



INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE

Transhumance and Pastoral Heritage: Culture, Identity, and Sustainable Futures



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**BOOK
OF ABSTRACTS**



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Editorial Introduction

The present volume brings together the abstracts of the International Scientific Conference **Transhumance and Pastoral Heritage: Culture, Identity, and Sustainable Futures**, held on 30 March 2026 at the University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”. This conference constitutes a central milestone within the broader research initiative entitled **Digital Horizons of Transhumance: Preserving and Promoting the Ethnocultural Heritage of the Albanian Alps for Sustainable Development**.

The project, led by the University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi” and supported by the Agency for Scientific Research and Innovation (AKKSHI), is grounded in a multidisciplinary approach that seeks to document, digitize, and interpret the living pastoral traditions of the Albanian Alps. By combining field-based ethnographic research with digital technologies, the project contributes to the safeguarding of transhumance as both a cultural practice and an ecological system. The collected materials, ranging from interviews and audiovisual documentation to linguistic and anthropological data, form a comprehensive corpus that not only supports academic research and teaching but also becomes part of a permanent digital archive hosted at the “Oso Kuka” Museum. In this sense, the project situates itself at the intersection of heritage preservation, knowledge production, and public engagement.

Implemented over the period July 2025 to June 2026, the project encompasses a series of coordinated activities, including field expeditions, academic lectures, workshops, and the organization of this international conference. These activities are designed to strengthen scientific research capacities, enhance public awareness of pastoral heritage, and promote sustainable territorial development. By framing transhumance as a dynamic cultural asset, the project highlights its potential not only as a historical practice but also as a resource for education, tourism, and community resilience.

Within this framework, the conference serves as a platform for the presentation of research findings, the exchange of interdisciplinary perspectives, and the fostering of international collaboration. It brings together scholars, researchers, and practitioners working in fields such as anthropology, linguistics, cultural studies, geography, ecology, and heritage studies. The diversity

of disciplinary approaches reflects the complex nature of transhumance itself, which cannot be understood solely as an economic activity, but rather as a multifaceted system encompassing social organization, ecological adaptation, cultural expression, and symbolic meaning.

The contributors to this volume represent a wide range of institutional affiliations and geographical contexts. Participants come from universities and research institutions across Albania, Italy, Switzerland, Sweden, Montenegro, Kosovo, and beyond, as well as from cultural organizations, museums, and development agencies. This diversity underscores the transnational dimension of transhumance as a shared heritage practice across the Balkans and Europe. At the same time, it reflects the increasing importance of collaborative research networks in addressing complex cultural and environmental challenges. The presence of both established scholars and emerging researchers further enriches the academic dialogue, creating a dynamic space for knowledge exchange and innovation.

The thematic scope of the conference, as reflected in the abstracts included in this volume, is both broad and integrative. Several contributions focus on transhumance as an element of intangible cultural heritage, addressing issues of safeguarding, institutional recognition, and policy frameworks, particularly in relation to UNESCO and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe. These perspectives highlight the growing international recognition of transhumance and the need for coordinated strategies that link cultural preservation with sustainable development.

Another cluster of contributions explores the ecological and environmental dimensions of transhumance, emphasizing its role in biodiversity conservation, landscape management, and climate adaptation. These studies demonstrate how traditional pastoral practices can contribute to the maintenance of fragile mountain ecosystems and offer valuable insights for contemporary environmental policies. By framing transhumance as a socio-ecological system, they challenge the dichotomy between tradition and modernity and propose new ways of integrating local knowledge into global sustainability agendas.

A significant number of papers adopt a cultural and anthropological perspective, examining transhumance as a system of meanings, practices, and social relations. Topics such as ritual, memory, material culture, and oral tradition are explored in depth, revealing the ways in which pastoral life shapes collective identity and cultural continuity. Within this domain, particular attention is given to the role of language as a medium through which pastoral knowledge is encoded, transmitted, and transformed. Linguistic and ethnolinguistic studies highlight the

richness of the pastoral lexicon, phraseology, and discourse, demonstrating how language functions as a repository of ecological knowledge and cultural memory.

In addition, several contributions address the potential of transhumance as a resource for sustainable tourism and rural development. By examining models of community-based tourism and heritage valorisation, these studies identify pathways through which pastoral traditions can be revitalized and integrated into contemporary socio-economic frameworks. Such approaches are particularly relevant in the context of rural depopulation and socio-economic transformation, offering opportunities for youth engagement and the diversification of local economies.

Taken together, the contributions in this volume reflect a shared concern with the future of transhumance in a rapidly changing world. While the challenges facing pastoral communities—such as demographic decline, environmental pressures, and socio-economic transformations—are significant, the research presented here also highlights the resilience and adaptability of these systems. Transhumance emerges not as a relic of the past, but as a living practice capable of generating new forms of knowledge, identity, and sustainability.

In this sense, the conference and the present Book of Abstracts contribute to a broader rethinking of cultural heritage. Rather than viewing heritage as a static entity to be preserved, the contributions emphasize its dynamic, processual nature, shaped by ongoing interactions between communities, environments, and institutions. By bringing together diverse perspectives and methodologies, this volume aims to advance interdisciplinary dialogue and to support the development of innovative approaches to heritage research and practice.

