



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

**Theme 5: Landscape and sheep farming
Report of Hungary**

*Hungarian Open Air Museum
(Szabadtéri Néprajzi Múzeum)
H-2000 Szentendre*

By Erika Vass PhD

November 2011

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.
This publication [communication] reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

2. The historical-geographical types of sheep keeping

2.1. Transhumance

2.2. Highland, alpine shepherding

2.3. Steppe shepherding, steppe renters

2.4. Animal breeding of complex farming-animal breeding plants

3. Pastoralism in history and in modern times

4. Types of grassland

5. Sheep farming: economy, society and environment

6. The current situation

INTRODUCTION

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

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

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

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

Different species – diversity of local species

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

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

Different forms of the keeping

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

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

The feeding of animals in extensive breeding is based on grazing; it is connected to migration, simple buildings, little investment of labor and low efficiency. Extensive breeding was widely practiced during the feudalism, mainly the young and slaughter livestock were bred this way.

Work-, milking-animals and those which were used for transportation were bred more intensively; they were fed and kept better. The two types of breeding were present in Hungary simultaneously probably since the Conquest of Hungary. The intensive breeding grew slowly by degrees and because of this extensive decreased.

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

The forms of animal husbandry with and without permanent accommodation have developed. In 1957, László Földes divided the sheep breeding in the Carpathian-basin to the following four regional and partly historical groups – mainly based on the type of buildings: 1. Alpine shepherding, 2. Kosarazó shepherding (*moving the sheep-pen from one place to another so the sheep could fertilize the land*), 3. Racka breeding on the Great Hungarian Plain, 4. Merino breeding.

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

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

Sheep breeding today

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

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

2. The historical-geographical types of sheep keeping

The living of Hungarians at the age of the conquest of Hungary was mainly based on animal husbandry and grazing. Since the most of the society were herdsmen they can be called *pastoral nation* with reason. As a big-bodied animal breeding tribe or nation, primarily bred cattle and horse, and sheep to a small degree, but they also had pig and chicken. The importance of agricultural farming grew by degrees during the 11th and 14th century. Only the people who came later (Cumanian, Jazygian, Romanian) and the groups who specialized on production (*pusztabérlő (steppe renter)*, *tőzsér (cattle merchant)*, *“magatarti” juhos gazda (private sheep owner)*) had farms concentrating purely on animal breeding.¹

Animal breeding was originally herding through the whole year, which required frequent dislocation. And in some cases whole ethnical groups and communities wandered with the herds. Regarding the historical and geographical types of sheep breeding on the historical Hungary the following were observable:

2.1. Transhumance: is the method of the settled population, which was based on changing of summer (highland) and winter (plain) pastures throughout the year. The length between the pastures could be several hundred kilometers. On the road and on the pastures only the shepherd followed the flock, the family of the shepherds stayed at home, which was different from the nomadic societies. In Hungary this was introduced by the Romanian groups, who

¹ Paládi-Kovács 2001: 599.

came up to the Southern-Carpathians from the Balkan. In summer they went to the alpine pastures, and in the autumn they tended their herds to the Danube region and Dobrudja, later to Moldva and to the Tiszántúl. According to the Austrian duty registers the wintering of Transylvanians lived its golden age on Havasföld and in Moldva, at the beginning of the 19th century.²

2.2. Highland, alpine shepherding: this was based on two natural grass sources, the meadows of the valleys and the alps above the forest belt. The livestock was owned by the farmers, living in the valley's villages, who harvested hay in the summer on the meadows of the valley and the alps, while the shepherds herded the animals on the alpine pastures. In the winter the livestock was fed on hay and they were staying on the winter shelters of the village or the meadows, where the hay was stored. The distance between the village and the summer alpine pasture was short (5-25 km). Alpine shepherding was characterized by developed dairying and cheese making. This type of herding developed in the countries of the Alps, in the Jura Mountains and in the Carpathians at the beginning of modern times.³ This system can still be found in many regions of Transylvania.

