

FOREWORD

Although pastoral transhumance has been identified as “one of the most distinctive characteristics of the Mediterranean world” (Braudel), notably the herding practices and the sociocultural life of shepherds and pastoralists as well as their versatile role as actors in the late medieval Mediterranean space are still largely unexplored. When for example addressing shepherd communities in 15th–16th – century Southeastern Europe, it’s first and foremost the transhumant herding communities of Vlachs and Morlachs that inspire the idea of the Balkan pastoralism to this day. These herders pastured their herds on the meadows of the Dinaric Alps in summer, while seasonally migrating to warmer coastal areas in winter. In the Venetian realm on the Eastern Adriatic coast, they rented pastures in karst areas, entered into business relations with locals and, from the late 15th century onwards, also settled in the hinterland of Dalmatian cities. Apart from these transhumant Vlach and Morlach communities, however, also a sedentary local form of animal husbandry existed along the coast and on the islands of Venetian Dalmatia. While historiography often instrumentalized the former for narratives of ethnic and national origins, the latter has been studied only rather secondarily either by legal historians analysing communal statutes or by economic historians adopting quantifying approaches to outline the economic impact of animal husbandry.

This thematic groupage of dedicated studies aims at overcoming the boundaries of national historiographies and disciplinary traditions by comprehensively studying and discussing new insights into both transhumant and sedentary shepherd communities in the late medieval Mediterranean Basin –encompassing cases from the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, and the Balkans up to the Greek realms in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its focus centres on scrutinizing different forms of pastoral communities, defined by sociocultural practices, seasonal routine and legal status, and the herders’ interaction with and perception by both state administration and (rural) society. Whereas shepherds, based upon their seminomadic lifestyle, were usually understood as marginal communities, these studies moreover emphasize their significant role in interconnecting rural and urban communities from different regions and cultural and political contexts. As economic agents, even if perceived as rather closed communities, shepherds had to be acquainted not only with local laws, market rules, prices and herding customs, but often – particularly in the case of transhumant pastoralism – also with varying political systems, borders and tax regimes as well as with different cultural contexts and environmental conditions. The mobility of flocks, the permanent need for fresh grass and water, the need for

protection and settlement during winter and the need for markets for ovine products transformed the shepherds' world into a fascinating but yet understudied field of, amongst others, cross-cultural interaction in the late medieval Mediterranean basin and its hinterlands.

The anatomy of this thematic groupage is composed of six studies covering a large panel of Pastoral aspects from areas that connect the Western and Eastern Nordic shores of the Mediterranean. Focussing on the rural spaces from Iberian, Italian and Balkan (and Greek) Peninsulas, these studies bring a series of new approaches and working hypothesis on the topic of shepherding. The contributions collected here resulted from the ideas shared in different academic contexts by a group of young postdoctoral researchers who thought that a joint project on shepherding could be a good start for a common effort toward a better understanding of the life and functioning of voiceless communities. Therefore, we discuss new archival material, approaches focussed on mobility, interaction, collaboration and coexistence, and political interventions and propose a holistic perspective on the shepherds' world at the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Modern Ages.

First contribution belongs to Lydia Allué trained at the Universities of Toulouse and Zaragoza and concerns the pastoralism specific to the Spanish rural hinterland. The main goal of the paper is to emphasize the creation, role and function of the *Comunidad de aldeas de Daroca* from Aragon. Created to control the tensions and the conflicts appearing among the shepherds, this institution had mainly the role of a legal authority involved in organizing and regulating the use and consume of the resources needed by the shepherds while interacting with the sedentary communities. The seasonal migration of the Spanish herds presented in this paper covers the space between the plains of Ebro Valley and the slopes of the Pyrenees, in the North, and the Iberian System to the Southwest. In this case the author speaks about a great variety of legal regimes concerning livestock herding. In particular, the article emphasizes the evolution of the *Comunidad de aldeas de Daroca* during the late Middle Ages and the Early Modern Ages. The paper analyses the political, economic and social changes that led to increasing the pastoral/shepherding related activities. The institution of *Comunidad de aldeas de Daroca* was one of the most important when it came to the protection of raising the livestock. The Concord signed in 1559 marked the end of centuries of negotiations between communities and public institutions. This case study is also relevant for understanding the need of a „rule” to assure the good functioning of the livestock raising.

The second contribution of the groupage, a paper proposed by Davide Cristoferi, focusses on another institution created to supervise and coordinate the pastoral communities and pasturelands. Cristoferi emphasises the *Dogana dei Paschi* and the hinterland of medieval Tuscany. The aim of the article is to analyse *the legal and social status and the perception* of the pastoral community and its interactions with the *Dogana* (the administrative forum). There are also researched

and analysed the continuous negotiations, conflicts and bargains that led to the development and structure of *Dogana dei Paschi* between 1353 and 1419. Analysing the statute of the *Dogana* the author underlines the differences between the coexisting groups, social statutes of the individuals and the temporality of interactions according to the pastoral calendar. The *dialogue between city-states and the urban market elites with the pastoralists shaped the transhumance* and impregnated it with *formal and informal agency* throughout the rural Tuscany.

