



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

RESEARCH THEME 4: TRANSHUMANCE ROUTES

RESEARCH REPORT FOR BULGARIA

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1. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1. Brief historical background of sheep-breeding, meaning and importance in Bulgaria

Geographical, geomorphological and climatic characteristics of Bulgaria proved particularly favourable to animal husbandry and especially – to pastoral economy and sheep farming.

Tending sheep has been one of the general occupations and trades of people since Prehistory. According to archaeological data and studies, since Prehistorical times (Neolithic – Bronze Age) many tribes on the Balkans and in Anatolia practiced particularly **mobile pastoralism** – due to its extensive nature.

In Antiquity **Homer** called **Thrace** “*fat-soiled land*” and “*the Mother of sheep*”. **Proto-Bulgarians** came in V – VI c. A.D. from the arid zones around the Caspian and the Black sea to settle on the Balkan Peninsula and brought their nomadic and semi-nomadic traditions. **Slavic tribes** from the Southern branch settled down on the Balkans in Byzantine provinces (V – VI c. A.D.), and brought quite different pastoral and agricultural traditions. All these economic and cultural traditions merged in the process of formation of the early medieval Bulgarian state.

In Medieval Bulgarian kingdom sheep-breeding and pastoral husbandry was widespread as an important branch of feudal economy. It was included in the system of feudal regulations and taxation. In Bulgaria and generally in the Balkans a special category of dependent pastoral population was registered – the so-called **Vlachs** (βλαχοί), whose trade and subsistence was mobile pastoralism and sheep-breeding in feudal domains of different size. The problem whether these *Vlachs* represented a **distinct social and economic category** whose **principal obligation was mobile sheep-breeding** or they should be regarded as an **ethnic category**, is still controversial among historians. However, another hypothesis combines both previous – that *Vlachs* category comprised socio-economical and ethnic aspects.

Anyway, the very existence of the *Vlachs* category proves the continuity of mobile pastoral economy from Antiquity in Medieval ages. The denomination “Vlachs” appears for the first time in Byzantine sources not earlier than the XI century. The Byzantine military officer Kekaumenus wrote about “*Vlachs who were spending the summer with their flocks and families in the mountains of Bulgaria*”¹.

The information from historical sources still cannot support any positive conclusions about **the type** of this mobile pastoral husbandry – whether it was nomadic, transhumance or some other kind. However, sources from XIII – XIV c. report that *Vlachs* made use of both winter pastures in the plains and summer pastures in the high mountains. They permanently migrated with their flocks and lived in seasonal camps called *katúni* [‘camps’] in the frames of feudal domains – both secular and ecclesiastical. *Vlachs* were allowed to move from one domain to another with their flocks and they were obliged to pay taxes for the use of pastures and water, as well as penalties for damages to the respective feudal lord.

According to the evidence and historical researches in the “economic and social” and the “ethnic” category of *Vlachs* we should include Latin-/Romance-speakers – the descendants of autochthonic Balkan pastoral tribes: the romanized **Aromanians** [κουτσοβλαχοί, βλαχοί] and the hellenized **Sarakatsans** [Σαρακατσανί, Karakachani]. About the “ethnic aspect” of *Vlachs*, intriguingly enough, among the personal names of the registered “Vlachs” in XII - XIII c. many **Slavic** names occurred.

¹ Bulgaria at that time was under Byzantine rule, so the term “Bulgaria” meant the administrative and religious district ‘thema Bulgaria’, i.e. the Balkan range and the Danube plain (today North Bulgaria).



Anyway, this fact suggests some part of them were probably of Slavic origins, i.e. that some type of mobile pastoralism has been practiced by *Bulgarians* and other ethnic communities in the Balkans too.

This is supported by historical data: Byzantine emperor Cantakuzen wrote in XIV c. about “**Bulgarian nomadic shepherds** who lived in the highlands of **Morra** [today the Central Rhodopes] in unfortified settlements and spent the winter in the adjacent Aegean planes around Mossinopol²”. This account is suggestive that **Bulgarian** shepherds from the Rhodopes at that time most probably practiced some kind of **Transhumance**, because they lived in permanent settlements (although unfortified) and moved with their flocks to spend the winter in the lowlands.

At the same time there is plenty of evidence from the XIII – XIV c. about the presense and pastoral migrations of *Vlachs* – much more in the “ethnic aspect” as distinguished in the sources from *Bulgarian* shepherds. Some accounts point to another distinctive feature of *Vlachs*’ pastoral economy – the fact they migrated together with their families to the seasonal pastures – i.e. probably some kind of **Nomadism** or semi-nomadism.

There is no clear information about sheep-breeding in Bulgaria in the course of Ottoman conquest. According to the testimony of the Ottoman analyst Mehmed Neshry, who described the prosperity of medieval Bulgaria just before it fell under Ottoman rule: “*Sheep, butter and milk was flowing out from this land to the World.*” This indirect evidence suggests the high level of development of animal husbandry and sheep-breeding in the XIV c. as one of the oldest economic traditions and trades of Bulgarians.

In the ages of Ottoman domination the tradition of mobile pastoral husbandry continued. The accounts of foreign travelers, envoys and diplomats from XV – XVIII c. prove there was continuity and further development of pastoral economy and sheep-breeding among Bulgarians and various ethnic groups - Christian and Moslem, subjects of the Sultan.

In the course of the conquest of Balkans, **new waves of nomads** invaded the peninsula – various tribes from Asia Minor known as **Jürüks** or **Konyari**³. There was a Turkish saying that “A **Jürük** [nomad, walker] does not need to go anywhere particularly, but he needs to be moving”. Similarly to the case of medieval “*Vlachs*”, the term **Jürüks** became the subject of the same discussion – whether it should be regarded as a distinct “social and economic category” – nomadic sheep-breeders, or rather as an “ethnic” category opposed to other ethnic groups.

However, *Jürüks* were first used by Ottoman rulers as a supplementary military force and tolerated by Ottoman authorities for their favours in conquering new territories and reinforcing Moslem element on the Balkans. The principal trade and living of *Jürüks* was **nomadic and semi-nomadic sheepbreeding** and they were pleased to find in the new conquered areas the same geographical and ecological niche as that they occupied in Asia.