2.3. Steppe shepherding, steppe renters: on the Great Hungarian Plain the system of *steppe's shepherding* and the "*pusztabérlet*" (*renting of steppe lands*) developed in the 14th century. The "*szabad bérlők*" (*free renters*) were the entrepreneur, enriching peasants of the market-towns, who built shelters on the pastures and hired herdsmen to herd their cattle-herd and flock. The beef-cattle became the primal export product of Hungary at this time, on which the society of *tózsér-s* and *hajtó-s* was built upon. This lived its golden age between the 14th and the 18th century. Besides cattle, sheep played an important role too – but it wasn't that important as the cattle.⁴

2.4. Animal breeding of complex farming-animal breeding plants: these plants joint the cultivation and animal breeding.⁵

3. Pastoralism in history and in modern times

Approaching to the times we live in, the intensive farming spread, till it got to the industry-like systems in closed places, through stabling. The old Hungarian breeds bore well the *extensive farming*, which was based on grazing, but the rising of agriculture's importance, the spread of intensive breeding, the change of breeds caused its decline.⁶ *Extensive farming* usually meant production on lower cost per field-unit. That is the feeding of bred extensive types was based on grazing instead of hay or fodder. This breeding method coupled with simple buildings, frequent dislocation, changing of pastures, little work expenditure and low profit. Oppositely to the draught and milking stocks, the rich peasantry bred their herds of horses (*szilaj ménes*) and herds of cattles (*szilaj gulya*) and the barren flocks (*meddőnyáj*) in extensive farming. From the middle of the 18th century, this kind of animal breeding started to setback because of the progressive colonization, peopling and ploughing. It lasted longest till the middle of the 20th century on the steppes of the Great Hungarian Plain (Hortobágy, Bugac), on the flood areas, islands and on upland and alpine pastures. *Intensive farming* – and especially stabling animal breeding – was characterized by higher cost and profit per field-unit. The "*jászlas*", "*istállós*", "*igás*" and "*kezes*" (*stabling*) breeding methods were in strong connection with agriculture and it totally displaced extensive herding. Where the people had small lands and was little pasture, the folk lived mostly on farming, and kept the

² Paládi-Kovács 1993: 75-76, 255-257.

³ Paládi-Kovács 1993: 77-80.

⁴ Paládi-Kovács 1993: 80-81.

⁵ Paládi-Kovács 2001: 600.

⁶ Paládi-Kovács 2001: 601-602.

animals in stables, grazed them on stubble or fallow at the most.⁷ It was the same in the cities with big fields, where the pastures were divided and ploughed; and permanent farm system was established on them.⁸ The point of stabling farming was determined by the measure and quality of feeding.

The change of breed, which transformed the Hungarian sheep farming pertained to this process. The western merino types were naturalized and became widespread in the 18-19th century, by the wool trading boom.⁹ The racka sheep which were bred extensively, spent the nights in open sheep-folds on the pastures, and the light fence was relocated two times a week, so the sheep could manure bigger areas, but with the spread of merino sheep resulted the building of sheep-cotes.¹⁰ By the breeding of the merino, different curing treatments (for example the trepanation of the stagger sheep's skull) and equipments (for example the shepherd's crook, which was used to catch the sheep, which was necessary to treat them) were introduced. The intensive breeding of merinos was based on two types of buildings: the winter sheep-cote, which was on the crofts and stack-yards, and a similar covered but airy one, which was on the outland pasture, which was used by the flock to spend the night and the midday in. Near the sheep-cote on the outland pasture, there was a hut for the shepherd. The sheep-cote localized the flock to one central place during the period of grazing. The owner of the flock provided the pasture around this area on his own lands. After the harvest the sheep were allowed to graze on the stubbles also. If the weather was warm enough in the late autumn or in the winter, shepherd drove out the flock to the pastures covered with fine snow layer – so they did not eat the fodder.¹¹