The paper proposed by Eleni Sakellariou discusses the terminology of mobility within the southern Italian pastoral spaces. It fills the gap of understanding the phenomenon created between the traditional schools focussed on local practices of livestock grazing and the new historiographic approaches aiming to analyse the mobility of the individuals and the influence they collect or project on the *milieux* (human or natural) they cross. This contribution emphasizes in a concise and complete manner the context and stages of the pastoral life in southern Italy. The journey of the herds, herders, state employees, marketeers and so many more individuals is documented, connected with the infrastructure (institutional and roads) and seasonal specifics. Naturally influenced by the climatic and geographic realities and by the pastoral calendar, the life of the shepherds and their flocks is “organically linked” with the other forms of living in the areas affected by transhumance. Eleni Sakellariou builds her paper on a series of strong arguments for the coexistence and collaboration among individuals that share different degrees of mobility. The isolation is no longer the attribute of the shepherds but it is replaced with a set of well-known occasional interactions marked by economic and subsistence reasons. Mobility in this case is the feature that connects communities and fills the gaps between husbandry and transhumance.

With the third contribution, belonging to Katerina Korre the volume crosses the Adriatic toward the more fragmented and culturally diverse space of the Balkan world. The work of Katerina Korre adds to the discussion and addresses one of most challenging aspects of the pastoral life in the Balkans: the military role of the transhumant communities. She researches the Byzantine heritage assimilated by the Venetian Republic in order to assure stability and safety in border areas of the Western Balkans in the case study represented by the Byzantine Despotate of Morea and the Venetian territories in the Greek peninsula during the 14th and 15th centuries. Recovering Byzantine practices of colonizing immigrants and shepherd communities in areas affected by war, plague or draught, this paper adds to the portray of the shepherds the military skill. It seems to be the best solution for assuring a formal stability in regions under permanent threat of military confrontations. Venice, as heir of the Byzantine territories from the Eastern Balkans, as often stated by its men, inspired its settlement policy from these practices and attracted in the territories the Republic administrated in Morea colonists, provided them with lands, exemptions and salaries aiming to increase the demographic resources so much needed for economic and safety stability.

The contribution of Dana Caciur also focuses on the Venetian measures applied for controlling the presence of the Morlach shepherds in Venetian Dalmatia during the 15th and 16th centuries. Additional to the identification issue represented by the ethnical uncertainties of the Morlachs (Vlachs), the issue of their specific pastoral lifestyle conflicting with the rural sedentary husbandry created a relevant case study for understanding the administrative, politic and diplomatic decisions taken by Venice. With multiple examples this paper emphasizes the legal distinction made between sedentary husbandry (Dalmatian owners of herds and lands) and transhumant shepherds present occasionally in the hinterland of Dalmatia. Also, the Morlach shepherding in Dalmatia is a tolerated practice that became an essential resource for the markets (local and not only) and so found ways to be included in the rural life of the province. Up to some extent, one can identify similarities with other pastoral spaces: given the presence of the Morlach shepherds in Dalmatia during the winter months, they conclude renting contracts and pay taxes and fulfil other demands in order to assure for themselves accommodation, food and water for the herds and markets for the resulted products. This inclusion to the Venetian system in Dalmatia became during the Sixteenth century one of the most debated aspects of the Venetian-Ottoman diplomacy, when the topic was the border areas of Dalmatia. Regarding the Morlach shepherds the paper aimed to recover rules and laws of this practice in Dalmatia despite the limited Venetian sources.

The last contribution of the volume belongs to Wojciech Sajkowski and addresses the legal and social status of the Vlachs living in the sanjak of Klis in the middle of the 16th century. Based on the content of an Ottoman tax register, the author managed to recover information about structure and function of the Vlach communities at the borders with the Venetian territories from Dalmatia. It also argues for the prevalent socio-economic life of the Vlachs, the shepherding, but stresses on the Ottoman attempts on settling the Vlach immigrants and include them among the human resources needed to provide military services.

There are few arguments that make this thematic groupage relevant and worthy to be emphasized here. First, all the papers argue for an inherent link between geographies and climates of the spaces, agriculture, sedentary husbandry and shepherding. Discussing advantages and disadvantages for the constant interactions between the pastoralists and non-pastoralists all the papers seem to agree on the aspect of cooperation (with or without the institutional help). Obviously, there where the institutions were better and stronger structured (like in Spanish and Italian spaces) the perception over the shepherding communities is better perceived and the interaction between different groups of individuals better documented (control elements, tax collectors, merchants, butchers, etc.). On the other side, where the institutions of control were still consolidating (Dalmatia, Greece) it is easier to observe how diverse were the ways of inclusion, how large

was the frame of action and how important was the legal status of the transhumant shepherds, even for the cross-border diplomacy.

Secondly, the papers of these groupage propose historiographic discussions. Bringing new archival materials, the authors test the traditional theories regarding the shepherding lifestyle and even their isolation. The mobility of the transhumant shepherds does not mean disconnection but transfer of practices from one region to another according to their pastoral calendar. Dividing the year, the shepherds interact, adapt, and exploit the local networks and resources according to formally accepted statutes/rules/laws. The conflicts, bargains or disobedience are nothing but natural responses to contextual actions and reactions. Their presence, either on the summer pasturelands or the winter ones, is desired and expected and contributes substantially to the local treasuries, markets and even for the protection of the roads. To all of these, shepherds appear to have played a key role in increasing the regional demographics when affected by wars or plagues, this being the reason for many attempts to settle the shepherds and to assimilate them to the sedentary – tax-paying lifestyle.

The third and last observation arguing for the value of the papers consist in the holistic perspective it creates on the Mediterranean world. Apparently contextualised to specific regions, geographies and political contexts, the studies collected here mirror the realities of a social category present from the Spanish territories to the Balkans. When analysed individually one understands the differences: administrative units more or less clear delimited, institutions of control better or worse structured and documented, and a social status accepted as part of the rural life, or a status in negotiation on its way to find a place in a state. When analysed together (a zoomed-out perspective) one can see the similarities: a mobile life style, a calendar respected in accordance with the needs of the herds and a social group that keeps yet many questions without answers.

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