Finally, the editors would like to express their gratitude to all contributors, members of the scientific and organizing committees, and supporting institutions whose efforts made this conference possible. It is our hope that this volume will serve not only as a record of the conference proceedings, but also as a resource for future research, collaboration, and policy development in the field of transhumance and pastoral heritage.

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THE CULTURAL ROUTES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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Abstract

Founded on 5 May 1949 with the Treaty of London, the Council of Europe today counts 46 Member States, including 27 members of the European Union. It is the longest-standing pan-European intergovernmental organization, dedicated to the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Among the main goals of the Council of Europe, culture plays a fundamental role in the promotion of human rights, as it is recognized not only as heritage to be preserved, but also as a dynamic and relational tool for building inclusive, plural and sustainable societies.

Among the most relevant operational initiatives are the Cultural Routes Programme, the Intercultural Cities Programme and the celebrations of the European Heritage Days. Each of these initiatives helps translate the Organization's core values into participatory and concrete activities. The Cultural Routes Programme of the Council of Europe was launched in 1987 with the certification of the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes. It takes the form of a network of transnational cultural routes built around shared symbolic themes, capable of expressing Europe's common cultural roots and promoting intercultural dialogue.

In 2025 the recognized Cultural Routes are 48, of which 36 cross Italy and 6 cross Albania. Among the routes involving Albania are Phoenicians' Route, ATRIUM – Architecture of Totalitarian Regimes of the 20th Century in Europe's Urban Memory, Roman Emperors and Danube Wine Route, Aeneas Route, European Route of Industrial Heritage and European Fairy Tale Route.

Within this framework, this paper focuses on the Transhumance Trails Route, certified in 2023, as a route expressing a historical practice which has shaped European culture, giving rise to a shared tangible and intangible heritage and to a transnational network of cultural routes.

Keywords: *Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe; Transhumance Trails Route; European cultural heritage; Transnational cultural networks; Intercultural dialogue*

PROGRESS OF THE TRANSHUMANCE SAFEGUARDING PLAN IN ALBANIA AFTER ITS INSCRIPTION ON THE UNESCO LIST

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Abstract

Transhumance, the traditional practice of the seasonal movement of livestock between summer and winter pastures, represents an important component of intangible cultural heritage and of traditional agro-pastoral systems in Albania. The inscription of this practice on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2023, as part of a multinational nomination, has created a new institutional and scientific context for its protection, documentation, and promotion. This development has also encouraged the design and implementation of a Safeguarding Plan and management measures aimed at preserving this traditional practice within the Albanian territory; however, its implementation has not yet reached the expected level.

This paper aims to analyse the progress of the implementation of this plan following the UNESCO inscription, focusing on institutional measures, local initiatives, and mechanisms of cooperation between public actors and the communities that sustain this tradition. The analysis is based on the review of strategic documents, public awareness activities, and projects related to ethnographic documentation, cultural education, and the promotion of transhumance as part of rural cultural identity.

Preliminary findings indicate that international recognition has contributed to increased institutional attention and to the development of initiatives aimed at the cultural and tourism valorisation of this practice. Nevertheless, the safeguarding process faces significant structural challenges related to socio-economic transformations in rural areas, the declining number of shepherds practicing transhumance, and changes in the use of pastoral territories.

In this context, the study highlights the need for integrated approaches combining cultural policy and rural development in order to support the communities that sustain this tradition and to ensure the intergenerational transmission of the practice. The safeguarding of transhumance thus represents not only an obligation within the framework of international cultural heritage conventions, but also an opportunity for sustainable development and for strengthening local cultural identity.

Keywords: *Transhumance, Safeguarding Plan, UNESCO, Traditional Agro-Pastoral Systems*

ALPINE PATURES AS BIOCULTURAL LANDSCAPES. A METHODOLOGICAL LENS TO UNDERSTAND TRANSHUMANCE

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Abstract

This study proposes transhumance as a methodological lens for understanding mountain territories as living biocultural systems, where conservation, community knowledge, and sustainable tourism converge. Transhumance is here approached as a territorial practice structuring landscape continuity and adaptability, cultural identity and tourism development. On the Alps, in particular, pasture mobility systems and their built ways have functioned along time as biocultural corridors, linking ecological cycles, community memory, and spatial orientation and design across the mountain environment. This perspective reframes pastoral heritage as an active process of landscape co-production between human communities, animals and ecosystems. In this view, routes become active parts of the built environment.

The Insubric World Heritage region of Monte San Giorgio is used as a case study, to explore this perspective on transhumance. Located along the Insubric Line — a geological and ecological threshold between Alpine and Mediterranean worlds — Monte San Giorgio preserves pastures whose botanical composition reflects this deep environmental transition, influencing seasonal mobility, grazing practices, and the transmission of pastoral knowledge.

The case of Monte San Giorgio is compared with other cases of pastoralism on the Andes, so to consider broader mountain pastoral knowledge systems, highlight shared principles of mobility, ritual relationships with mountains, and adaptive resource management, from lower valleys to higher elevations.

