Mountain Sheep Farming under Rozsutec

The heritage of the Wallachian colonisation in Malá Fatra and Kysucká vrchovina mountain ranges

A collective of authors

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This book is dedicated to all sheep farmers, chief shepherds, 'valachs' – chief shepherd's helpers and herdsmen ('honelníci'), who dedicated their lives to shepherding and mountain sheep farming for their hard work on preserving the cultural heritage. Since the 14th century, generations after generations of shepherds have been transforming the landscape under Rozsutec. They were gradually taming the unyielding land, while the land was simultaneously transforming them. With this publication, we would like to pay a tribute to all the past as well as the present generations. It is thanks to their commitment and passion that mountain sheep farming under Rozsutec has not fully perished yet. The shepherds under Rozsutec have worked hard, knowing the nature intimately, retaining the customs of their ancestors and taking good care of the land. They have left us an immense treasure in the form of the diverse range of the landscape types under this majestic mountain. The characteristic local landscape, or the 'oštiepok' and 'bryndza' cheeses are just the most salient attributes that today form an essential part of the local identity. It is only up to us to not let this wealth of tradition fall into oblivion of the past and further work on retaining it and developing it. Our land, its people, the culture and the traditions truly deserve it.

„Dust jacket: flock master Ján Karcol in the upland sheep farm in Zázrivá – Plešivá, 1981, photo by Pavol Breier"

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A collective of authors

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Introduction

Sheep husbandry and mountain sheep farming and sheltering (known in Slovak language as 'salašníctvo') both stood at the birth of the municipality of Zázrivá and continue to shape its essential part at present. Still, we would certainly wish to see the role of this aspect of our identity and heritage to be represented much more intensively than it is today. The municipality of Zázrivá, the nature of the Malá Fatra and Kysucká vrchovina mountain ranges were strongly shaped also by the ways of mountain sheep farming after the arrival of Wallachians (also known as Vlachs), who have left a significant trace in our culture and traditions. Today' society is increasingly turning back to its roots; we like to search for the original, for the traditional, for the pure and natural. However, in this exercise, we sometimes tend to forget the hard work and care that our mountainous lands require. Present lifestyle comes with a number of challenges, opportunities, risks and just like our ancestors in the past, we also have our own day-to-day worries and concerns. Our region offers a great volume of untapped opportunities for taking care of the landscape, agriculture and economy, agritourism, and local produce. Perhaps more so than in the past, we are today trying to follow in the traditional, the well-established and sustainable. Sheep farming and mountain sheep farming and sheltering ('salašníctvo') are an opportunity we should not miss in retaining the local cultural heritage (along with the traditional landscape farming and agriculture) that is closely related to the above. I am deeply convinced that with this publication we will do our bit and contribute to reviving of this activity not only in our municipality but also in the wider region in our support to the origination of new initiatives providing benefits to the whole region.

JUDr. Matúš Mních, Mayor of Zázrivá

The topic of Wallachian colonisation and sheep husbandry in our region represents an aspect of the local history and culture that has remained largely forgotten and not thoroughly examined. Nevertheless, Wallachians gave the lands under Rozsutec their specific characteristic twist, without which the nature and the culture would not be what they are today. Looking at the ridge of Malá Fatra, its individual peaks, municipalities and settlements huddled under the steep hills of Kysucká vrchovina, the well-preserved and still cultured small terrace-like fields, we can clearly perceive the harmony and the centuries of mutual partnership between the man and nature, their mutual influence and harmonious interaction. Looking at the history of Wallachian colonisation and its present context, it is certainly more attractive as it may seem on the first sight. The migrating Wallachians were gradually becoming mountain agriculturists, mutually influencing each other with the original populations until their full assimilation. Interestingly, modern Slovak language only knows the word 'valach' as a name for the position of an assistant, helper to 'bača', the chief shepherd or flock-master in the upland mountain sheep shelter or farm (known in Slovak as 'salaš'). The new ways of agricultural farming, sheep farming and husbandry, production of dairy that the Wallachians brought were truly revolutionary, changed the land and continue to impact on our perception of our own identity and culture. It is a mission of this publication to bring closer to the wider public not only from the region under Rozsutec this historical, cultural and natural heritage that has so far remained – perhaps unfairly – in the shadow of more popular phenomena. From the perspective of geographical scope, when putting together this publication, we defined two units: Malá Fatra and Kysucká vrchovina mountain ranges, out of which we further selected the territory of the section of Malá Fatra dominated by the Mount Kriváň, where the authors were focusing mostly on the part of the range falling into the current microregion of Terchová valley and the whole Kysucká vrchovina, including the Bystrica and Vadičov valleys that are mutually closely related. Specific attention in the book is dedicated to the Oravian municipality of Zázrivá that used to belong to the leading centres of sheep farming and mountain shepherding. With respect to absence of research, processing of materials and the wide scope of interest defined hereto, as well as the limits offered by the size of this publication, the respective contributions are elaborated and focused in order to provide the reader with essential overview of their respective topics in this particular region while simultaneously providing inspiration for further reading, perhaps leading to research, documentation, publications and also keeping of the live traditions and heritage of the mountain sheep farming under Rozsutec.