Being nomads, *Jürüks* represented a quite disturbing and turbulent contingent, so in order to keep them under control and use them in further wars and assimilation policy, the Ottoman Empire created in XV c. a special **military Jürük organization**. At the same time the authorities used *Jürüks* as a specific category of pastoral population – for the delivery of sheep, products and other pastoral activities. Thanks to that, the *Jürüks* managed to gain advantage and privileges for the exploitation and control of seasonal grazing lands both in the mountains and lowlands of the conquered territories. Local Balkan pastoralists, shepherds and nomadic communities (including *Bulgarians*, *Vlachs* and others) were pushed away and oppressed by *Jürüks*, because the seasonal pastures were located in the same areas which were formerly used by autochtonic shepherds. This resulted in many conflicts and fights between *Jürüks* and the local stockbreeders. Since the XV c. a slow and long migration of “*Vlach*”

² Today Commotini, Greece.

³ The denomination **Jürük** was derived from the verb ‘*jürümek*’ [meaning ‘to go’/‘walk’/‘move’], while **Konyari** was derived from the verb ‘*konmak*’ [meaning ‘to stay’/‘rest’/‘settle’] both of which reflected their general occupation and living – nomadism.



pastoral population from the Balkans started to the North – through Wallachia and Transylvania to reach in XVI – XVII c. the mountains of Southern Poland.

Despite being subjected to the *Jürük* military organization with prescribed obligations and regions of seasonal migrations and habitation, many *Jürük jemaats* [seasonally migrating communities] constantly avoided paying taxes, fees, rents and penalties to the *spahis* [feudals] where their flocks grazed. That was the reason Ottoman authorities since the XVI c. tried hard to force them settle down. It was a long and painstaking process – many *Jürük* groups avoided their military obligations and changed unexpectedly their occupation for agriculture, salt supplies delivery, miners, etc., or just disappeared from the prescribed living area. However, in the late XVII and the early XVIII c. the great deal of *Jürüks* settled down basically in the **plains**⁴, while still keeping the rights and control of seasonal pastures in the mountains and plains. Most of them gave up the seasonal migrations, but still remained owners of big flocks and pastures. Others continued their semi-nomadic migrations with their flocks and families despite living in permanent settlements in the plains.

The presence and impact of nomadic and semi-nomadic *Jürük* groups in the plains for a long time (XV – XVIII c.) resulted generally in **the mode of making use of land**. The particular plots ascribed and hold by *Jürüks* in the plains, were exploited exclusively in the system of nomadic or mobile pastoral husbandry – **most of all as pastures** and just occasionally for agriculture. This proportion between arable/cultivated land and grazing land/pastures, as well as the preferences of land-use and some specific forms of leasing/renting land, were kept in the lowlands for ages - up to the mid-XIX century, as it was well documented in sources.

This is the background we should consider the development of **Bulgarian** mobile pastoral husbandry in the time of Ottoman rule. The condition of the *non-moslem* subjects of the empire was very hard, but at the same time quite **favourable terms** for the development of sheep-breeding emerged. In the vast territory of Ottoman empire there were no inner frontiers and barriers to stop the migrations of flocks and people. Moreover, the culture, traditions, religion and living of the conquerors were bound to the consumption of huge quantities of mutton and sheep products. The needs of the Court, big cities (*Constantinople/Istanbul, Adrianople/Edirne, Salonica/Thessalonica*, etc.) and the army for food supply and clothing were enormous.

In order to satisfy those needs and to organize the regular supply of large numbers of sheep, Ottoman authorities created a particular category of *raya* with special statute – ***gelepkeshani/ gelepi***. They were charged with the obligation to deliver, ordered by the state, great supplies of livestock for butchery (exclusively sheep) to the capital, the big consumptive centers of the empire and the army. The organization and control of the special deliveries was assigned to the ***kadîi*** – judges and regional government officials. Some historical studies suggest that the category of ***gelepkeshani*** with its special activities was inherited and adopted in the Ottoman Empire by a similar stratum in the former Byzantine Empire – the so-called ***makelária*** whose main task was to provide Constantinople with great quantities of livestock and meat.

According to the sources, in XV – XVI c. a great deal of ***Bulgarians*** whose main occupation was pastoral husbandry (owners of flocks and shepherds) belonged to the category of ***gelepkeshani*** or ***gelepi***⁵.

⁴ Significant numbers of *Jürüks* were dislocated in Upper Thrace – in Maritsa and Tundzha valleys, along the lower flow of Maritsa river, along the Black Sea coast and the Aegean coast, down Mesta, Struma and Vardar flows, around Salonica, in Thessaly and Macedonia.

⁵ According to the studies both terms seem to be of Arabic origin: ***gelepi*** – from the verb *jalaba* meaning ‘to provide’, ‘to supply’; and ***gelepkeshani*** – where this meaning is strengthened with the Persian verb *kāshandān* meaning ‘to carry’, ‘pull’, ‘drag’.



The category of *gelepkeshani* consisted by both: 1. **owners** (owners of sheep and traders/merchants) and 2. **breeders, tenders** (farmers, shepherds) who were breeding and raising sheep themselves, were engaged in animal husbandry and pastoral economy and this was their general trade and means of living. There was also a distinction between “registered” and “unregistered” (volunteer) *gelepkeshani*. The **first** were enlisted in special registers with strictly stipulated obligations. They enjoyed some privileges and protection by the authorities but should compulsory deliver and sell the sheep solely in the capital or to the army. The sale of sheep at another market place or on the route was strictly prohibited for them. “**Unregistered**” *gelepkeshani* were not included in the registers with special tasks and privileges. They probably encountered much more problems, obstacles and dangers, but took advantage of being allowed to sell their beasts in towns and market places all along the route to the capital.

The *gelepkeshani* in the period XV – XVIII c. presented a fairly broad and ethnically versatile category, incorporating *Jürüks* too. It was also marked with a clear social and economic differentiation – the **property** of *gelepkeshani* in XVI c. varied from 400 to 6 000 sheep (of their own). The **rate of their annual compulsory delivery** was about 1:20 (5 %) of the whole flock: in the range from 20 – 25 sheep (minimum, very rarely) – to 25 – 100 (average, usually) – up to 300 – 400 sheep (maximum, rarely). Generally in this category were incorporated and registered **wealthier sheep-owners** and traders, who were supposed to have the assets to purchase livestock, manage carrying and safeguarding the flocks and endure all the dangers and losses on the route to Constantinople.