The contribution therefore aims primarily to initiate a methodological reflection that views transhumance as a perspective for interpreting interdependent biological, cultural and social phenomena. Secondly, it seeks to characterize transhumance in the Insubric Alpine region, highlighting its distinctive features compared to other regions.

Research question: How can Alpine pasture transhumance be taken as a methodological lens for understanding mountain territories as living biocultural systems, which link World Heritage conservation, community knowledge, and sustainable tourism development?

Keywords: *Transhumance; Biocultural heritage; Alpine pastoral systems; Mountain landscapes; Community knowledge.*

AN OUTLINE OF THE ASPECTS AND GOALS OF THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL ROUTE TRANSHUMANCE TRAILS

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Abstract

In June 2023 the Council of Europe awarded to the itinerary «Transhumance Trails» the Certification of Cultural Route.

The Certification meant the transition from a cultural, academic project to an international network, which could -if adequately organized- play a role in shaping the relations between a particular territorial contest and the people living there.

«Transhumance Trails» is not a linear Route; it is a veritable Network encompassing the transhumance trails spreading over the European continent, from the reindeer breeding in the Far North to the Mediterranean regions, and from the Atlantic coast to the Caucasus.

These trails differ quite a lot according to the type of transhumance; nevertheless they all share common fundative elements - men, animals, tools, skills, music - which form the common identity and the common heritage.

Since 2023 the Route has grown, encompassing countries beyond European boundaries, such as Mexico, with its flourishing and very vital pastoral culture, or Lebanon, where transhumance is still a living practice.

In 2025 we were proud to welcome Turkey, adding to the Network the Efeler Yolu, a route that follows ancestral paths in the mountain districts in central Turkey, covering a wide geography of plateaus and mountain passes.

At present «Transhumance Trails» is re-thinking its governance towards a federative structure, in order to achieve a better interaction with local and national institutions, and a more efficient fundraising.

Keywords: *Transhumance Trails Network; Cultural Routes of Europe; Pastoral Heritage and Identity; International Governance and Cooperation*

CULTURAL RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN THE LUMA–NËNSHKODËR TRANSHUMANCE

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Abstract

This paper examines the Luma–Nënszkodër transhumance corridor in northeastern Albania as an authentic and historically grounded route of seasonal pastoral mobility, interpreted through the lens of cultural resilience and social infrastructure. Framed within the international recognition of transhumance by UNESCO and the Council of Europe, the study situates the corridor within broader European and Balkan mobility traditions while foregrounding its locally embedded meanings. Drawing on oral narratives collected through focus group discussions with pastoral families in the Luma highlands and triangulating these accounts with ethnographic and socio-economic scholarship, the paper analyzes how vertical transhumance between alpine pastures and the Nënszkodër plain constitutes both an ecological strategy and a socio-cultural institution.

Particular attention is devoted to the cultural implications of the historical reorientation of the corridor from earlier Aegean-linked pathways toward an internally consolidated Albanian axis. Rather than signaling rupture or decline, this spatial rescaling is interpreted as adaptive reconfiguration in response to political border formation and economic transformation. The study further advances the concept of the *abllang*—the wooden arch of the pack saddle—as a form of “social infrastructure,” a material metaphor through which balance, burden-sharing, and collective endurance are culturally articulated. By distinguishing between emic narrative metaphors and etic heritage frameworks, the paper demonstrates how mobility systems are stabilized through ritual kinship, seasonal calendars, vernacular architecture, and object-based symbolism.

Through the integration of oral history and documented research, the article contributes to scholarship on pastoral heritage by conceptualizing the Luma–Nënszkodër corridor as a living cultural ecosystem in which movement is not merely economic adaptation but a structuring principle of identity, memory, and continuity.

Keywords: *Transhumance; Luma–Nënszkodër Corridor; Albania; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Social Infrastructure; Pastoralism; Oral History; Cultural Resilience; Vertical Mobility; Ritual Kinship; Vernacular Architecture*

PLANTGEOGRAPHICAL SCENARIOS FOR THE ORIGINS OF TRANSHUMANT PASTORALISM IN WESTERN EURASIA

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Abstract

Pastoralism is considered to have reached the S European coasts around the 7 th. millenium BC by migrants from the Near East, at the onset of the local Neolithic.

Since the coastal ecosystems were a limited resource for an annual coverage of food needs, the widespread natural grasslands above the tree-line in all mountain ridges in S Europe became attractive target ecosystems where to replace wild Ungulates with domestic livestock and provide it the necessary summer pasture. Being these ecosystems separated at middle altitudes by the nearly impenetrable barrier of the large dense coniferous and broadleaved forest belts of the middle Holocene, existing naturally open areas/sites, allowing nomadic herders to force this barrier and open the livestock trails which, later, gave origin to the historical and present days trails of the vertical transhumance, were needed.