Mgr. Peter Madigár, Wallachian Culture Educational Trail
Project Coordinator for the municipality of Zázrivá

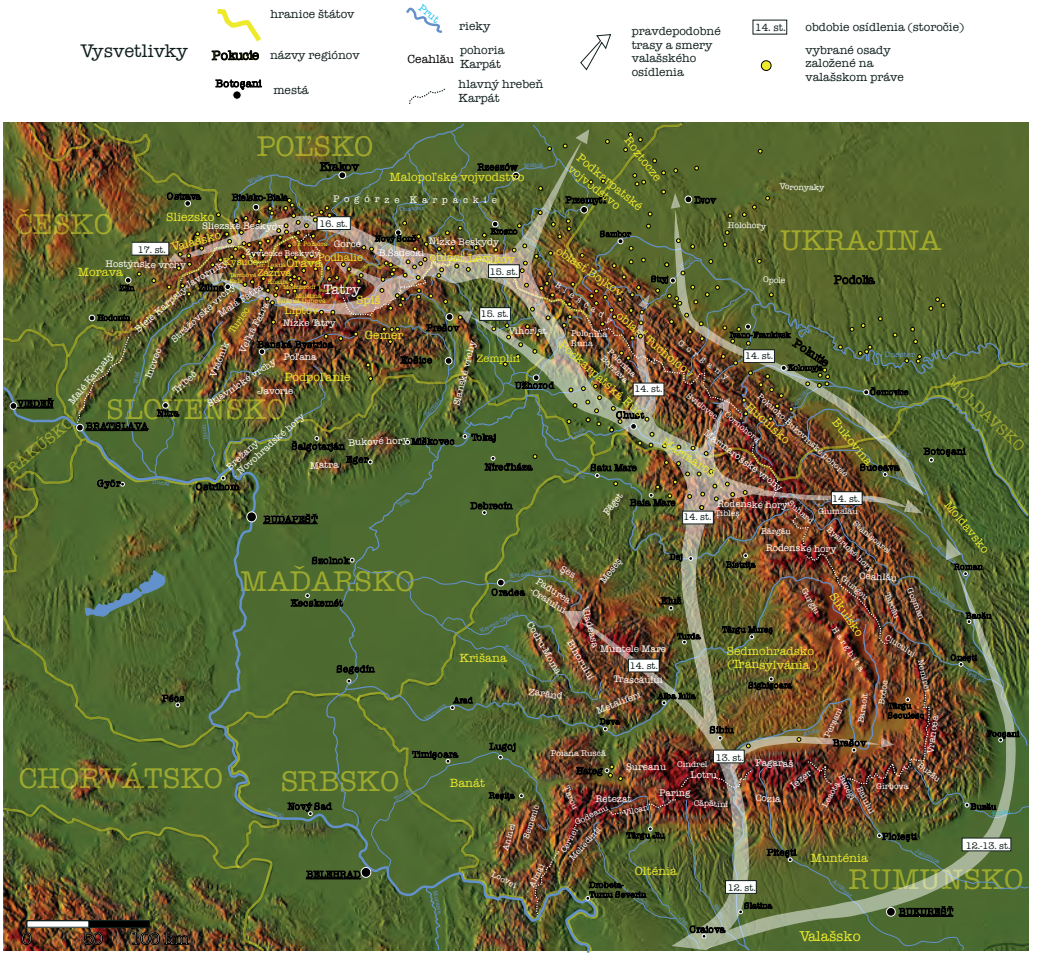
The Origins and Spreading of the Wallachian Law in Orava and the Founding of Zázrivá

Mgr. Lukáš Tkáč, PhD.

The Origins and Spreading of the Wallachian Law in Orava and the Founding of Zázrivá

One of the most significant stimuli in the process of completion of settlement of the territory of present-day Slovakia was the colonisation based on the so-called Wallachian law. Its major contribution was mainly based in utilisation of the pre-

The process of Wallachian colonisation, map author: Piotr Klapyta



viously unfarmed land in the mountainous regions. Although the local alpine meadows, pastures and grassy uplands were not very suitable for agriculture, they still provided conditions sufficient for livestock farming. Alpine shepherding focusing primarily on sheep husbandry and processing of related products was the main profession of Wallachians also known as Vlachs – an ethnic group with distinctive language and ethnic background of Romanesque origin, originally living in the mountainous areas of the southern Carpathians. After the end of 12th century, these mountain herders and shepherds gradually started to migrate along the both sides of the Carpathians towards the north and west. Although they did penetrate the regions from Transylvania in the south to the westernmost point of the Carpathian crescent, that is the territory of Silesia and Moravia by the end of the 15th century, as we can see from the map, the main stage of spreading of the Wallachian law often significantly lagged behind the first penetration of the Vlachs into the given territory.