In the middle of the 19th century sheep breeding lived its golden age in Hungary, because of wool prosperity. The landowners grew their flocks, so they needed bigger and bigger pastures, which they took from the peasantry. As the ploughed lands grew in the following decades – also because of the river regulations – the number of sheep suddenly fall back, and by 1890 it was less than half of the 20 years earlier state. On most parts of the Great Hungarian Plain the pastures were taken from the livestock, which was earlier bred extensively. The horse, cattle and pig breeding changed to stabling-feed methods, but the sheep flocks were still using the pastures, and with the pastures, the number of sheep decreased as well. There was an ideal standard for the number of horses, cattle and pigs for every family with different financial situations. But sheep had no such norm. It was not considered imperfectness, if a farmer on the Great Plain had no sheep at all. There were families with only a few (maximum 10-15) sheep, and in some wealthy families breeding sheep was an important production line. In this case the family could live on 70-80 sheep. Sheep-owners did not breed more than 100-150 sheep, and the sheep of the smaller farmers were added to this in the summer, which were grazed for a wage. On the fields which used rotation-system, sheep could graze primarily on the stubble and on the fallow. The fertilizing with the constant movement of the sheep-pen

⁷ Paládi-Kovács 2001: 602.

⁸ Györffy 1934: 117.

⁹ Before the merino-types, racka and the so-called „*parlagi*” (*fallow*) types were spread. Once racka was general on Hungarian speaking areas, but later it was supplanted to the Tiszántúl, and remained only on the Hortobágy. Fortunately it can be found in more and more regions again. This type with twisted horn and rough wool, was not bred by the neighbour people. Its connection to Hungarians can be seen by the name „*magyar juh*” (*Hungarian sheep*) used by other people far away from each other; for example the Romanians in the Transylvanian basin, and Goral people on regions of Tatra. Probably another type with softer wool, came to Hungary from Moravia long before the merino. The Hungarian word *berke* or *birka* (*not racka type*) is referring to this. In the times of the racka-merino change, the word *juh* (*sheep*) was mainly used for the old Hungarian sheep, while the word *birka* (*sheep*) was used for the merino types. K. Kovács 1979: 689-691.

¹⁰ Fél – Hofer 1997: 128.

¹¹ Fél – Hofer 1997: 129.

was used here. On the common-pastures sheep could graze only after the big-bodied animals (horse, cattle).¹²

4. Types of grassland

Grazing, utilizing the grassy, woody fields is a natural form of animal breeding. In the Carpathian basin we can differentiate at least five traditional pasture types by the natural and environmental capabilities:

1. **Steppe pasture:** besides the original grass of the Great Plain we can count here the lick pastures – which were the result of the river regulations in the 18th and 19th century – and the lands covered in sand, quicksand. The lick lands were typical in the Hortobágy, in Békés County and in the Bánság, the sand covered steppes were typical in the Nyírség and Kiskunság. Common grass types: *chamomile*, *matgrass*, *bromes*, *festuce*. These were poorly useable for farming, but they were also poor as a meadow, so they were used for sheep-farming.
2. **Meadow-lands, wet pastures:** wet pastures can be dangerous for sheep (fluke-worm or the rot in sheep), but these lands could be well used by meadow swine-breeding.
3. **Woodland pasture:** the peculiar summer-winter pasture of foliated wood belt. It was significant especially in the mixed foliage of Oak-yards, where there was rich undergrowth. Woodland pastures were utilized for cattle-, sheep- and pig husbandry, in the mid-sized mountains and hilly areas (Transdanubia, Highlands). Once there were more woodland pastures on the Great Hungarian Plain as well, but they disappeared because of the grazing, mowing and wintering of the livestock.
4. **Alpine pasture:** grass lands above 800 meters. Its rich flora, grass are good for the milking of sheep. Alpine pastures were perfect for cattle pastures and for sheepwalks, but because of the big snow they were inappropriate for winter pasturing. It was especially important in Székely Land and in the cattle- and sheep-farming of other Transylvanian groups (Ghymes, Csángós of seven villages, in Máramaros, Szatmár, Kalotaszeg, Fekete-Körös valley).
5. **Uncultivated land, fallow, stubble:** the uncultivated land served as hayfield and pasture. The pastures near to these villages had an important role in the yearly cycle of grazing, until the 1960-1970s. Fallow was used as a hayfield or meadow for years in the fallow-system. In the two- and three-course rotation farming, the next half or third of the land (the fallow) was used as a pasture as well. Animals were usually allowed to graze on the stubble also, between the 20th of August and the beginning of November that is from the end of the harvest to the start of autumn plough. At the end of the winter, and in the spring the green autumn crop was grazed as well. Grazing helped to exterminate the furrow-weed and it also fertilized these fields.¹³ In Transylvania the ground was fertilized by moving the dismountable sheep-fold and sheep-pen, so the flock spent every night on a different spot. This method – called “*kosarazás*” – had great importance on those areas where the stable-manure was not used for soil-amelioration; and also where it was hard to transport the stable-manure (for example the highlands), but here the sheep flocks were available. On the Great Hungarian Plain and in the Transdanubia it was used in many places, but still scattered and on a less degree. On the Great Hungarian Plain – mostly in the Middle Ages – the flocks were also moving from one place to another, but without moving any buildings; it was called “*telkesítés*”.¹⁴ The number of nights a flock spent on a farmer’s land during the *kosarazás* was determined by the number sheep he had in the flock.