Growing and tending such big flocks was possible only in the system of extensive pastoral husbandry – most of all **transhumance** (for the sedentary population – Bulgarians) and to a smaller extent **vertical nomadism** (practiced by *Jürüks*, *Vlachs*, etc.).

In the frames of this category (*gelepkeshani*) many Bulgarians made a fortune and in the XVI - XVII c. the wealthy class of stockbreeders, owners and traders – the so-called **chorbadzhii** arose. Many of them were previously granted the privileges of *dervendzhí* [guardians of mountain passes] and *voynútsi* [quasi-military service in support of the army or service in the Sultan’s stables]. Later on (XVII – XVIII c.) the greatest and the wealthiest among them became leasers of the right to collect sheep-taxes (*beglik*) in vast districts of the Empire – the so-called **beglikchii**. Both classes – chorbadzhis and beglikchis, were at the same time big owners of huge flocks – sheep, cattle and horses tended in the system of Transhumance. Many of them managed to get privileges for the use of restricted areas of winter pastures in Eastern Thrace (between Adrianople and Constantinople).

In the period XV – XVIII c. sheep-breeding in the system of transhumance developed progressively and reached its climax in the XIX century. It was in the system of Transhumance that the wealthy class of Bulgarian bourgeoisie grew up, due to the development of trade with livestock, products and raw materials from sheep: mutton, wool, milk production – both in the vast inner market of the Ottoman Empire and for export to Central and Western Europe. Their trade contacts went from Asia Minor and Egypt to Russia, Wallachia, Transylvania, Austria and France. It was this wealthy class that started and carried on the struggle for political emancipation and liberation.

Many trades and crafts in Bulgaria in the XVIII – XIX c. flourished on the base of transhumant sheep-breeding: wool-processing and manufacture of coarse and fine woolen fabrics for the needs of citizens and the army (*abadzhzystvo* – Bulg.), knitting big quantities of woolen socks for the market, tailoring industry (*terziystvo* – Bulg.) We cannot forgo the fact that 90 % from the pieces of popular clothing, as well as interior textiles in the village and town was home-spun, manufactured in the household from sheer sheep-wool. Many towns in Bulgaria flourished with their economic prosperity and beautiful architecture due to the development of transhumance.

After the Liberation in 1878 and the emergence of new Bulgarian state, a period of brief decline of transhumance started. According to the decisions of Berlin congress (1878) Bulgaria was divided in two parts: Eastern Rumelia (tributary to the Sultan) and Principality of Bulgaria separated by official state



borders. Another part of Bulgarian ethnic area – in the Rhodopes and in Macedonia remained in Turkey and was also detached by state borders. The most affected by setting national borders was transhumance in Central Bulgaria (along the Balkan range and in Sredna gora). It was literally “cut” from the winter pastures in Eastern Thrace that remained in Turkey. The free access between winter and summer pastures was also interrupted between Rumelia and Bulgaria, as well as between the Rhodopes and Macedonia from one side and Rumelia and Bulgaria from the other side. In this context we could easily understand the bitter disappointment of Bulgarian stockbreeders and economists: “*Rumelian borders took the life of Panagyurishte transhumance!*” a contemporary exclaimed. After the Reunion of Eastern Rumelia and Principality of Bulgaria in 1885 – winter pastures still remained on Turkish territory and this put the end of transhumance in all the towns at the foot of Stara planina and in Sredna gora. Later on this brought the decline of the once flourishing textile and tailoring industries, and the crafts based on processing ovine raw materials, centered in the same towns all along the Balkan range.

Transhumance got some chance to survive in those areas that remained on Turkish territory until 1912 - the Rhodopes and in Macedonia. The shepherds from those regions kept on driving their flocks to the winter pastures of Western Thrace and Aegean Macedonia. Balkan wars (1912 – 1913) brought liberation for many Bulgarians in those areas, but caused many damages to transhumance.

After WWI and 1920 the free access between summer and winter pastures was again interrupted because Western Thrace and Aegean Macedonia were included in the territory of Greece. Eastern Thrace still remained in Turkey. In spite of all the problems and obstacles, Bulgarian shepherds from the Rhodopes and Pirin continued their seasonal migrations to the winter grazing lands in Greece and Turkey, crossing the borders legally “with passports”. They had to pay a whole range of customs duties, taxes and fees for the flocks on their way to and back from the pastures, so transhumance already proved not as profitable, as it was in the past. However, in this case and in this mode transhumance survived up to the 30-ies of XX c. Other sheep-owners tried to graze their reduced flocks within Bulgaria – in Upper Thrace plain – in Maritsa valley or along the Black Sea coast. For the last time many former transhumant shepherds visited the Aegean coast with their flocks in the years 1941 – 1943.

Anyway, big political changes on the Balkans concerning the liberation of peoples and the emergence of modern Balkan national states in the XIX c. resulted not just in re-drawing the political map. It brought the break-down of *long-durée* traditions of Transhumance as a specific pastoral economy, culture and lifestyles on the Balkans.

But drawing the national borders in XIX – XX c. was just the most striking, visible, obvious reason for the decline of Transhumance in Bulgaria. There was another, even more important factor for that – radical changes in the system of land-use and the expanding agriculture. Transhumant pastoral economy needed vast uncultivated lands for seasonal pastures, as well as free communication and access to them. At the same time since the mid-XIX c. changes in land-use and the development of agriculture started – many pastures in the plains turned arable lands (chifliks) – in Upper Thrace, Eastern Thrace and along the Aegean. After the Liberation of Bulgaria (1878) the so-called *Agrarian revolution* started – a brief process of redistribution of land and changes in ownership but also in rapid increase of cultivated arable lands. It resulted in a complete change of the structure of modern Bulgarian economy and left no room for mobile pastoralism.

Transhumance, however large-scale, diversified, market-oriented and profitable it was in the period of national Revival, remained a type of **extensive** pastoral economy and proved incompatible with the development of modern industrial society.

After the decline of Transhumance in Bulgaria, in all the areas it was practiced, it was replaced by another type of mobile pastoral husbandry – the Mountain/Alpine husbandry. Among all the types and



forms of traditional pre-industrial mobile pastoral economies, Alpine husbandry was distinguished by its higher potential for **intensive** development.