Our territory was influenced by the stream of Wallachian colonisation with its southern edge, in particular the north-east, central and north-west parts of present Slovakia. The first Wallachians penetrated to what is now Slovakia in the 1330s from the territory of Ruthenia. Already as early as then the original term Wallachian (Vlach) had already lost its ethnic semantic relevance and had become 'only' a word specifying a person who was working as a shepherd while following and complying with the principles of the so-called Wallachian law[1].

Wallachian colonisation (or settlement) gradually advanced along the ridge of the Carpathians in the east-west direction; partly spontaneously and partly supported by aristocratic landowners who were inviting groups of Vlachs to come and settle their lands. The major cause of the noblemen's interest

in Wallachian colonisation was the vision of attracting a new (non-negligible) source of feudal rent from the mountainous lands that had been previously unused. However, parallel to this settlement encouraged by the landowners and nobles, Wallachian population tended to move along the wide Carpathian region also spontaneously during the whole middle ages as well as later, too.

We have already stated that the main profession of Wallachians as a specific social group of the population was livestock farming, in particular sheep husbandry. Together with the Wallachian colonisation, a new species of sheep was domesticated in Slovakia – the so-called valaška (Wallachian sheep) sheep that were used to the somewhat tougher climate in higher mountain altitudes. Along with shepherding and livestock

The native valaška sheep breed, photo: Jozef Jurík

farming that constituted the base of their farming activity, Wallachians also attempted to plough fields where the natural conditions allowed them to do so while in the mining and metallurgy regions some of them took up jobs as coalmen, or in felling wood and processing timber. Almost everywhere, the part of their agreed duties also included the protection of the borders of the kingdom or the respective feudal lands.

Wallachian law in its basic features was shaped sometimes in the 13th century in the southern Carpathians. It originated based on a gradually stabilised set of customs and traditions that had become through long-standing usage and application a 'standard' for shepherds living in the territory of modern Romania. As a result of migration of the native Wallachians, the Wallachian law has been modified and partly also differentiated. Still, in its specific shape and form, the decisive for the Wallachians were always the privileges and duties determined and tolerated by their landowner that more or less corresponded to this law.

The Wallachian newcomers were initially settling the existing villages, only later – with the inevitable cooperation of the landowners – they started to establish brand new villages and settlements. Due to various reasons, a certain part of the Wallachian population refused to participate in the process of 'concentration' into stable settlements and continued to live in the traditional way, in the mountain cabins and sheep shelters ('salaš').

Specifics of the Wallachian way of life were also reflected in the structure of their autonomous organisation. This was composed of two major units: 1. Municipal and 2. Supra-municipal. The first one was represented by the existing older villages that were re-settled by the Wallachians and the new villages,

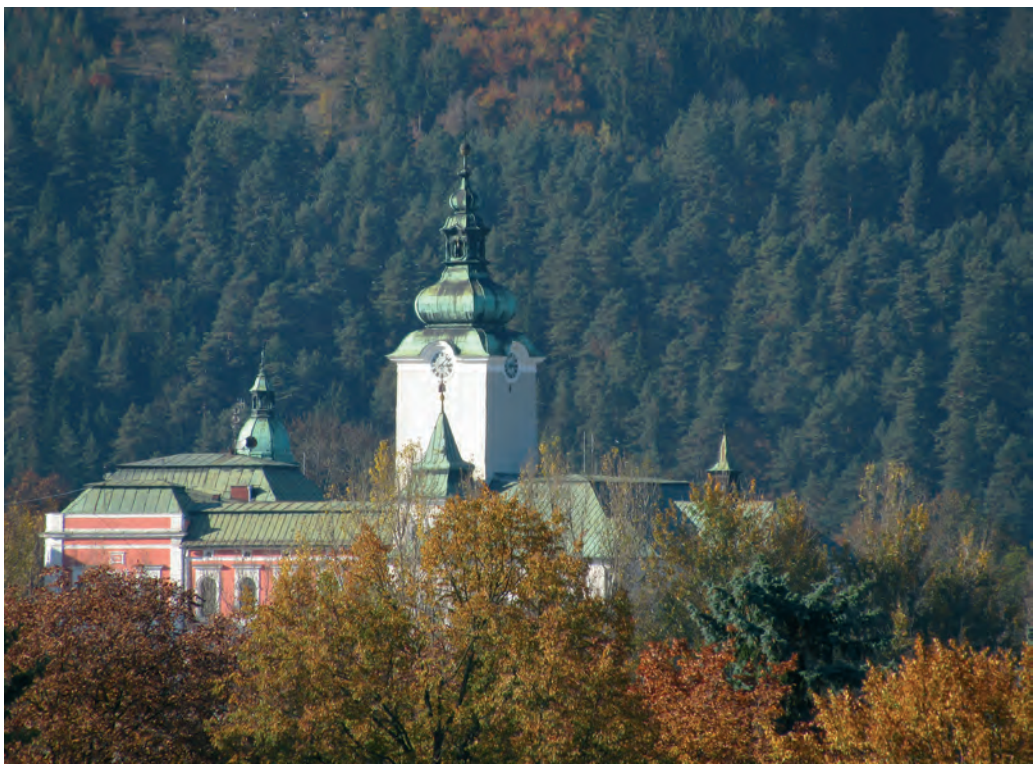
established "on a green field". The elders of the Wallachian villages communities were called knezi. However, if there were several Wallachian villages under a single noble's estate or castle domain or if the individual Wallachians were living here scattered into individual families or smaller groups, they always organised themselves also into supra-municipal administrative forms. In this case the knezi, or possibly also other representatives of Wallachians used to elect the so-called Wallachian duke (vojvoda). He was then respected by all the Wallachians as their judge and representative in front of the feudal lord or county administration.