After comparative surveys from the Apennines in peninsular Italy, to Turkey (Marmara Mountains Cappadokia), to Caucasus (Tusheti, Georgia), this type of sites can be detected in the small isolates of species aggregations on screes, stony outcrops scattered along the steeper slopes of valleys on the way from lowland to highland. They host representatives of steppe- and shrubsteppe/heath belts, dominated by *Juniperus* sp.pl, woody Rosaceae and continental dry grassland graminoids, as relics of an earlier forest-free landscape of late-glacial assessment, Here these isolates are suggested as the stepping stones of the prehistorical spread upslope of neolithic livestock to reach the subalpine grasslands above the treeline, providing the necessary primaeval "open areas " for the altitudinal seasonal migration of these earlier pastoralists and the nuclei of the historical pastoral landscape in the mountain areas of Europe and Western Asia.

Keywords: *Transhumant pastoralism; Plant geography; Neolithic migration; Subalpine grasslands; Western Eurasia.*

LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND TRANSHUMANCE: AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLINGUISTIC APPROACH

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Abstract

Transhumance represents a traditional pastoral practice based on the seasonal movement of livestock between summer and winter pastures and constitutes an important element of the cultural heritage of rural communities. Beyond its economic function, transhumance encompasses a rich system of cultural practices, traditional knowledge, and distinctive forms of communication that have been transmitted across generations. This paper aims to analyze the relationship between language, culture, and the practice of transhumance through an interdisciplinary approach that combines anthropological and psycholinguistic perspectives.

From an anthropological perspective, the study examines transhumance as a cultural and social system that includes specific forms of pastoral organization, the relationship between communities and the natural environment, and the mechanisms through which traditional knowledge is transmitted. From a psycholinguistic perspective, the analysis focuses on the role of language in structuring pastoral experience, particularly through specialized terminology related to livestock, pastures, and the seasonal cycle of pastoral work, as well as through narratives and discourses through which pastoral communities articulate and preserve their collective memory.

The methodology of the study is based on qualitative analysis, including a review of relevant literature, discourse analysis, and the interpretation of pastoral terminology as a conceptual system reflecting the interaction between language, cognition, and culture. The findings indicate that language plays a fundamental role in organizing and transmitting the experience of transhumance, contributing to the preservation of cultural identity and traditional knowledge within pastoral communities. In this way, the study highlights the importance of examining language and culture in order to understand transhumance not only as an economic practice but also as a complex cultural and cognitive system.

Keywords: *Transhumance, Language, Cultural Heritage, Cultural Anthropology, Psycholinguistics, Pastoral Terminology.*

KATUNS AS LIVING HERITAGE LANDSCAPES: RURAL TOURISM AS A DRIVER OF YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND SUSTAINABLE TRANSHUMANCE IN MONTENEGRO

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Abstract

Transhumant pastoralism has shaped the mountain landscapes and cultural identity of Montenegro for centuries. The katun system—seasonal high-mountain settlements used during summer grazing—represents a distinctive socio-ecological system combining pastoral production, traditional knowledge, and communal resource management. However, demographic decline, rural depopulation, and difficult living conditions in these remote areas have placed increasing pressure on the continuity of this heritage system.

This paper explores the emerging role of rural tourism as a complementary development pathway that can contribute to safeguarding katun landscapes while creating new opportunities for local communities. The analysis draws on practitioner experience working with katun communities and examines how tourism activities based on pastoral traditions—such as accommodation in traditional huts, local gastronomy, participation in seasonal agricultural activities, and interpretation of transhumance practices—can generate additional income and strengthen the economic viability of seasonal mountain settlements. The recognition of transhumance as cultural heritage adds further value to this authentic tourism offer.

Particular attention is given to the role of tourism in attracting younger generations back to katuns. While traditional livestock production alone often does not provide sufficient economic incentives for young people to remain involved in pastoral livelihoods, tourism services can diversify income sources and encourage intergenerational engagement with pastoral heritage.

The paper also highlights the importance of sustainability frameworks and certification systems in guiding tourism development in sensitive mountain environments. International sustainability standards and certification schemes, such as Good Travel Seal and similar initiatives, provide tools for improving environmental performance, strengthening local supply chains, and ensuring responsible visitor management.

The analysis suggests that, when guided by sustainability principles and community participation, rural tourism can bridge heritage conservation and rural development. By supporting pastoral practices and innovative tourism services, katuns can continue to evolve as living cultural landscapes rather than becoming abandoned heritage sites.

Keywords: *Transhumance; Katun Landscapes; Rural Tourism; Sustainable Pastoral Heritage.*

TRANSHUMANCE AS A SOURCE OF MUSICAL FOLKLORE AND ITS REVITALIZATION IN MODERN TIMES

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Abstract

Transhumance, as a traditional practice of the seasonal movement of shepherds and livestock, represents one of the earliest forms of socio-economic and cultural organization in the Albanian space and more broadly in the Balkans. Beyond its practical function, it has played a significant role in the creation and development of musical folklore, generating a rich repertoire of songs and musical forms closely connected to pastoral life and nature. Transhumance songs reflect profound human experiences such as longing, solitude, resilience, and a spiritual connection to the homeland, while traditional instruments have served as essential means of artistic expression and cultural communication.