2. TRANSHUMANCE in Bulgaria

Transhumance was a particular form of mobile pastoralism with seasonal utilization of different ecological niches. It was based on all-year round maintenance of the livestock on the pastures taking advantage of seasonal climatic changes and changes of grass vegetation in the zones of highlands and in the plains. This form excluded laying-in fodder or maintenance of the flocks in the villages. The flocks were tended by specialized shepherds and periodically migrated from the winter pastures in the lowlands to summer pastures in the mountains. However, transhumance developed in the context of complex agricultural economy. It implies division of labour, a settled form of agriculture with crops to maintain, fixed dwellings and permanent villages where the population lived. Just the shepherds took part in the seasonal migrations and lived far away almost all the year round.

Illustrations: Map of Elli Muller of Transhumance in the Mediterranean
Map of Petrovic and Cvijic of Transhumance on the Balkans
Map of Pastoral migrations of nomadic Aromanians on the Balkans

2.1. Variants

Depending on geographical factors – localization of permanent settlements (centers of transhumance) and accordingly the situation of the seasonal pastures, three variants of transhumance are defined:

1) *Normal/ Ascendente*; 2) *Inverse/ Descendent* and 3) *Mixed/ Pendulare*.

Illustration: Scheme of the variants of transhumance

In the XIX c. in Bulgarian lands *Inverse* and *Mixed transhumance* were dominant as a result of big demographic changes and economic development under Ottoman rule.

In the case of *Inverse transhumance* the permanent settlements were localized at various altitudes higher in the mountains (from 700 up to 1200 m). The flocks were grazed in summer close to the villages and were driven for the winter to far distant winter pastures (80/ 100 – 300/ 400 km). In this mode the villages were connected with pastoral economy generally in the summer season. The shepherds were in contact with their homes and families during the summer and got some help by the villages in the time of milking, organizing dairies and milk-processing, summer shearing, etc. In Bulgarian lands in XVIII – XIX c. this variant was widespread in the Central and Western Rhodopes, Rila, Pirin, Osogovo, Belasitsa and the mountains in Western Macedonia.

Mixed transhumance implied the localization of permanent settlements in between the zones of winter and summer grazing lands, but distant by both. In this mode flocks and shepherds were far away all the year round. Their short contacts with the villages and their families took place twice in the year: in spring – during the migration to summer pastures, and in autumn – during the migration to winter pastures. The villages represented just a transit point on the route of seasonal migrations. However, these contacts were important for the organization of pastoral economy. In spring the flocks got the opportunity for a short stay, rest and grazing in the commons while the shepherds changed clothes and received food supply and inventory. In the autumn the shepherds brought dairy production to the villages and received food and equipment for the winter. In Bulgarian lands this variant was registered in a whole range of towns and villages in high valleys and kettles at the foot of Stara planina and in Sredna gora (Zlatitsa, Pirdop, Koprivshtitsa, Panagyurishte, Klisura, Karlovo, Kazanlak, Shipka, Sliven, Kotel, Zheravna), in Pirin (Razloga and the lower flows of Struma and Mesta), in Strandzha and in Macedonia.



Normal transhumance for a long time was prevented by the occupation of plains dominantly by Turkish population, as well as nomadic Jürüks and their sedentarization in this area.

2.2. The development of Transhumance in Bulgaria was already presented in the General introduction.

2.3. General characteristics

2.3.1. Sheep breeds and composition of flocks

Transhumance in Bulgarian lands for ages was based on raising the old well known and perfectly adapted to the local harsh climatic conditions breed – **Zackel**, called by Bulgarian shepherds *méstna* ['local'] or *Balkánska óvca* ['mountain breed']. It was raised first of all for meat and milk, and additionally – for the wool. The sheep of this breed were relatively small and gave little milk, but they were very tough and adaptive to the long travels, climatic conditions, insufficiency of water and grass. The experiments of cross-breeding in the past proved rather unsuccessful, so the modest qualities of the breed were compensated with large quantities obtained by increasing the flocks. In some regions providing special food supplies the varieties of **Zigaya** breed were also popular – *Karnobát kavardzhi*– distinguished with a very good taste of meat and a curly fine fleece. The meat of all flocks that grazed along the sea coasts obtained a delicious taste due to the salty grass and they sold at a good price on the market. There was an attempt to improve the breed by import of merino sheep (1864) from Spain especially for the needs of fine wool for the army uniforms. Though, the merino breed – *shpánki* did not become popular and had no impact upon transhumance.

In the **composition of flocks** sheep were exclusively dominant. There was a little number of goats (20 – 30) – female to be attached to the shepherds for milk supply and male – to wear the biggest and heaviest bells. The shepherds were usually helped and supported by donkeys or mules, the latter also used to carry the household belongings – the so-called *odayá* to the winter dwellings. Big sheep-owners – *chorbadzhis*, *kehayas*, etc. possessed and included in the flock a large number of horses (100 – 200) and a large number of cattle (300 – 500). Cattle was sometimes divided into several herds – *parchéta*, *syurétsi*, *odzhátsi* and grazed separately on free pasture isolated in the forests with random surveillance and that is why these herds were called *lúдите govéda* ['the mad/wild cattle']. Horses were also separately tended.

2.3.2. Grazing lands – summer and winter pastures. Landmarks

In the system of transhumance in Bulgaria in the past, seasonal pastures were the only resource for grazing the flocks. The pastures were situated in two alternative zones in terms of climate, ecology, flora and topography – winter pastures in the plains and summer pastures in the mountains.

Winter pastures – *kǎşlá* ['winter camp/hut/dwelling'], *meríya* ['common'/pasture'], *ová/uvó* ['plain'/fields'] of Bulgarian transhumant shepherds, were located along sea coasts, in the warm plains and the valleys of big rivers. They were spread along the Black and Marmara sea, in Eastern Thrace – in the basins of Ergene and Maritsa, in Western Thrace – along the Aegean coast and in the flows of Mesta, Struma and Vardar, in Macedonia and in distinct areas along the Adriatic sea. In the area of winter pastures were also included some regions in the Upper Thrace plain – in the basin of Tundzha and in some spots of the Asia Minor littoral. These areas were distinguished by a favourable maritime climate with Mediterranean influence. Winters were mild, almost snowless. The maximum of rainfalls was in winter – to the advantage of grass vegetation. Especially important was that these regions were relatively sparsely populated (XVIII – XIX c.) and the land was preferably used for the lease of pastures than for cultivation. For that reason many Bulgarians involved in transhumance called this area "Promised land". In XVII - XVIII c. the great *chorbadzhis* and *beglikchis* from Koprivshtitsa and Panagyrishte were granted special privileges by the Sultan to use



restricted regions in Eastern Thrace for their flocks, but they were lost at the end of XVIII c. However, from the mid-XIX c. winter pastures became overloaded, being used by Bulgarian, Albanian, Turkish, Aromanian and Sarakatsani transhumant and nomadic shepherds and by the increase of flocks. The rents for the pastures also increased. The development and expand of agriculture in the plains, as well as the increase of population made the problem even harder.