After the rather extensive introduction, we can now start addressing the topic of the beginnings and spreading of Wallachian law in Orava. In this respect, we shall focus on the period following 1556 as after this year, we can assume that the initial stages have been completed as we can talk of the 'golden era' of Wallachian colonisation.

The first Wallachians penetrated Orava sometimes in the 1st half of the 15th century. If we rely on written sources, we can prove their presence by 1474 at the latest, when two representatives of Wallachians travelled to the town of Ružomberok to meet the king Matthew Corvinus on their own behalf as well as in the name of all Wallachians from the villages of Kňažia and Medzibrodie (belonging to the lands of the Orava castle) and Dubová (Valaská) belonging to the Likava castle lands to present their plea to the king to confirm their old privileges. Based on the privilege issued by the king, the local Wallachians received the following rights: 1. They were not obliged to pay any county taxes. 2. They were not obliged to labour on the lands of the Orava and Likava castles. 3. They were to settle

their disputes in front of the Wallachian duke elected by the whole community of Wallachians and those unsatisfied with the voivoda's decision could appeal to the king or the castellan of the aforementioned castles. 4. They were freed from the tolls and fees with the exception of the goods they have acquired for profit. 5. They had the right to let their sheep graze in the forests belonging to the castles of Orava and Likava provided that nobody lets the sheep get out from the forest further than a quarter-mile so that the sheep flocks do not cause damage to the peasants, under the penalty of six sheep. Their duties were stated as follows: 1. Every Wallachian who had sheep was obliged to pay to the castle on whose territory he was settled a twentieth (i.e. five of every hundred sheep) and the same

Ružomberok (the town hall and the church of St. Andrew), photo: Lukáš Tkáč



share of five billy-goats out of hundred goats. Equally, every Wallachian who had sheep was obliged to give to the feudal lord one ram every year and one harness and those who only farmed wit oxen had to pay one Grosch per each ox. 2. Instead of taxes and labours, they were obliged to guard the roads and paths along the border from robbers, highwaymen and other criminals. To this end, they were to be equipped with weaponry, in particular with bows and crossbows. 3. For the travellers indicated by the castellans of both aforementioned castles, they were supposed to provide safe passage at any time desired and in case of need, they were to send youths with weapons even for several days to the location determined by the castellans. Rejection of the armed service was punished with the penalty of six sheep for the first, second, and third time. If a Wallachian rejected to serve in arms even after the third admonition, his whole property was forfeited for the benefit of the king.

The privilege of Matthew Corvinus specifically mentions the two Oravian Wallachian villages of Knysy a Medzybrogy. In both cases, these were older villages that switched to Wallachian law from the original combined customary-emphyteutic law.

The privilege of Matthew Corvinus was confirmed without any change by king Ľudovít (Luis) II Jagello in 1526 based on the request by the owners of the Orava and Likava castles – bothers Ján and Juraj Zápoľský. On the other hand, the privilege's next confirmation from 1550 already came with certain alterations. The privilege was issued based on the plea by Václav Sedlnický, who held the castle as a deposit given in pawn from the previous holder, the king Ferdinand I. Habsburg extended the Wallachian freedoms guaranteed by the king Matthew also to include the inhabitants of Bziny and Ústie, however he terminated the freedom of Wallachians from payment of county

taxes and customs and instead of the obsolete bows and crossbows he instructed them to carry modern firearms. King Ferdinand I. therefore had to adequately react in his confirmation from 1550 to several changes in the extent and structure of the Wallachian settlement of Orava. As implied by the wording of the confirmation, the Liptov-based village of Dubová was sometimes before 1550 added to the lands under the dominion of Orava castle. On an unknown date (but certainly after 1474) Wallachians established Wsthy in upper Orava. For the first time, this village is mentioned in the list of serfs (subjects) of the Orava county in 1549, where it is defined that this is a village inhabited by Walachy, who inhabited 24 portals together with the Wallachians from Keneze, Bzyny, and Metzibrozy. Since in the territory where Ústie was established we

