



MYTHOLOGICAL TYPOLOGY OF SHEEP

DANIELA VĂLUȘESCU¹, MARIA SAUER¹, ANA-GINA ARMAȘ¹, LOREDANA VĂDUVA²,
IOAN PETROMAN^{1*}

¹ Development Research Station for Raising Sheep and Goats, S.C.D.C.O.C. Caransebeș

²Banat's University of Life Sciences "King Mihai I", Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara

*Corresponding author's e-mail: i_petroman@yahoo.com

Abstract: In this paper, the authors focus on the mythological typology of sheep. First, mythological typology is presented. Then, based on the references mentioned at the end of the paper, they analyse the main archetypes in the mythological typology of sheep, align them with Romanian seasonal festivals and transhumance rituals, draw a ritual calendar of mythological sheep archetypes, emphasise the different cultural and mythical contexts and different sheep symbolism, as well as the benefits of establishing a mythological typology of sheep.

• Introduction

A mythological typology is a classification framework allowing the organisation of mythological elements (animals, gods, heroes, rituals) into types based on shared symbolic functions, narrative structures, or roles; a tool for comparative mythology allowing the tracing of universal patterns across diverse traditions; and a way to translate cultural memory into symbolic language bridging anthropology, folklore, and psychology.

Mythological typology includes :

- Archetypes, i.e., universal figures like the Hero, the Mother, the Sacrifice, the Trickster, etc.;
- Narrative functions, i.e. roles such as guardian, guide, rebel, redeemer, etc.;
- Ritual or seasonal alignment, i.e., mapping types to festivals, life stages, or transhumance;
- Symbolic domains, elements like Earth, Fire, Moon, Threshold, or Water.

Mythological typology matters because :

- It allows for creative expansion letting one invent new archetypes or remix existing ones;
- It supports interdisciplinary synthesis connecting cultural identity, folklore, and zootechnics;
- It transforms empirical data into symbolic insight for breed mapping, educational storytelling, and visual atlases.

• Material and method

The material used in this paper consists in studies on one of the most representative sheep breed in Romania – Țurcana Creață de Caransebeș. The research method is the comparative one given that the study covers a comparison between the morphological, productive, and genetic features of five varieties of this sheep breed.

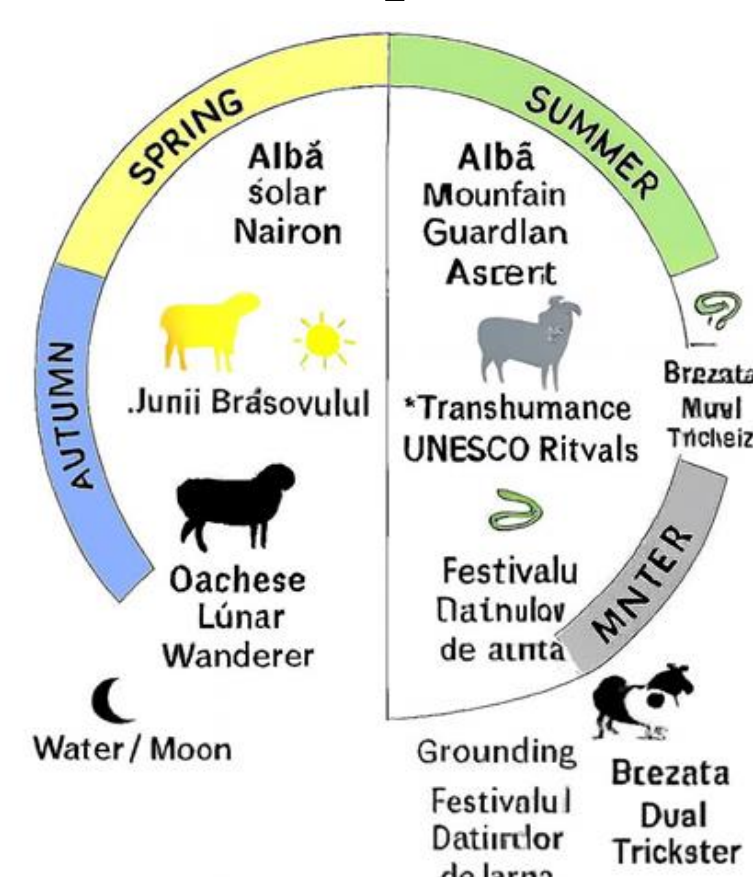


Figure 1. Ritual calendar of mythological sheep archetypes

• Results and discussion

According to sheep mythological typology, the symbolic roles of sheep are organised across cultures into archetypes reflecting cultural, seasonal, and spiritual functions (Table 1 and Figure 2).

Table 1. Main Archetypes in the Mythological Typology of Sheep

Archetype	Symbolic Role	Cultural Examples	Elemental Domain
Elder	Amcestry Grounding Memory	Archaic Țurcană Mărcușe Chthonic myths	Earth / Root
Guardian	Protection Vigilance	Țurcană Bucălăi Shepherd myths	Earth / Stone
Matron	Fertility Lineage Nurturing	Țurcană Albă Spring festivals	Air / Vital breath
Sacrifice	Offering Purity Redemption	Lamb of God (in Christianity) Aries (in Zodiac)	Fire / Light
Trickster	Ambiguity Transformation	Țurcană Brează Dual nature tales	Air / Threshold
Wanderer	Intuition Liminality	Black Țurcana Oacheșe Lunar folklore	Water / Moon



Figure 2. Main Archetypes in the Mythological Typology of Sheep

This mythological typology can be aligned with Romanian seasonal festivals and transhumance rituals, reflecting the symbolic role of sheep in cultural rhythms, ecological cycles, and spiritual transitions.

• Conclusions

The analysis above allows the following typological conclusions to be drawn:

- Sheep are mythical stabilisers because they ground cosmological cycles through fertility, memory, and sacrifice;
- Sheep breed morphology reinforces archetype: archaic traits = memory (Țurcană Mărcușe), patched fleece = ambiguity (Țurcană Brează), white fleece = purity (Țurcană Albă);
- Sheep have a seasonal typology, i.e., spring favours the Matron and the Sacrifice, autumn favours the Wanderer, and winter favours the Elder;
- Sheep serve as symbolic interfaces between human ritual and natural cycles especially in agrarian festivals and transhumance.