5. Sheep farming : economy, society and environment

¹² Fél – Hofer 1997: 126-128.

¹³ Paládi-Kovács 2001: 606-607.

¹⁴ Földes 1980: 281.

The system of *infield- and outland pastures* were present on the stack-yard villages of the Great Hungarian Plain, in the mountain of medium height and in the alpine region. In these villages of the Great Plain, the building site and the farming grounds were separated. Houses – with maybe a poultry-house or a pigsty – were standing on small crofts in the middle of the village or the town. The stack-yards with the farming buildings were next to the building site, or in some cases they were located farer from it.¹⁵ At the border of these villages, after the belt of *stack-yards* came the zone of *infield pastures*. There lived the milking-flocks and the shepherds. The herds of cattle and the pig-herds – with the brood sow – went there daily. The horse-herds of dry-mills and draught-oxen were grazing there. On the outland pastures lived most of the young stock: the cattle and extensive herds of horses and cattle. There grazed the flocks of barren-sheep and wethers, and the pig-herds, which like marshy and moorish places. From spring to autumn they lived outside with their shepherds, and the farmers visited them only a few times. While the infields were at the margin of the village, the outland pastures were really far away (for example in the Kiskunság 80-100 km).¹⁶

For centuries, until the introduction of the strict forest-laws and the protection works against flood and swamp draining works in the 19th century, the *system of summer and winter pastures* were in effect. On the Great Hungarian Plain the summer and winter pastures and shelters were kept separate even in the 16-17th century.¹⁷ The villagers kept infields and hayfields for winter pastures which were close to the village, so they could keep there the valuable parts of the wintering stocks. The importance of winter pastures increased after the draughty years, when only less hay could be stored. In years like this, the meadows, marshy- and flood areas were less draughty and could support the wintering of greater livestock.¹⁸ In the 18th century even many Transylvanian shepherds rented winter pastures in the Tiszántúl or in the Bácság. In the 19-20th centuries the corn-stalk left on the fields was used as a winter pasture for cattle, and the cabbage-stump as a sheep pasture. In the mountains and hilly areas (Transdanubia, Highlands, Transylvania) oak-yards and beech-groves full of acorns, and also the floodplains of the rivers were used as winter pastures. Due to draining works and the division of lands, winter pastures on the Great Plain disappeared by the beginning of the 20th century. After that the livestock was forced back to the villages or farmsteads. The forest-law of 1898 set-back woodland wintering, preparation of leaves as a fodder and grazing on budding branches. Summer pasturing lasted even between 1880 and 1960 in two different forms: renting summer pastures by villages or smaller peasantry communities; and leasing livestock (especially sheep flocks) for the summer.¹⁹