Likava castle, photo: Lukáš Tkáč

cannot expect any older settlement (perhaps with the exception of an older Wallachian 'salaš' – a seasonal mountain sheep farm), it deserves the primacy of the very first village in Orava established based on the Wallachian law. However, Wallachian population also settled in the village of Bziny. It lived here alongside with the original population, who followed the customary law. Already the list of portals from 1547 in the village of Bzynny mentioned fur taxed portals, a single reeve, three landless peasants (želiari) one shepherd and four Olachones (that is, Wallachians). This fact is also demonstrated by the above list of serfs from 1549.

Significantly different situation was recorded in the villages of Nižná, Krásna Hôrka, Dlhá, Dubová (Sedliacka) and Dolná Lehota. As implied by the oldest known list of portals (portal register) of the Orava county, in 1547, in the villages of Nižná and Krásna Hôrka, who had a shared reeve, there were ten taxed portals, in which there lived one reeve, four landless peasants, three persons with no possessions, two Olachones and two shepherds. Except for the above, there was one newly-built and one deserted house. For the villages of Dlhá and Dubová (Sedliacka), which also shared a single reeve, we register seven taxable portals and the population of one reeve, four landless peasants, four Olachones and one landowner's day labourer. In one of the two villages, there was also a single deserted serf's settlement. In all of these cases, these were older villages, which were originally following the emphyteutic law. In 1547, one Wallachian family penetrated to the village of Dolná Lehota, which at the time probably followed the customary law. It is implied by the information form the portal register which indicated that the population comprised three landowner's day labourers, one doorman and one Olahus. However, the portal registers from 1548 and 1549, just like the register of serfs

from 1549 do not mention any Wallachians in these villages. None is mentioned in the charter issued by the king Ferdinand from 1550 either.

Here, it should be noted that the privileges issued to the Wallachians of Orava and Likava castles in 1474, 1526 and 1550 represent the most extensive and most complex list of rights and duties of Wallachians in West Carpathians. And this is exactly the reason why we may regard them as some kind of legal template or basis for the other Wallachians in the territory of West Carpathians.

Already in this historical period, we can rightfully expect that there were multiple mountain sheep farms (salaš) in the territory of Orava. It was these mountain farms that became the cores for establishing of villages in the early second half of

Mountain sheep farm, Ján Hála, Slovak National Gallery, SNG,
source: webumenia.sk

the 16th century. These newly established villages were likely to originate exactly on the locations of the most significant and largest mountain sheep farms.

In this way in 1552, Václav Sedlnický had the village of Vitanova established in the territorial bounds of the village of Čimhová. He awarded to office of 'šoltýs'1 to a certain Michal Koptej. By the end of 1556, Václav Sedlnický had established six more of these villages. However, the resources do not provide information when and how this took place. In 1556, when the dominion of the Orava castle was received into temporary ownership as a deposit (in exchange for borrowing) by František ("Francis") Thurso, for the first time we see the mentions of the following villages: Zazriva, Pribiss, Puczow, Chlebnicze, Podbielye and Bielypotok.

The following part of the text is focused on the Oravian part of the monitored territory of Malá Fatra and Kysucká vrchovina. Since only a single village was established here based on the Wallachian law – and this was Zázrivá. Next, we can take a more detailed look at the interesting but exceedingly complex history of the settlement's beginnings.

The beginnings of Zázrivá are hidden under the veil of secrecy until this day. What is certain, however is that it had to be established between 1550 – 1556. We deduce this conclusion as the charter by the king Ferdinand I. from 1550 does not mention the settlement while the documents from 1556, when the Orava castle domain was received by Francis Thurso, Zázrivá is already mentioned as an existing village. Since we cannot estimate the existence of an older settlement that had existed in the territory where the village originated (perhaps with an exception of an older mountain sheep farm), Zázrivá

Coat of arms of the Thurso family, Adolf Medzihradský, Orava gallery, OGD, source: webumenia.sk

ranks to the Orava villages that were established based on the Wallachian law. Unfortunately, we cannot state with certainly anything else with regards to the origin of its population. The fact that in the territorial bounds of Zázrivá, before 1565 there existed the so called Vatzkowszke meadows that belonged to Dubová (Valaská), would suggest that at least some part of its first settlers could come from this old Wallachian village.

