Andorra coming to spend the winter in France, in the Midi. Nowadays, the number of breeds has declined following rationalization efforts of pastoral activity.

Animals are connected to a breed by their character more than to any other zootechnical group, and which have no trace of recent cross-breeding.

Apart from their rustic nature and their adaptation to a specific terrain, breeds can be put into two broad categories: those for which a genealogical book verified by the agriculture ministry has been established; and those with no officially registered genealogy and whose headcount is low.

Thanks to cross breeding and modes of selection, several breeds of sheep are "creations" which only have distant relationships with the ones who adapted to the almost natural conditions of their ancient farming.

For the Pyrenean mountains, several breeds are nowadays raised according to the production decided by the shepherd. For example, in the Basque country, there are herds of ewes of milking breed (tête noire mainly and tête rousse). In the Béarn (the Aspe – Ossau – Barétous valleys), there are herds of milk breeds (basco-béarnaise. cf. illustration 29). In the Pyrénées Centrales (Hautes-Pyrénées, Haute-Garonne), there are herds of meat breeds. The ewes are rustic and come from local breeds (tarasconnaise, auroise, barégeoise).

Who own the flock ?

The question of possession of the flock is important even if it has not changed a lot over the centuries. One finds two types of models. Shepherds who are owners of their flocks and who are in charge of carrying out the transhumance, shepherds who manage other people's flocks (here called rearers) during the transhumance period and whose activity is seasonal. Between these two, a mixed form which corresponds to the owner shepherd who adds another rearer's flock to his own flock and which he manages.

How many sheep per flock ? Do the shepherd keep flock from other owners ?

As a general rule, flocks are made up of a few hundred heads. The size of the flock is however determined by two constraints: not too small so that the activity remains profitable for the shepherd; not too large so as not to deplete too quickly the land entrusted to the shepherd.



Way of collecting flocks and external identification of sheep ? (marks, paintings...)

To run a sheep farm, it is necessary to be able to identify in all circumstances and with certainty the members of the flock. This marking is carried out by means of various processes: marks made on the animal itself, ways of shearing, shapes of collars, shapes and sounds of bells. Marks made on animals usually consist of brightly coloured stains so they are easily identifiable. In former times, the shepherd could decide to mark permanently his animals with a hot iron. It appears that this practice is less and less used. Bells or *sonnaïlle*, worn by animals are also a method of identification.

Are they names for some of the sheep ? which sheep for which bells ? other distinctive marks ? (ex: "fraises", signatures of the shepherds and the owners...)

Shepherds who know their flocks well are able to spot within them different characters in the animals; they are the ones which stand out and are noticed because of their specific behaviour. Each shepherd has his own notebook but as a general rule, animals called leaders are quickly identified everywhere, as are those that escape. These particular animals are more likely than the others to be equipped with a bell so that they can be spotted at all times by the shepherd when he is gathering the flock.

10. Other animals

Shepherds dogs : which breed ? number of dog per flock ?

Sheepdogs belong to the shepherd and are divided into two main groups:

- guard dogs: beauceron (cf. illustration 30), briard, picard, Alpine, Pyrenean, German.
- defensive dogs : « Pyrenean Mountain Dogs »

Guard dogs are trained by the shepherd. Training takes several months alongside a dog which has already been trained. Dogs obey gestures, voice commands and whistles. The dog is effective for about ten years. The type of training varies according to the shepherd, the dog the type and site of grazing; one does not train a dog the same way to guard a flock on alfalfa or on fallow land.

Since 1960, dog shows have been organised to maintain specific traits of the great sheepdog breeds in France. Guard dogs generally wear a collar with a ring to attach the lead. Shepherds north of the Loire used to keep dogs on their leads (belts of leather or of chains) when not working. The collars often bear the name of the dog's owner, therefore generally the shepherd's name.

The defensive role of the dog has considerably declined with bears and wolves becoming increasingly scarce. It remains useful to watch over flocks for other wild and domestic animals not to mention thieves. Dogs used to wear collars with spikes which protected them against animals which go for the neck.

A shepherd often has several dogs for his flock and mixes guard dogs, defense dogs and several generations of dogs to train them. Depending upon the size of the flock, he



may also decide to have several with the same function.

Other animals useful for transhumance (donkey ? goats ?...)

The presence of animals ancillary to the flock is less and less frequent but in some cases, depending upon the shepherd, they may be used as a supplementary animal. They are goats (does and bucks) donkeys, mules or even horses. They are used for guiding and transporting equipment or contribute to feeding the shepherd, the dog or the flock.

Donkeys, mules and goats transport equipment and during transhumance, periodically supply the shepherd. They carry items on their backs or in a cart. A fairly large number of donkeys accompany migrating flocks in the Alps or in Corsica. In the mountains, they live in herds. Mules are more particularly used in the Pyrenees.

Are there predators ? Is the percentage of loss important ?

Numerous predators threaten flocks and often attract the attention of the media. Wolves in the Alps, bears in the Pyrenees (cf illustration 31). These two predators are on the decline and their reintroduction provokes many arguments amongst those who use the mountains. Whatever the case, the most dangerous predator for flocks appears less frequently in the media who focus on bears and wolves. They are wandering dogs which have returned to their wild state.

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