This paper aims to analyze transhumance as a source of inspiration for musical folklore and to examine the ways in which this heritage can be revitalized in a contemporary context. Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach, the study highlights the role of traditional instruments as carriers of collective memory and as bridges linking the past with the present. The revitalization of pastoral music through education, performance, and youth engagement is presented as a dynamic process that contributes to the preservation and promotion of cultural identity.

In the context of globalization, where cultural homogenization poses a risk, the revalorization of values associated with transhumance and musical folklore gains particular importance. The study emphasizes the need for new approaches that make tradition both accessible and meaningful for contemporary generations.

Keywords: *Transhumance, Musical Folklore, Traditional Instruments, Revitalization, Cultural Heritage.*

PASTORAL CULTURE AND THE ECOLOGICAL EMANCIPATION OF TRANSHUMANCE PRACTICE WITHIN PASTORAL CULTURE IN NORTHERN ALBANIA

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Abstract

The broader context of this phenomenon, present since very ancient times in Albania, is analyzed as:

- A way of thinking, being, and acting, inseparable from the world of the shepherd and his herd, through which the social and cultural life of pastoral communities is shaped.
- An eco-cultural heritage that must be taken into account in the political choices of all rural development projects.
- An eco-socio-cultural practice rooted in territories of high biodiversity; cultural landscapes, pastures, and pastoral routes form a genuine pastoral institution, where the mountain constitutes both a refuge and a stronghold that enables the preservation of ancient cultural values and indigenous knowledge. It is also a space of circulation and communication, of crossings and encounters that foster exchange, solidarity, and cultural interweaving. As a phenomenon, transhumance constitutes the cultural identity of these regions.

Currently, the practice of transhumance in Albania has been submitted for recognition to UNESCO (Nomination file No. 01964 – 18.COM, accepted on 5 December 2023). This is the moment to reflect and to consider the design of an appropriate safeguarding plan for the protection of transhumance practice. Transhumant shepherds are guardians of the future. They are guided by traditional ecological knowledge that is important to identify, preserve, and transmit.

Consequently, the Albanian government can no longer ignore transhumant pastoralism. However, many misunderstandings and issues prevent shepherds' associations and state authorities from reaching agreement on an inclusive ecological vision for the management of pastoral resources. Pastoral communities and institutions do not speak the same language. The scope and the essence of traditional pastoral practice must be made understandable to everyone.

How can the conditions for a dialogue be created in which shepherds' traditional knowledge is genuinely taken into consideration in development projects? This is the question I will attempt to address, drawing on a search for solutions already initiated through the actions of shepherds in northern Albania. Let us also give them a voice so that, together, appropriate sustainable solutions may be found.

Keywords: *Transhumance as a landscape grammar; Geography of livestock farming; Ontological transmission; Eco-cultural heritage; Inclusive governance.*

TRACES OF TRANSHUMANCE AND THE PASTORAL WORLD IN ALBANIAN ORAL LYRIC POETRY

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Abstract

In this paper, we address the following research questions: *What are some of the traces of the phenomenon of transhumance in Albanian oral lyric poetry?* How are the relationships between humans and nature, livestock, and the social group to which they belong represented in this poetry? In Albanian oral lyric tradition, songs dedicated to livestock, their herding and care, movements in search of pastures (transhumance), as well as songs about shepherds and shepherdesses who accompany them, occupy an important place, alongside songs related to agriculture, calendar festivities, and other themes. As is well known, livestock breeding and agriculture have been essential activities for Albanians, as for other Balkan peoples. Through these activities, they ensured their survival under difficult historical conditions, including periods of foreign domination, often living isolated in mountainous areas and deep gorges.

Livestock breeding—depending on lowland or mountainous areas—primarily involved small livestock (sheep and goats) as well as large livestock such as cows, buffaloes, bulls, oxen, horses, mules, and even sheepdogs guarding the mountain pastures. This has been a centuries-old tradition. Traces of this tradition are found in lyrical songs about livestock and throughout Albanian folk culture: in epic and legendary songs, fairy tales, fables, proverbs, riddles, and even in lyrical love songs and lullabies, as well as in traditional costume design, artisanal artistic carvings, tools, and work instruments connected to life and labour in mountain pastures (stane) or within the household environment.

Through the study and comparison of oral lyric songs related to livestock, we highlight the specific character of these songs, some of which have ancient origins and, at times, have preserved elements of a magical function. It was believed that through song and poetic speech one could exert real influence on the well-being of livestock and the success of the work processes associated with them.

These songs often depict the practical aspects of daily livestock management, such as the search for pastures towards the highlands in summer and towards the plains in winter, grazing, milking, and the processing of pastoral products—milk, cheese, yogurt, butter, whey, wool, meat, leather tanning, and the weaving of clothing. At the same time, they portray the human dimension: the harsh and demanding life of the shepherd/shepherdess in close contact with nature and livestock, as well as relationships with the broader human community—family, clan, and kinship network.