We encounter the village of Zazdrywa in written records again in 1564 when the Walachi Arvenses submitted their complaint to king Ferdinand I. about officials in charge of taxation who forced them to pay county taxes from which they had reportedly been exempt. Wallachians were asking the king to confirm the privileges of the king Matthew Corvinus and Luis II and exempt them from taxation and protect them from his officials in charge of tax collection. Ferdinand advanced the whole matter to the Hungarian house of representatives simultaneously notifying the house with his letter that he himself had terminated the privilege of tax exemption for Orava Wallachians in 1550. The only exception was provided to the three oldest Wallachian villages in Orava – Kňažia, Medzibrodie and Dubová (Valaská), that continued to be tax exempt.

Table no. 1. The number of portals under taxation in Zázrivá in 1564 – 1575

Year	**1564**	**1565**	**1566**	**1567**	**1569**	**1570**	**1572**	**1573**	**1574**	**1575**
The number of portals	2	2	3	3	–	–	4	4	4	4

It is evident from Table 1 that Zazrywa was subject to taxation basically regularly in 1564 – 1575. For unknown reasons the village was made tax-exempt in 1569 – 1570, when it was perhaps classified as a settlement that is free from taxation yet. This theory would be supported by the entry in taxation census from 1570 where the village is mentioned as a newly-established settlement. Its population was made exclusively of Walachi, which is proven by the taxation census of the Orava county from 1574.

Further development of the village can be again reconstructed solely based on data from portal register and taxation census documents. The portal register from 1577 only mentions two portals (subject to tax but later, the number of portals starts to rise again slowly. Portal register from 1578 indicated two and a half of taxed portals and ten years later already three and a half (in 1588). The population of Zazrywa is also here labelled as Walachi. Taxation register of the Orava county from 1593 classified the village as the property of Georgius Thurso with three portals. The first register of houses in Orava county from 1598 recorded 11 serf households in the village of Zazryva that are subject to taxation.

With the rise in the number of Wallachian population and the establishing of new villages, the search for suitable pastures for

Orava castle, photo: Jozef Juríik

the extensive livestock farming was increasingly becoming problematic. Wallachians therefore gradually started to choose also agriculture and working with wood. This naturally led to the swift reaction by the feudal lords who started to ask from Wallachians not only the typical 'Wallachian' duties but also conventional duties from agricultural produce and labour on the feudal lands.

This is proven also by the first known accounting schedule of the Orava castle domain from 1602, which indicates for the village of Zazriva that on the St. George's day, the population was obliged to pay 17 golden coins, a fee for the butcher, submit 44 rams as well as an unspecified tithe. They also had the duty of carrying (carting) salt or to pay a fixed monetary payment instead of performing this particular obligation. On the St. John's day, they were paying the duty for the rental of the grassy uplands, paid the tithe from 700 sheep, submitted 5 lambs or again paid a fixed monetary payment instead of performing this particular obligation. On the St. Michael's day, they paid for bryndza sheep cheese, for food and for not participating in carting of hay. On the Nativity of the Lord, they were obliged to pay 3 golden coins and 97 denarii, pay the fees for mills, for wood, for the licence to catch birds, for the sawmill, an again pay the rent for the grassy uplands. Besides the above, they were obliged to cart wine, submit two hazel hens to the castle or again paid a fixed monetary payment instead of performing this particular obligation. The serfs were obliged to submit 48 measures of oats and the reeves ('šoltýsi') another six measures.

The next development of the village was negatively affected by the rebellion of Stephen Bocskay (1604 – 1605). The register of houses 1604 indicates only five taxable houses in the village of Zazrywa and the next register from 1608 mentions only three taxed serf households while stating that already in 1604 Zazrywa had five houses to be taxed but now (i.e. in

1608) because of great hunger and lack of bread, only three households can be taxed.

The fact that during the 'years of renewal', agriculture played an increasingly important role in the life of the population is demonstrated also by the canonical visit by the super-intendent of the Bytča district, Eliáš Láni from 1612. According to the report, the parish priest from Veličná was receiving from the serfs in Zážriva two measures of barley and each of the three reeves of Zazriva gave him two measures of oats. This means the serfs of Zázrivá were bound to pay their tithe to the priest only in grains. Another indirect evidence of this transformation of the village is the charter that the landowner Juraj Thurso issued in 1613 to define the boundaries of the village's municipal territory. It seems they had not been precisely stated before

Zázrivá at present, photo: Jozef Juríik

that date, although the village had been established more than 60 years ago at the time (!). The description of the boundaries was specified as follows: „...Chotar jejich jest z Veličany na Čremoš po studňu, z Párničany po Biely potok, z Hruštínom po vrch Beskydu, z Považany též po vrch Beskydu aneb Rovnej hory... ". [the boundaries of their (village municipal territory) goes from Veličany to Čremoš until the well, from Párničany to Biely potok, from Hruštín until the top of the Beskyd, from Považany also to the top of Beskyd also known as Rovna hora].

It seems that at the time when most of the local Wallachians worked as shepherds, the precise specification of boundaries was not necessary. However, as the Wallachians increasingly turned to agriculture or work with timber, the question of boundaries with other villages' rural territories became more acute.