In Hungary common flock organization and the institution of common shepherding is known since the Middle Ages. Regulation of common pastures, organizing common flocks and hiring shepherds became a function of cities in the 14-15th century.²⁰ For the rural small works, organizing common flocks meant workforce and time saving, but also some expenses and obligations. Even the simplest forms of flock collectives needed the cooperation of farmers (guarding, hiring of shepherds, paying for them, providing them houses, keeping sire etc.). Two types of collective herd keeping is known: the herd living on the infield pastures, which were driven to the pasture and back daily, they had strong connection with the farmer. The farmer milked his livestock daily, saw them daily and looked after them. And there was the herd living on the outer pastures spent the whole year – or most of it – in a shelter on a pasture far from the farm. The herd's shelter of the steppes, and alpine regions, and also the people

¹⁵ Györffy 1943.

¹⁶ Paládi-Kovács 2001: 607-608.

¹⁷ Takáts 1961: 217-218.

¹⁸ Szabadfalvi 1970: 112-113.

¹⁹ Paládi-Kovács 1965: 48.

²⁰ Paládi-Kovács 1993: 123-124.

and animals living there, formed totally differentiated works in space and time. The connection between the herd and the farmer was loose; the shepherds were supervised by a chosen representative of the collective farms. In case of this collective herd keeping the collective property was increased by the *esztena* (*milking-pen*), cheese-house, sheep-cote etc. In case of milking herds all dairy works were done by the shepherds, and the farmers shared in from the cheese and curd cheese. For the complex farming works extensive breeding and collective shelters had the benefits of release from a great part of the work during the summer peaks.

Many farmers, estate owners and renters had animal breeding plants on steppe shelters, far shepherd's shelters during the era of capitalism. "*Szállás*" (*shelter*) and "*tanya*" (*farmstead*) were typical forms of employing herdsmen in the 18th century – and also before this era – by the manorial farms and steppe-renters.

In smaller villages the organization of collective flocks, hiring of herdsman, regulation of grazing order were the tasks of the village community, and later the grazing-associations. On the villages with bigger lands and higher population, appeared the autonomous agricultural association of husbandmen, who undertook the organization of herds, in the 18th century. The order of pasture usage, the division of the pastures between local farm-communities – based on the districts was prescribed by a council. This council unified the wages of herdsmen – adjusting to the limitations, and made decisions in cases harming the public order or common law. But the organization of flocks, hiring and supervising of herdsmen, the distribution milk, dairy products and the cost were the responsibilities of "*gazdatársak*" (*partner farmers*) and their elected leaders.

Autonomous animal breeding farms emerged early and existed nationwide in sheep husbandry. In the Tiszántúl sheep breeding farms were organized partly on cousinhood, partly on "old customs". In the Hajdúság and Nagykunság they had two different types of herds: milking herd on the infield pastures, for which an *esztrenga* (milking pen) was built and the barren-herd on the outer pastures. Milking-flocks were milked twice or three times a day by the shepherds, the number of sheep in the flocks was restricted. In the towns of Tiszántúl, farmers organized flocks with 120-180 sheep. If a farmer had 20-30 sheep in the flock, he received the milk of one whole day. So every farmer received milk for a day on during the week, and the Sunday-milk increased the wage of the shepherd.²¹ The distribution of milk and dairy products was a more important matter among the Transylvanian "*esztanaközösségek*" (*milking-pen communes*) than on the lands of Duna and Tisza, where the distribution was made based on the number of sheep. In Transylvania at the beginning of milking-season a test milking – called "*bemires*" – was done to determine the potential amount of milk, on which the cheese and cottage cheese was distributed.²²

By organizing collective flocks and common pastures, and hiring a shepherd for the village, complex rural farms were not totally relieved from the responsibilities of the daily tasks of animal breeding. One part of their livestock spent the time from spring to autumn on the outer farms, the other spent the whole year on the barn-yard or in the buildings of the farmstead. The peasantry farms and household could not work without draught-animals, milking animals and the poultry which gave them eggs and meat. Rural animal breeders gave their animals into cattle-, pig-herds and sheep flocks which went to the pastures and returned daily, as long as the common pastures and common flock organization existed. Especially the small farms came upon this. The breaking up of farms into little bits and farm-reallocation drove the cooperation – which remained from the feudal era – to a new direction in the second half of the 19th century. The distribution of pastures, the disappearance of outer farms and the elimination of external cattle-herds, horse-herds and sheep flocks quickly progressed in the

²¹ Paládi-Kovács 2001: 612-613.