Not infrequently, these lyrical songs tend to evolve into expressions of longing and love, and even of sexuality, because during periods of seasonal migration with livestock and settlement in mountain or lowland pastures, some family members are compelled to separate from the rest of the family, which usually remains in the permanent home. They are also separated from acquaintances in the village or region. It is understandable that young men and women, shepherds and shepherdesses—married or unmarried—during these periods, living in large, organized groups with other families, experience a freer way of life than in their everyday existence in the permanent household. Despite the heavy labour involved, they have time to reflect in nature on the world, on themselves, and on the emotions that connect them to others. Consequently, these songs often express a wife's longing for her shepherd husband, the yearning of young men and women for one another, sorrow over separation, or joy at reunion.

In this paper, songs about livestock are distinguished as a specific group within Albanian oral lyric poetry. They testify, first and foremost, to the ancient tradition of livestock breeding among the Albanian people, as well as to the phenomenon of seasonal migration with herds throughout their ethnic territory—not as a nomadic population, but as a population with permanent settlement. Seasonal movements were carried out in summer and winter along predetermined routes in search of predefined pastures, where temporary dwellings such as mountain huts, shelters, and tents had been constructed.

Keywords: *Transhumance in oral lyric poetry; Shepherd/shepherdess in folk.*

TRANSHUMANCE AS AN ECOLOGICAL MECHANISM IN THE CONSERVATION OF ENDEMIC ALPINE PLANTS UNDER CLIMATE CHANGE PRESSURE: THE CASE OF THE ALBANIAN ALPS

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Abstract

Alpine territories are becoming increasingly fragile, particularly under the pressure of climate change. In this context, transhumance is not viewed solely as a traditional practice, but also as a process that may directly influence the functioning of alpine ecosystems. This study aims to understand how transhumance can serve as an ecological mechanism in the conservation of biodiversity, with a specific focus on endemic alpine plants in the Albanian Alps, one of the areas with high biodiversity and endemism values in Albania.

The study is based on a combined approach, including a review of international scientific literature and socio-ecological field data collected through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with transhumant shepherds. This approach enables the analysis of the relationships between seasonal grazing, alpine vegetation dynamics, and the sensitivity of endemic plant species to environmental change.

The findings suggest that moderate transhumant grazing may positively contribute to the conservation of alpine vegetation diversity by reducing floristic homogenization and creating microhabitats where alpine and endemic species have greater survival opportunities. Shepherds' perspectives also indicate that transhumance is gradually adapting to climate change, particularly through adjustments in grazing season duration and the spatial use of alpine pastures. Overall, transhumance is treated as a living practice within alpine socio-ecological systems, with potential not only for biodiversity conservation but also as a relevant component of climate adaptation strategies in mountain areas.

Keywords: *Transhumance, Endemic Plants, Alpine Biodiversity, Climate Change, Traditional Grazing, Albanian Alps.*

**RITE, LANGUAGE AND CULTURAL MEMORY
IN NORTHERN ALBANIAN HIGHLAND SOCIETY:
THE MEMOIRS OF FATHER KOLË BERISHA
IN "FROM SHKODRA TO TOPLANA"**

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Abstract

This paper aims to provide a scholarly reading of Father Kolë Berisha's work "From Shkodra to Toplana", treating it as a primary source for ethnolinguistic, ethnocultural, and dialectological studies of Northern Albania, with reference to the region of Toplana. Written based on direct experience and prolonged coexistence with the inhabitants of this area, the author's memoirs are characterized by a high density of ethnographic description and by a linguistic expression that preserves authentic features of the northern Gheg dialect.

The analysis focuses on two fundamental rites of the life cycle: the wedding rite and the rite of death, including the phenomenon of blood feuding as a social and cultural reality. Through detailed descriptions of wedding customs, such as the arrival of the bride, the role of wedding participants, ritual songs, and the symbolic significance of the apple, Father Kolë Berisha documents a stable system of traditional norms in which symbolism, religious belief, and the patriarchal structure of highland society are closely intertwined. Equally significant is the portrayal of funerary rituals, particularly the men's lament (*gjama*), which is presented not merely as an act of mourning but as a collective expression of grief, honor, and masculine identity.

From an ethnolinguistic perspective, the text contains a rich dialectal lexicon, ritual formulas, phraseological expressions, and syntactic structures characteristic of northern Gheg, rendering the work a valuable testimony for the historical study of the Albanian language. On the ethnocultural level, Father Kolë Berisha's memoirs shed light on the traditional virtues of the highland population, such as hospitality, honor (*besa*), manliness (*burrnia*), and religious devotion, while also addressing the darker aspects of this culture, particularly blood feuding, which in Toplana reached extreme proportions, as attested by the author himself.

Keywords: *Northern Albanian Highlands; Toplana; ethnolinguistics; Cultural memory; Wedding rites; Funerary rituals; Blood feuding; Gheg dialect.*

THE MATERIAL CULTURE OF ALBANIAN TRANSHUMANCE BETWEEN SOCIAL CODIFICATION AND THE EROSION OF MEMORY

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Abstract

The material culture of transhumance in Northern Albania has functioned as a codified social system, a language of objects in which hierarchy, territory, and collective memory became embodied in form and material. The artefacts of pastoral life, belts, garments, musical instruments, and embroideries, were never merely practical tools, but active bearers of this system, through which status, territorial belonging, and collective memory were legible to every member of the community.