Although Zázrivá was becoming an increasingly agricultural settlement (apart from a sheep farming village) the traditional shepherding and the related manufacture of typical Wallachian products continued to enjoy a significant role in the life of the village. This can be demonstrated also by the charter issued by Juraj Thurso in 1615 granting the respective villages in Orava usage of the grassy uplands and stating the number of sheep that are to be bred on these lands. According to his regulation, 44 villages in Orava were to farm with the total of 20 167 sheep. The village of Zazrywa received into usage (or reconfirmation of usage) the upland pastures called Okruhlicza and Ostrý Wrch, where they were allowed to pasture 700 sheep.

Wallachian-agricultural character of the village is aptly illustrated also by the oldest known list of all properties and landowners of the Orava castle lands from 1619. In the village of

Zázriwá the register notes that it is administered by the reeve named Juraj, who is obliged to cart wine and salt for the feudal lord as well as to the pay the duty of two young roosters. For the mill, he has to submit to the feudal lord one well-fed pig or five golden coins; when the need be, he is to carry arms and fight for the lord, assist in repairs of the castle, submit gifts, pay a tithe from sheep as well as roof shingles. The documents state eleven Wallachian peasants and five landless peasants. Peasants were obliged with the following duties to the lords of the castle: 44 rams, tithe (one tenth) from sheep, send the Wallachians from the mountain farms to arms as well as foot soldiers and to work on castle repairs. Their duties for the castle 'kitchen' included: 2 pieces of young calf, 11 castrated roosters, 22 chicken, 11 geese, 11 hazel hens, 100 pieces of

The church in Veličná, photo: Jozef Juríik

eggs and oat in the volume 20 large measures and standard 2 measures. Landless peasants were obliged to submit 5 chicken to the castle kitchen.

The list of all properties and landowners from 1619 can conclude our inquiry into the beginnings of Zázrivá. The village had defined boundaries of its rural territory, it received two grassy uplands for pasturing of livestock and precisely defined duties to its feudal lordship as well as to the kingdom. During the times of the Bocskay uprising, but mainly during the years of hunger that followed, it clearly demonstrated its viability. The oldest history of Zázrivá is an ideal case study illustrating the process of shaping of villages that did not take days or months but often several years and in extreme cases (like the one illustrated here) it could take a few decades.

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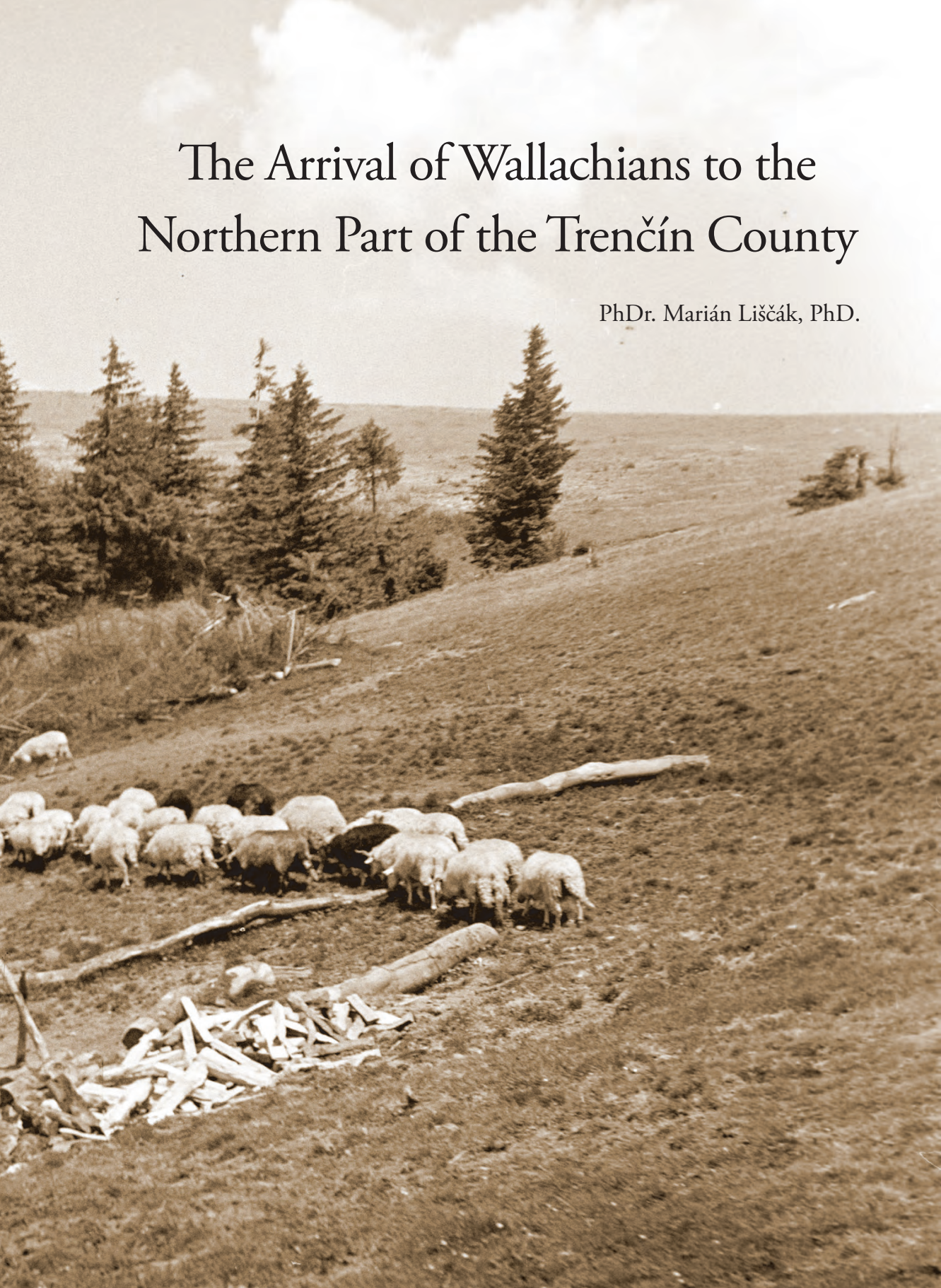
The Arrival of Wallachians to the Northern Part of the Trenčín County