²² K. Kovács 1968: 9-50.

first half of the 20th century. In line with this, the privatization of peasantry animal breeding and the ceasing of cooperation sped up. The importance of inner animal breeding plants and farmstead's farming grew, or in other words the role farm, which did not required common herd organization. Sheep breeding of little farms was spread even in the 1940s; for example in Tolna and Baranya counties where there were 5-10 sheep in every yard, and also in little farms of Nógrád, Gömör, Borsod, Abaúj-Torna and Transylvania. Little farmers of the Great Plain kept some sheep on their barn-yards.²³

The proportion and importance of private pastures grew throughout the country. For example the re-allocation of 1927 in Átány also decreased their size. The wealthy farmers seized the lands at the far part of the borders, which were mainly good as pastures. They received a big parcel of those low value lands, and built farmsteads to start sheep husbandry.²⁴ A similar process ran its course near the villages in Borsod County and the northern parts of Heves County. Following the examples of manors, on the northern belt spread the farmsteads of large farmers. Farmsteads were built for the wealthy farmer's flock and shepherd. This branch was separated in space and organizationally from the rural farming crofts.²⁵

The farming of farmsteads inevitably included the animal breeding plant as well. Historically it developed from an animal wintering shelter to a permanently inhabited private settlement, where sheep-pens, sheep-folds and sheds and later houses were built for the extensive flock and the shepherd. In the second phase of farmstead development, farmsteads became the summer shelter of well-mannered and draught animals, while the yards of the inland fields (towns, villages) still had a stable on them. Milking sheep and store-pig were placed to the shelter, farmstead at latest. But the pigsty was still standing on the town and village yards of the farmstead owner farmers when their animal breeding on the inland fields shrank to a minimum.²⁶

Animal breeding plants of the farmsteads had several forms from the "*rideg tanya*" (*rideg is a word for extensive in Hungarian – the translator*) on the Tiszántúl to the productional, pig-fattening capitalist detached farms. On the pastures of the detached farmsteads grazing was done individually, guarding was solved by the family. Herdsmen can be found mainly in farmstead shepherding, on the places of pasturing animal husbandry. Herdsmen lived with their family on the detached farmsteads; they looked after and milked the flock of the farmer, who lived in the village. Until the 1960s, this farmstead type was especially popular in the North Hungarian Mountains and on the plains of Heves and Borsod counties.²⁷

In the detached farmsteads, the number of pigs and cows generally grew proportionally with the size of the estate. On the small holdings (farmstead of 10 cadastral acres) in the Tiszazug draught-oxen, sheep and young cattle were not bred in the 20th century. Self-care, pig- and poultry breeding had greater importance.²⁸ The number of livestock was low on most of the intensive farmsteads – which specialized on vineyards and market gardening – because keeping a lot of sheep could have made it impossible to grow root crops. There the field renters were constrained by the towns, for example in sheep breeding. While they prescribed the growing of papilionaceae fodder, territorial standards of root crops, and the timing of the fields' fertilization. For example the farmstead renters of Kecskemét with 10 acres could breed 5 sheep, and above this one more per 2 cadastral acres.²⁹

²³ Paládi-Kovács 2001: 614-615.

²⁴ Fél – Hofer 1997: 34.

²⁵ Paládi-Kovács 1965: 31.

²⁶ Orosz 1980: 202-203.

²⁷ Paládi-Kovács 1965: 30-32.

²⁸ Szabó 1997: 435.

²⁹ Für 1980: 270.