This paper examines the material culture of Albanian transhumance as a dual system: a structure of social communication built and lived for centuries, and simultaneously a system now undergoing deep, documented erosion. The study argues that the dissolution of transhumance does not entail only economic or demographic losses; it entails the loss of an entire social code. When the living pastoral context fades, objects do not merely lose their function; they lose their meaning. Younger generations no longer read the inherited symbolic system, and with this loss, the social memory that objects had sustained across generations fades.

Against this backdrop, the international recognition of transhumance and the xhubletë by UNESCO arrives at a singular moment: precisely as the living system that gave these objects meaning is withdrawing. The tension between institutional preservation and the erosion of communal context raises fundamental questions about how we conceive of intangible cultural heritage today and whether preserving the object, without preserving the system that renders it legible, constitutes preservation at all.

Keywords: *Material Culture, Transhumance, Northern Albania, Social Codification, Memory Erosion, Intangible Cultural Heritage, Territorial Identity, Cultural Anthropology*

LINGUISTIC LANDSCAPES OF TRANSHUMANCE IN THE ALBANIAN HIGHLANDS

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Abstract

Transhumance in the Albanian Alps represents more than a pastoral economy; it constitutes a complex cultural system in which mobility, landscape, and collective identity are linguistically mediated. Seasonal movement between lowland winter pastures and high mountain pastures structures not only patterns of livelihood but also the symbolic organization of space, time, and community in highland societies. This paper adopts an anthropolinguistic perspective to examine the lexical and phraseological corpus associated with pastoral life in northern Albania, exploring how language encodes ecological knowledge, spatial organization, and social practices embedded in transhumant traditions.

The analysis draws on ethnolinguistic material documented in Gjovalin Shkurtaj’s *Fjalor leksiko-frazeologjik dhe etnolinguistik i Malësisë së Madhe* (2021), which preserves a rich vocabulary related to pastoral environments, herding activities, and mountain dwelling systems. Within this corpus, terms designating pastoral landscapes illustrate how language conceptualizes pastoral territories not merely as geographical spaces but as socially organized environments governed by collective rights and customary practices.

The vocabulary of transhumance also reflects a ritualized temporality that structures the pastoral calendar and reinforces communal ethos. Expressions related to the departure toward the mountains, known as *çoja*, together with formulaic greetings among shepherds, *Mir bar!* (“Good grazing!”) or *Për hajr çoja!* (“May the departure bring good fortune”), demonstrate how speech acts accompany and symbolically frame the cyclical movement of people and herds. The lexicon further preserves detailed terminology for human and animal dwellings, such as *buni* (shepherd’s hut), *gjie* (animal shelter), or *mriz* (shaded resting place for livestock), reflecting spatial typologies adapted to high-mountain environments.

Methodologically, the study combines semantic field analysis with ethnolinguistic interpretation, situating lexical meanings within their ecological and cultural contexts. The findings suggest that the Albanian pastoral lexicon functions as a repository of environmental knowledge and collective memory, preserving a linguistic model of coexistence between humans, animals, and landscape.

Keywords: *Transhumance; Pastoral Lexicon; Ethnolinguistics; Cultural Landscape.*

COMMUNICATION AND THE CULTURAL HERITAGE OF PASTORAL COMMUNITIES IN LEZHE

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between communication and cultural heritage in the pastoral communities of the Lezhe area, highlighting the role that traditional forms of communication play in preserving and transmitting cultural values. The areas of Zadrime, Torovica, the Mat River coast, Mount Rrenci, and others have served for decades, and continue to serve, as pastoral zones, where shepherds from Mirdita, Kukes, Dibra, Malesia e Madhe, and other regions bring their livestock (mainly small ruminants) during the winter, returning to their respective mountain pastures during the summer. In these communities, communication is not limited only to verbal language but also includes a wide range of symbolic practices, rituals, and cultural expressions closely connected to pastoral life and natural cycles. In Lezhe, communities from various northern regions have lived and continue to live, and in some cases their settlement has come precisely because of territories that have favored the development of livestock farming.

Pastoral communities in Lezhe have developed specific forms of communication such as shepherd songs, livestock calls, oral narratives, and seasonal rituals, which serve as tools for transmitting knowledge and strengthening identity. The study aims to analyze how traditional communication influences the preservation of cultural heritage and how these forms of communication are at risk under the conditions of modernization and migration. Special attention is given to intergenerational interaction and the role of communication in transmitting pastoral knowledge and practices. Through this research, concrete evidence will be presented, including interviews with generations of shepherds from Lezhë and other areas that use Lezha's pastures for their herds. This methodology allows for a deeper understanding of communication practices and their cultural significance.

This study contributes to highlighting the role of communication as a key mechanism in preserving the intangible cultural heritage and cultural identity of pastoral communities. Furthermore, this research aims to identify the challenges these forms of communication face in the era of digital development and the strong need to preserve this heritage.

