



A SYMBOLIC ATLAS OF THE ȚURCANĂ SHEEP BREED

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Abstract: The authors of this paper approach the idea of a symbolic atlas of the Țurcana sheep breed to provide an interdisciplinary vision of the one that is nicknamed the "Queen of the Mountains". Such a symbolic atlas contains a chronology of the Țurcană sheep breed, a regional map of the Țurcană sheep breed, mythological layers of the pastoral folklore of Arad and Banat in which the Țurcană sheep breed is found, and symbols and archetypes related to the varieties of the Țurcană sheep breed. All this is based on a rich bibliography consisting in articles and books on this topic.

• Introduction

The purpose of this work is to build a symbolic atlas of the Țurcană sheep breed that will provide an interdisciplinary vision of the one that is nicknamed the "Queen of the Mountains". The symbolic atlas of the Țurcană sheep breed contains the chronology of the Țurcană sheep breed, the regional map of the Țurcană sheep breed, the mythological layers of the pastoral folklore of Arad and Banat in which the Țurcană sheep breed is found, and the symbols and archetypes related to the varieties of the Țurcană sheep breed.

The chronology of the Țurcană sheep breed begins with the Dacian era and reaches the present day:

- ❑ The Dacian era – archaeological evidence of transhumant herding in the Carpathian Mountains: traces of prehistoric sheepfolds (in the area of the Trascău Mountains, the south of the Apuseni Mountains), pastoral artifacts from the Bronze and Iron Ages (ceramic vessels, stone and bone tools, traces of controlled fires), toponymy and trails in the Bran-Moieciu, Muscel and Țara Hațegului areas (La Baltă, La Câmp, Drumul Oilor, Stâna Veche);
- ❑ The 18th-19th centuries – stabilization of local varieties through natural selection and seasonal migration in the Western Plain and Transylvania (archives);
- ❑ The period 1920-1950 – the first attempts at directed breeding in Banat (at the Caransebeș Research Station; in agricultural cooperatives and farmers' circles through the Agrarian Reform of 1921 by centralizing animal husbandry from 1945-1950, with emphasis on state control over production and selection; and by importing breeding stock);
- ❑ The period 1970-1980 – the communist regime proposes replacement with foreign breeds, motivating low productivity, standardization and planning and genetic control and directed improvement, and applying measures such as the prohibition of uncontrolled matings, "zootechnical re-education" campaigns and the reduction of the Țurcană sheep herd: the effects of these measures consisted in the resistance of the shepherds, survival through adaptation and post-communist rehabilitation;
- ❑ The period 2000-present – recognition as a strategic breed in mountain animal husbandry and as cultural heritage.

• Material and method

The material on which this paper relies consists in articles and other documents regarding the Țurcană sheep breed and its varieties. The research method used in this paper is the bibliographic method.

• Results and discussion

The regional map of the Țurcană sheep breed shows the areas of origin of the main Țurcană varieties (Figure 1):

- (1) Brează – Jiu Valley, Parâng Mountains;
- (2) Bucălaie – Apuseni Mountains, Huedin-Câmpeni area;
- (3) Creață de Caransebeș – Mountainous Banat, around Caransebeș and the Semenik Mountains;
- (4) Oacheșă – Făgăraș Mountains, Sâmbăta de Sus area;
- (5) Ruginie (central Transylvania, close to Sibiu area).



Table 1. Romanian areas of origin of the main varieties of Țurcană

The symbols and archetypes related to the varieties of the Țurcană sheep breed are (Figure 2):

- ❖ Brează – archetype of purity – characterized by the black face with white brindle and which is the symbol of balance and motherhood;
- ❖ Bucălaie – archetype of strength – characterized by the massive head, strong muscles and the connection with the myth of the brave shepherd;
- ❖ Creață de Caransebeș – archetype of fertility – characterized by the curly wool, the large amount of milk and the connection with spring rituals;
- ❖ Oacheșă – archetype of the fairy – characterized by contoured eyes and mythical beauty, and which is present in carols and fairy tales;
- ❖ Rust – archetype of ancestry – characterized by brown wool and evoking the past and solstice rituals.



Figure 2. Varieties of Țurcană sheep breed:
a – Brează; b – Creață de Caransebeș; c – Oacheșă; d – Ruginie.

• Conclusions

It contains a chronology of the Țurcană sheep breed (spanning a period from the Dacian era to the present), a regional map of the Țurcană sheep breed (showing the location of the main five varieties of the Țurcana sheep breed), mythological layers of the pastoral folklore of Arad and Banat in which the Țurcană sheep breed is found (materialised in mythological symbolism, nedeias and fairs, doinas and ballads, and traditions of transhumance), and symbols and archetypes related to the five varieties of the Țurcană sheep breed.