The downgrading of sheep husbandry is related with the plough and cultivation of pastures, also because sheep liked the lick pastures where only small grass grew - they did not eat the big grass, only stamped it flat - moreover cattle breeding was more profitable than sheep breeding, therefore where they had grass of eligible quality they rather kept cattle. Lamb consumption in Hungary is far below poultry, pig or cattle consumption, so the demand for its breeding is much less, then for the other rehearsed types.

6. The current situation

In the 1960s private farms ceased because they were taken into public ownership, but neither the farmer's co-operative nor the restarting economy in the 1990s paid attention to sheep husbandry. The number of livestock is really low, and because of this significant/big fields were left unutilized. In 2006 7.584 sheep breeders had 1.137.258 sheep. The ratio of sheep breeders with less than 100 sheep was 15,22%. The number of sheep breeding farms with 100-500 sheep was 2.408 and the ratio of sheep bred by them (47,63%) was the highest. The number of farms with 500-1000 sheep was 370, the ratio of sheep kept by them was 22,23%. 93 farms bred more than 1.000 sheep and the ratio of their sheep stock was 14,87% of the total sheep livestock. Most of the farms are producers for the market, but they are not deliberate producer-breeders, so they are dealing with sale problems. But sheep husbandry could be a way of keeping the population in the rural areas and a way of rural development. The cultivation of lands, which are under environmental protection, could be solved by sheep breeding.³⁰ The quality of the soil of non-grazed pastures degrades, and the ecological balance overturns, weeds appear and the lands become wild. The professionals of National Parks know that they can't sustain the balance of nature without these animals.³¹

Nowadays more and more land lies fallow, in the agrarian sector in Hungary is dealing with difficulties. In my opinion, sheep breeding could be a good solution, because this undemanding animal could help in the utilization of uncultivated, low quality fields, and keeping these fields clear, which could be useful for environmental protection.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Edit FÉL – Tamás HOFER

1997 *Arányok és mértékek a paraszti gazdálkodásban*. Balassi Kiadó, Budapest

László FÖLDES

1980 Kosarazás. In: ORTUTAY Gyula főszerk. *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon* III. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 281.

Lajos FÜR

1980 A „belterjes” tanya. In: PÖLÖSKEI Ferenc – SZABAD György szerk. *A magyar tanyarendszer múltja*. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 216-271.

István GYÖRFFY

³⁰ Kukovics – Jávör 2007: 2-4.

³¹ Kukovics – Jávör 2007: 8.

1934 Állattartás. In: GYÖRFFY István – VISKI Károly: *A magyarság néprajza* II. Budapest, 107-182.

1943 *Magyar falu – magyar ház*. Turul, Budapest

László K. KOVÁCS

1968 A közös fejős juhnyájak tejhasznvételi formái Erdélyben 1900 körül. *Népi Kultúra – Népi Társadalom* I. 9-50.

1979 Juh. In: ORTUTAY Gyula főszerk. *Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon* II. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 689-691.

Sándor KUKOVICS – András JÁVOR

2007 A juhágazat szerepe a gyephasznosításban.

<http://www.avacongress.net/ava2007/presentations/vs2/7.pdf>

Attila PALÁDI-KOVÁCS

1965 *A keleti palócok pásztorkodása*. Műveltség és Hagyomány VII. Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, Debrecen

1993 *A magyar állattartó kultúra korszakai*. MTA Néprajzi Kutatóintézet, Budapest

2001 Állattartó gazdaságok. In: SZILÁGYI Miklós szerk. *Magyar Néprajz* III. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 599-616.

István OROSZ

1980 A „rideg tanya”. In: PÖLÖSKEI Ferenc – SZABAD György szerk. *A magyar tanyarendszer múltja*. Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 170-215.

József SZABADFALVI

1970 *Az extenzív állattenyésztés Magyarországon*. Műveltség és Hagyomány XII. Kossuth Lajos Tudományegyetem, Debrecen

László SZABÓ

1997 *A munka néprajza*. Debrecen

Sándor TAKÁTS

1961 *Művelődéstörténeti tanulmányok a XVI-XVII. századból*. Gondolat Kiadó, Budapest