In the area of winter pastures every transhumant village or town had at their disposal a distinct plot/ section – *sínor*, *yuría*, separated by others with borders. Within these borders the economic contacts, grazing flocks and the life of shepherds in seasonal dwellings took place.

Summer pastures – *plánina* ['mountain'], *yáyla* ['summer pasture'], *chál* ['peak'], *otlák* ['pasture'], *barchína* ['hill/'mountain'], *dág* ['mountain'] are represented by the highland and alpine pastures on the top (1000 – 2400 m) all along the Balkan range, in Sredna gora and Strandzha. In the Rhodopes they were located most of all in their Central and Western parts. To the same area belong also alpine pastures in Vitoshka, Rila, Pirin, Osogovo, Ograzhden and Belasitsa.

Accordingly, transhumant shepherds from every village had restricted plots of summer pastures separated with borders. Somewhere they were also marked with high piles of stones in the shape of a human, called *stártsi* ['old men']. They were meant to present visible signs and make them recognizable from a distance. Every year the pasture plots were redistributed among the leaders of shepherds groups. Dairies and pastoral constructions of every shepherds group could be erected solely within the borders of their plot. There was a competition between individual big sheep-owners and cooperatives of small sheep-owners to get better and larger sections of summer pastures. In the late XIX c. summer pastures became overloaded by the increase of flocks and bringing in some regions (the Rhodopes) flocks of local owners from the Aegean plain. The overload of summer pastures in Sredna gora made big transhumant owners from Panagyurishte to lease more pastures in other mountains and expand in Vitoshka, Rila and the Rhodopes.

Illustration: Map of Transhumance in Bulgarian ethnic area: winter pastures, summer pastures, centers of transhumance and directions of migrations.

2.3.3. Migrations

Transhumance was based upon two annual seasonal migrations of flocks and shepherds. The autumn migration was directed towards the far winter pastures and the day of its start was determined by local traditions and the distance. In the most remote regions the migrations started on *Krustóvden* [The Exaltation of the Holy Cross, September 14] and the flocks had to travel for 20 or 30 days to the pastures. As a rule in most regions in Bulgaria the autumn migration started on *Dimítrovden*, *Kásúm* [St. Demetrios' Day, October 26], which marked the beginning of winter in traditional folk calendar.

Similarly, the spring migration for the flocks and shepherds at the most distant pastures started earlier in order to come back to their native villages on the eve of *Gergyovden* [St. George's Day, May 6]. The shepherds from the Rhodopes and Pirin started from the plains after *Gergyovden* and came back home on the eve of *St. St. Constantine and Helena's Day* (May 21).

Very important component in the system of transhumance were traditional routes of migration – the roads of itinerant sheep. They represented a specific “infrastructure” of transhumance linking seasonal pastures, market places and the permanent settlements. The main routes (XVII - XIX c.) – *drúmove*, *dzhadéta*, *yollár* – as a rule follow the tracks of main roads, used also by merchants, caravans, convoys, carters. In general, the old road-map from Antiquity was inherited. There were many spots in the Rhodopes, Stara planina, Sredna gora and other regions where parts of old Roman roads and bridges have been preserved up to the present day. However, transhumant shepherds' routes often turned away from the main roads, rounded towns and villages, passed



through valleys and hills seeking the best options for grazing and minimal contacts with sedentary population. **Illustrations:** Map of Ancient roads in Bulgaria

Picture of old bridge in the Rhodopes

Picture of Svilengrad bridge

Unfortunately, no traces or landmarks were preserved from these transhumant routes. In the Ottoman Empire with its lack of inner borders and frontiers, riots, brigandage and insecurity, the roads especially those in the mountains, remained in an extremely poor condition until the end of XIX c. There was no special regulated transhumant infrastructure – with restricted trails, tolls, taxes and privileges like those in Italy and Spain. The Agrarian revolution and modern economic development changed the face of cultural landscape and left no traces of old pastoral routes. Although, there is scarce evidence that in the late XVIII c. at the foot of Sredna gora in Chirpan vicinity, on the route of itinerant flocks to Constantinople there was a toll where they were obliged to pay fees and the villagers were obliged to leave a broad uncultivated stripe – *skélya* as a road for the flocks.

During the migration, the flocks and shepherds spent the night at fixed places – *konatsi*. Sheep were grazed in the commons or the fallows of villages on the route without paying any fees. It was a common practice for the peasants to invite the shepherds with the flocks to rest on their fallows and crops to manure them. That is why the autumn migration lasted longer. In spring the case was the opposite – lands were occupied with crops and itinerant shepherds and flocks were already unwelcome guests.

Dangers and insecurity during the migrations made many owners and *kehayas* to hire special well armed guardians – *pánti*, *seyméni*, to safeguard them by brigands and robbery on the route. Shepherds were allowed to be armed in the period of Ottoman rule.

Shepherds' **dogs** helped their masters to safeguard the flocks on the route and at the pastures from brigands and predators, and to drive the sheep. The most popular dog breed was *karákachanska*. Dogs were selected to be pedigree. They were specially trained and fed only with bread or hominy. In the past dogs often wore iron thorny rings on their neck against predators.

The **bells** - *chánove* (of bronze) and *tyumbelétsi* (of copper) were “the voice” of the flock. They were one or two octaves, according to the size. Some of them were too heavy and shepherds attached them to male goats. Copper bells were “the drums” and bronze bells were “the melody” in the whole orchestra – the shepherds' music. The shepherds ordered special cast of bells with some addition of silver to the alloy – to make them “sing”. Out of the aesthetic aspect, the bells were a specific tool to help the shepherd to find lost sheep or to feel the danger, the fear/ mood of the flock. At the same time the bells and their music were the sign for the state of flocks and shepherds. In the time of arrival from the lowlands the sound of bells “informed” all villagers that the winter season was good, the flocks increased and shepherds were joyful. Silence, i.e. the lack of bells (taking them off) meant “death”, “disease”, “loss”.