Keywords: *Pastoral Communication; Intangible Cultural Heritage; Transhumance; Ethnographic Research; Cultural Transmission*

THE TRADITION OF TRANSHUMANCE IN THE MOUNTAIN PASTURES OF MALËSIA E MADHE

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Abstract

Transhumance, mountain pasturing, or as it is otherwise known in popular language, "The Departure of the Highlanders," is a tradition shaped by survival, with its origins dating back to antiquity. Livestock breeding and animal husbandry constituted the main branch of the closed natural economy for the inhabitants of the Albanian Alps, including the region of Malësia e Madhe. Characterized by limited arable land and extensive mountainous terrain, this economy relied on pastoralism to the provision of dairy products, meat, wool, leather, manure, as well as the value of livestock as a means of exchange to secure material resources and meet other household needs.

The sedentary life of highland shepherds was closely tied to property, which was divided into two distinct zones and settlements known by the respective terms "bjeshkë" (summer mountain pastures) and "vrri" (winter lowland pastures). The need for abundant grazing lands and more favorable climatic conditions for livestock breeding, as well as for the preservation of indigenous breeds, led to the development of the tradition of transhumance. This seasonal movement begins at the end of spring and continues until the early weeks of autumn.

The movement of livestock, or the tradition of mountain pasturing, was also regulated by the Law of the Mountains or Customary Law, not only in terms of the organization of migration but also regarding territorial, familial, and clan ownership. Despite the fact that this tradition depended directly on the highland communities themselves, the state also played a significant role in determining transhumance zones, often assigning mountain pasture ownership to specific clans of Malësia.

Of particular importance was the cultural discipline established through the assemblies of the Mountains, which set legal norms governing the safety of caravans during migration, resting places, and compensation in cases of attacks within the territories of respective clans. The organization of migration caravans was carried out through messengers. In the highland tradition, the organization of the shepherds' departure was strongly influenced by the lunar calendar, as well as by spiritual culture, cults, and pagan beliefs inherited since antiquity. These elements enabled shepherds to coexist in harmony with one another and with nature.

The mountain pastures of Malësia e Madhe are clan-owned and inherited properties.

Keywords: *Transhumance; Pastoralism in the Albanian Alps; Customary Law (Kanun); Seasonal Migration of Livestock; Cultural Heritage of Highland Communities*

TRANSHUMANCE AS A SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE: ALIGNING PASTORAL SYSTEMS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS WITH EUROPEAN UNION ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES

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Abstract

This paper examines pastoral life and the phenomenon of transhumance in the countries of the Western Balkans within the framework of sustainable development and the objectives of the European Green Deal. The study aims to assess the role of traditional livestock practices in the sustainable management of natural resources, approaching them as functional models that contribute to the preservation of biodiversity, the rational use of land, and the reduction of pressure on rural ecosystems.

At the core of the analysis lies transhumance as a seasonal practice of livestock mobility, which enables the balanced distribution of grazing and the natural regeneration of land. The paper argues that these traditional systems demonstrate a significant degree of alignment with European Union environmental and agricultural policies, particularly in terms of rural landscape protection and sustainable territorial development.

Through an analytical approach to scientific literature and European policy documents, the study identifies key challenges related to the abandonment of pastoral practices, climate change, and the lack of institutional support. At the same time, it highlights the opportunities for integrating these practices into contemporary frameworks of rural development and sustainable environmental management.

In conclusion, the paper emphasizes that the preservation and promotion of pastoral life and transhumance constitute an important component in achieving sustainable development goals, strengthening ecological resilience, and ensuring alignment with European Union standards in the process of European integration.

Keywords: *Transhumance; Pastoral Systems, Sustainable Development; European Green Deal; Rural Landscapes.*

THE ROLE OF PROVERBS AND IDIOMATIC EXPRESSIONS IN PRESERVING THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

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Abstract

Proverbs and idiomatic expressions constitute an important part of the linguistic and cultural repertoire of rural communities, functioning as tools for communication, informal education, and the preservation of cultural identity. This study aims to explore how proverbs and idioms are used in Albanian rural communities and their impact on the intergenerational transmission of values, norms, and traditions.

The methodology employed includes the collection of proverbs and idiomatic expressions through interviews with local inhabitants, structured conversations, and observations in various social contexts. The data analysis seeks to identify the main thematic domains of the collected expressions, their communicative functions, and the ways in which they reflect the experiences, beliefs, and practices of the community. In particular, the study examines how proverbs and idioms are used to offer advice, educate children and youth, and maintain social bonds and moral norms. The expected results indicate that proverbs and idioms are not merely ordinary expressions, but powerful instruments for preserving cultural identity, enabling rural communities to transmit their values across generations and to resist the pressures of social change and globalization. The study also highlights the importance of documenting and preserving these linguistic repertoires as a form of cultural heritage that reflects the history, wisdom, and way of life of rural communities.

This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the close relationship between language and culture, providing a foundation for the preservation and promotion of Albanian cultural heritage and that of rural communities more broadly.

Keywords: *Proverbs; Idioms; Cultural Identity; Rural Communities; Heritage.*