Illustration: bells

A typical form of organization in the system of transhumance were **shepherds' associations** – cooperations between independent shepherds – sheep-owners for the collective tending, grazing of the flocks, renting pastures, processing milk and distribution of the products. They were called *tayfá*, *odzhék*, *kashlá* [meaning ‘company’] and were leaded and managed by a chief shepherd and the biggest owner – *kehayá* [‘responsible’, ‘in charge’, ‘manager’]. There were also big pastoral “companies” initiated and organized by individual big owners – *chorbadzhis* and *kehayas* (as a rule of 10 000 – 15 000 sheep of their own, except the herds of horses and cattle). In this case the pastoral “trade” organization bore the personal name of the owner. Generally the shepherds' associations collectively rented the pastures, raised the sheep and processed the milk. The shepherds personally took part in the joint venture. The *kehaya* was responsible for all the



contracting, hiring of additional staff for the dairies or the shearing, transporting, constructions, arrangement of sales, contacts with the authorities, with the chorbadzi, etc. – in both seasons – winter and summer. He was also the Chief accountant of the company and he settled the accounts and payments with each of the shepherds, owners of pastures, etc.

The structure of each pastoral collective within such associations was marked with a rigid professional and labour hierarchy based on professional experience and ownership. The shepherds were two categories: junior and senior. At the bottom of the “pyramide” were little boys (age 6 – 8) who drove the sheep in the milking pen: *karachérche/pogoních/podkarvách*. Then the apprentices followed (age 8 – 15) – *maleshina/chirák*. The next position was of a young shepherd – *mlad ovchár* – with no less of 80-100 sheep of his own. After that came the senior shepherds – *ovchár/chobán/star ovchár* – with 200–300 sheep of their own. All the shepherds had a chief, responsible for their work – *yán-kehayá*, who was the deputy of the kehayá. The manager could get the rank “kehayá” with no less than 500 sheep of his own – up to 1000– 1500–3000. The shepherds’ household was kept by a special man – *ódadzhiya*, who looked after the food supplies, preparation of meals for the shepherds and the dogs, meeting guests, etc. In the Rhodopes in summer often he was the one who was the chief dairy-master. On the top of the pyramide was the great sheep-owner – the *chorbadzhiya*, who did not take part in growing the flocks and usually lived in the town and was occupied with commerce, business, money-lending, etc. In summer additional staff was hired: a Dairy-master – *mándradzhiya/básh-mándradzhiya* and his apprentices – *chirátsi/gynlyukchii/redári*.

Illustration: Photo of transhumant shepherds from the Rhodopes, 1905

The profession of the shepherd was handed over in the family or the kin. Learning started at the age of 6 – 7 when the little boys went for the first time at the dairy with their fathers and became drivers of the sheep in the milking-pen. At the age of 8 they were taken to the winter grazing lands and became *maleshina*. In the Rhodopes the father marked some sheep with a special mark – *yén*, for his son at his birth. These sheep increased in the years and were supplemented by “presents” – lambs, the boy received for his work from the owner of the pasture. A young shepherd could become independent farmer, respectable man and a good match when he managed to increase his sheep to 250 – 300.

There were whole shepherds’ and kehayas’ clans in all regions where transhumance developed. In the time of Transhumance climax, shepherds performed a special stratum in villages and towns. They were distinguished and respectable among other migrant labour strata (builders, tailors, weavers, fishermen, etc.) because of their prosperity and wealth. In many settlements in XVIII – XIX c. were found Shepherds’ guilds with mutual-aid funds and insurance funds.

2.4. Social dimensions

In the system of transhumance shepherds lead a specific mode of life – isolated for the most part of the year at the seasonal pastures. In winter they lived for 6 months at the huts on the distant winter pastures. They stayed at home for 3 - 4 days before they moved to the summer pastures in the mountain. The shepherds returned to the village just on Petrovden [June 29] to rest and celebrate for 3 days. Many engagements were made at that time.

The folklore in the regions of transhumance is full of songs and narratives about the solitude of shepherds’ wives and their misery and pain in the absence of their husbands. Engagements lasted for years, but though shepherds were considered a very good match, because they were relatively wealthier, respectable and made good living. Almost all the traditional calendar holidays and celebrations were performed in the absence of the shepherds.

There were several notable celebrations in the regions of transhumance: The day of *departure* for winter pastures (Krustovden/ September 14 or Dimitrovden/ October 26); the day of *return* (Gergyovden/May 6 or St. Constantine and Helena/ May 21) – *Predoy* [Milking]; *Petrovden* (St. Peter's Day, June 29) – moving the dairies, festival of the village; *Petkovden* (October 14) – insemination of sheep.



3. ALPINE PASTORAL ECONOMY in BULGARIA

Mountain/Alpine pastoral husbandry (*Éstivage, Alpwirtschaft, Gospodarka szalasnicza*) is characterized by the situation in which the majority of the population leads a sedentary life and is occupied for the most part with agriculture. The livestock is maintained most part of the year on pastures. The shepherds and flocks move consequently from pastures in the valleys/plains (in spring) to the highest alpine pastures on the top of mountains for the summer. In autumn the flocks return to lower pastures and in the winter the livestock is maintained closed in stables in the villages and fed with layed-in fodder. Shepherds/herdsmen were appointed from the household, extended family or in the village. They took care of the flocks and lived at a short distance from the village, but they maintained close contacts with their families and homes.

Mountain/ Alpine pastoral husbandry presents a **dictinct type** of traditional mobile stockbreeding within the complex agricultural economy, **different from Transhumance**. It is an old form of mobile pastoralism that existed in the Medieval period and was widespread all over Europe. The term “Alpine” was derived from the denomination of the highest “Alpine” pastures – *Alm, Alpe, Alpino, Montagne, hola, hala, planina*, but also from the name of The Alps, where this type was for the first time studied and described.

In Bulgaria Mountain/ Alpine husbandry existed from medieval times up to the present day. In many regions it developed simultaneously with transhumance until the Liberation (1878 – 1912). After WW I it finally replaced transhumance and remained the only type of traditional mobile husbandry in the country.

3.1. Variants of Alpine pastoral sheep-breeding in Bulgaria

There are two variants of Mountain/ Alpine pastoral husbandry: 1) **Direct** and 2) **Complex/ Swiss type**.

1) The **first** one is based on a simpler pattern of seasonal migrations and use of pastures. The village with arable land and cultivated plots is located in a valley or kettle in the mountain. The distance between it and the mountain peaks is not very big, respectively the alpine pastures are not too far. That is why the flocks and shepherds in May migrate directly from the pastures and meadows in the valley to the alpine pastures in the highlands. There is no intermediate zone with seasonal settlements/ summer cottages. This variant is distributed in Bulgaria almost everywhere in the mountains and is prevalent.

2) The **Complex type** presumes two settlements and a more sophisticated pattern of migrations and use of pastures. The basic village with the great deal of cultivated land and meadows is located in the valley or at the foot of the mountain. But there are scattered arable plots and meadows in the forests around. The distance between the village and the alpine pastures is bigger. That is why the farmers organize a supplementary cottage at their cultivated plots, close to higher mountain meadows or lower pastures. These “cottages” represent a **seasonal dwelling** for some part of the family in summer. The farmers go there to cultivate the land, to look after the livestock and to

prepare and store fodder/hay for the winter. In this way the “cottages” perform a stage in the migrations of the flocks up and down from the mountain. This variant is registered in mountain regions with a complex relief and scattered settlements – in Stara planina – Central and Western parts, in the Western Rhodopes, in Pirin.

3.2. General characteristics

3.2.1. Sheep breeds and composition of flocks

The Mountain/Alpine sheep-breeding in Bulgaria is based dominantly on raising Zackel breed – the so-called *méstna Balkánska óvca* [‘local mountain sheep’]. Many attempts for cross-breeding and improval were made with no success. The “local Balkan sheep” proved to be very well adjusted to the harsh climatic conditions, insufficient pasture, forage and food in winter, hard migrations in the mountain. Somewhere in lower areas the farmers succeeded to get varieties with finer fleece – Ruda [‘softer’] or giving more milk. Sheep were tended first for meat and milk and at the second place – for wool.

In those mountain regions where Alpine husbandry was the basic type, every kind of animals was raised and grazed separately. The flocks consisted only of sheep, occasionally with a small number of goats. Horses and cows formed distinct herds, tended by special herdsmen – both in family distribution of labour and in the village.

3.2.2. Grazing lands

Alpine husbandry is based on the division of pastures into 4 ecological and landscape zones: 1) Low/valley – in the valleys and at the foot of mountains (up to 800 m altitude); 2) Mountain pastures (800 – 1200 m); 3) Lower Alpine region (1200 – 1800 m); 4) Upper Alpine region (over 1800 – 2000 m).

Every village owns and uses in common forests, mountain pastures and commons where the livestock is grazing in summer. Farmers collect, prepare and store fodder for the winter. Generally the number of all the livestock raised in the village is determined by the overall area of pastures and meadows in the commons. In the area of high Alpine pastures – *visóki sováti*, the flocks of barren sheep and goats grazed – on the top of the mountains, close to the peaks. In the area of lower Alpine pastures – *níski sováti* were distributed the spots of horses (*konyárnitsi*) and cows (*kravárnitsi*, *govedárnitsi*). The flocks of ewes grazed on lower and warmer mountain pastures with thick grass and nice water – at the edge of forests zone and Alpine pastures.

The farmers used in common freely the pastures within the borders of the village land. As a rule, the highest Alpine pastures on the top were nobody’s property. Villages from both sides of the mountain wanted to use them for their livestock and claimed these areas belonged to them. This caused conflicts, fights and endless lawsuits. It was a common practice for the municipalities to put out to lease Alpine pastures for herdsmen and merchants from other regions, Aromanians or Sarakatsani, because this proved very profitable.

Usually new spots for pastures, as well as new plots for cultivation, were opened by means of setting woods on fire.

3.2.3. Seasonal migrations of shepherds and flocks

The pattern of seasonal migrations of sheep-flocks is adjusted to climatic and vegetation changes. At the beginning of May – with the growth of grass higher in the mountain and after setting a prohibition to trespass the meadows around the village, the flocks are carried to the summer pastures. The start of migration is set on *Gergyóvden* [St. George’s Day, May 6]. The cooperative dairies start their activities about *Petróvden* [St. Peter’s Day, June 29]. They stay there in the hot summer months: June, July and August 15 – *Golyáma Bogoróditsa* [Our Lady’s Day]. After the reaping and the mowing, the flocks move down close to the villages and graze in the reaped plots and mowed meadows. In spring and in autumn the farmers use to graze the animals everywhere

around the village – in the meadows, in the crops, at the “cottages”, in the fallows and the forest meadows. The flocks were taken down to the valley for the winter. They spent the cold months in warm pens in the yard in the village, at the “cottages” or in the close neighbourhood and were fed with laid-in fodder – hay and foliage, collected in summer. Though, in winter too the sheep-owners made use of every spot free of snow, where they could carry the sheep to graze in the open air.



Illustration: A scheme of seasonal migrations in the system of Alpine husbandry – Teteven region.

The winter food of sheep was generally hay and foliage (oak and beech) by pollarding, supplemented by straw (rye and wheat) and rarely – fern.

Illustration: Feeding the sheep in winter

Mowing the meadows, Momchilovci

According to this pattern the routes of migration of flocks and shepherds were “closed” between the village in the valley and the mountain top. The flocks migrated vertically up and down basically within the borders of the village lands/commons.

3.2.4. Ownership and organization of pastoral economy

Every household raised sheep and goats to meet the needs of food and clothing. The number of the beasts was a sign for wealth. Several categories of sheep-owners could be distinguished. The poorest people owned 5 – 10 sheep or goats and usually this was their only source of subsistence. Small farmers tended small flocks of 20 – 60 sheep to meet their needs of meat, milk and wool. Average owners with more land (arable plots, meadows, lawns and forests) had flocks of 80 – 100 sheep which were considered “big”. Rich agriculturalists, merchants and businessmen owned the biggest flocks of 150 – 200 beasts and they raised them basically for trading.

The size of flocks was bound to the size of the owned land – arable plots, meadows and forests.

There are several types of labour organization in traditional sheep-breeding.

Most part of the year the sheep-and goat-owners take care of them **individually**. The shepherds are appointed in the family (or extended family) as a result of the division of labour. Some part of the family members was constantly moving between the village and the “cottages”. The shepherd – the farmer himself or his son lived permanently with the beasts at their pen (or at the “cottages”) and did all the activities alone. Shepherds got a shift very rarely and came back home (in the village) only for big holidays or celebrations.

Many farmers, who could not take care of their flocks themselves, **hired a shepherd** – generally for the winter season. He received a salary in money and in kind: clothing, food and often – as an option to exploit the manure. The shepherds – *ovchari/ chobani*, could be hired twice in the year – on *Gergyovden* (May 6) and on *Dimitrovden* (October 26), for 6 months or for all the year round. Winter salary was higher than summer, because lambing was considered a really hard work.

For the summer season sheep-owners gathered in groups and **cooperated** for milking, milk-processing and tending their flocks. Occasionally, the owners took part in the pastoral activities themselves, but they could also send a representative from the family or a hired shepherd. The cooperative flock was divided into “barren” (*yálovi, yoz*), “ewes” (*dóyni, sagmál*) and “males” (*kochóve*). Each of these flocks was attached to different shepherds: the barren were managed by 2 shepherds (*yalovari*) at the highest alpine pastures. The ewes were managed by 3 shepherds who grazed and milked them close to the dairy. The “males” were tended by 1 shepherd.

Dairies – *mándra, bachíya*, started their activities at the end of June – on *Petrovden* (June 29) and closed on August 15 (Our Lady’s Day, Assumption). The company of sheep-owners hired collectively a dairy-master with 2 – 3 apprentices. All the members of the company took part in erecting or repairing the dairy and collecting its inventory, purchase of salt for the ewes, etc. They



arranged the distribution and use of manure among themselves. The farmers made a test-milking of the ewes on Petrovden – to specify the quantity of milk or milk products they should receive in the season.

After the close of dairies, the cooperative flocks broke. Every farmer took his sheep and grazed them in his own plots until the winter.

There were five principal dates and celebrations in the system of Mountain/ Alpine pastoral husbandry: **Gergyovden** [May 6] – the beginning of summer season, making new contracts, weaning the lambs; **Petrovden** [June 29] – start of milking and dairy activities; **Golyama Bogoroditsa** [August 15] – finish of milking and repartition of the flocks; **Petkovden** [October 14] – insemination; **Dimitrovden** [October 26] – beginning of winter season, breaking old and making new contracts.

3.3. Social dimensions

In the system of Mountain/ Alpine husbandry the shepherds lead rather isolated and lonely way of life too. In winter they lived next to the sheep-pens in huts or at the “cottages” and took care of the animals all the time. They came back home in the village just on big holidays or to change – in 15 days. In summer, the shepherds of the barren flocks lived far away high in the mountain on the alpine pastures in primitive huts. Their only transport were mules. Just the shepherds of ewes lived at the dairy and had more social contacts. Though, in this pattern sociability of shepherds and their mutual contacts within the family, kin and the village was better as compared to transhumant shepherds.

Illustration: Shepherds on the alpine pastures

4. Present economical dimensions. Conclusions

Mountain/Alpine pastoral husbandry existed and developed along with transhumance all the time until the beginning of XX c. After the decline of transhumance, Alpine husbandry replaced it in the regions it was formerly developed. This was probably due to the fact that in spite being also a traditional extensive form of pastoral economy, Alpine husbandry provided the best options for an intensive development. The pattern of this type mobile pastoralism included a stage of winter maintenance of animals in closed constructions and feeding with in-laid fodder, therefore it did not depend on random climatic, vegetation and other natural changes.

Accordingly, in the interwar period Mountain/ Alpine pastoral husbandry, along with stationary type, became widespread all over the country. In the highlands of Bulgaria many new cooperative and commercial dairies were found with a large produce of white cheese, yellow cheese, butter and curds for the home market and export.

After WW II, in the period of socialism, agriculture and animal husbandry was incorporated in the newly found “TKZS” – Labour cooperative farms. In the following 20 years significant changes occurred – new solid pastoral constructions, huts and houses were built with modern equipment, the infrastructure, transport and communication improved, the conditions of living of shepherds also changed. It is interesting that the pattern of vertical migrations of the flocks, characteristic of the Mountain/Alpine pastoral husbandry, was inherited in TKZS. Later on – in the 70-ies and the 80-ies of XX c. there was a withdrawal of young people, especially Bulgarian, from the profession of shepherds. People of ethnic minorities – Roma, Turks, Sarakatsani or Bulgarian Moslem took their place instead. Maybe one reason was the low salary, hard work, poor living conditions in the mountain and in the country as opposed to the living in town and the striving of young people for higher education.

Intriguingly enough, patterns of Mountain/ Alpine pastoral husbandry are still surviving today. The case-studies of CANEPAL in Stara planina – Apriltsi municipality, Vidima and in Momchilovtsi, Smolyan region, in the Rhodopes proved that. In the case-study of Apriltsi a new modern profitable shepherds cooperative was registered. It got about 80 members with a flock of ca 500 sheep. They

managed cooperative maintenance and milk production in summer. A commercial growing of lambs for export was organized and they sold at a good price in Turkey. Cross-breeding experiments were undertaken in collaboration with German specialists. The collective restored and improved the dairy building and enclosures in the site *Bazyov dyal* in the highlands. Alpine pastures were rented from National Park Central Balkan for the flocks. Many elements of the traditional forms of pastoral organization, as well as technologies for milk-processing and equipment were inherited by the old local tradition. The traditional celebration on the occasion of the start of milking season and dairy activities on Petrovden [St. Peter's Day, June 29] was continued too.



Illustration: The dairy at *Bazyov dyal*, Stara planina

In Momchilovtsi, Smolyan region, local shepherds were supported for raising and preserving old local breeds – Rhodopean and Karakachanska.

At both places shepherds had some problems with the maintenance of pastures and safeguarding the flocks from predators – bears and wolves. Other problems occurred due to the sale of production. In both cases, as it is in many regions in Bulgaria sheep wool was completely destroyed by the shepherds because of its extremely low purchase price – 0, 60 leva (BGN) per kilogram. The great deal of small enterprises in towns and villages failed and were closed, unemployment increased. A great problem for the future development of sheep-breeding is presented by the decrease of population in the country, migration and emigration of many young Bulgarians in Europe and America.

There is a big potential in agro-tourism and cultural tourism to develop in Bulgaria. Old pastoral technologies and celebrations, cuisine, unique landscape, handicrafts, tangible and intangible cultural heritage present a good basis for that.

Illustration: Celebration on Sveta Nedelya, Momchilovci
Workshop for felting, Momchilovci

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