PhDr. Marián Liščák, PhD.



The Arrival of Wallachians to the Northern Part of the Trenčín County

Wallachian population started to arrive to the territory of modern Slovakia already in the first half of the 14th century. According to Dr. Peter Ratkoš, the so-called Wallachian colonisation of Slovakia can be divided into three stages. The first one was limited to colonisation of only the territory of eastern Slovakia. In second stage, during the whole 14th century, Wallachians from the Polish territory started to penetrate our territory and the third stage in the 15th century comprised active participation in the colonisation of also the native Slovak population.

Wallachians penetrated to the northern part of the Trenčín county through two major directions. One stream that contained a relatively large proportion of the original population from the east of what is now Slovakia was headed through mountain valleys to the south of the High Tatras. The second stream of Wallachians went through of Galicia and southern Poland, that is, through the border regions to the north of High Tatras. It then penetrated Orava, northern Morava and Silesia as well as north-west Kysuce. It is not quite clear, which of the streams actually arrived at the northern parts of the Trenčín county as the first as the feudal lords and their charters did not explicitly mention from where these populations were arriving while they were settling their territory – we can only state their presence based on documents form the end of the 15th and the early 16th century.

In the territory of north-west Slovakia, Wallachians are for the first time mentioned in the document issued in 1474 in

Portrait of Matthew Corvinus, Blasius Höfel, Fendt, engraving, Municipal gallery of Bratislava, source: webumenia.sk

the Orava and Liptov county, where the king Matthew Corvinus granted privilege to three Wallachian settlements (Kňazie, Medzibrod in Orava and Dubová in Liptov). The most important document with regards to Wallachian settlement of the upper Trenčín county is the charter of king Vladislav II. from 1496, in which he confirms the charter of his predecessor king Matthew (issued after 1475) and the liberties its grants to the Volachis in Belá and other locations and forests belonging to Strečno castle. Based on this document, we can assume that at the turn of the 16th century, Wallachians had already been present at various locations across the lands belonging to the Strečno castle. However, Wallachians in the Trenčín county are mentioned also by older documents from 1491 and 1492.

In 1548, Wallachians are mentioned in the settlement of Nesluša and one year later also in Tižina. Together with their compatriots from Belá, Wallachians from Tižina thus started to settle the upper end of the Varín valley reaching as far as the valley of Bystrica. It was in this particular territory, where the border disputes between the Starý hrad and Strečno castle lords begun. The lords of the castle of Strečno had much more extensive lands and could thus afford to offer their territories to a much large number of Wallachians, who therefore gradually settled also the territory of Bystrica valley. They went as far as Veľká Rača where they encountered (near Čadca) the previously settled Wallachians from the northern branch of colonisation, who had settled in the neighbourhood of Veľka Rača as early as near the end of the 15th century. Čadca itself was established in 1534. Tižina is a very important village for the Wallachian settlement of this region, as it provided a certain administrative framework for the whole process of settlement of the Bystrica valley as well as the upper ends of the Terchová valley.

The southern stream of Wallachians that had, in the meantime, settled most of eastern Kysuce, encountered the northern stream in the central part of Kysuce, near the town of Krásno nad Kysucou. Still, we should perceive this line as a symbolic border as the Wallachians at that time still lived a nomadic lifestyle and they were penetrating deeper to the above territories (e.g. Wallachians from Belá let their sheep graze in the future territory of Raková). The ability of Wallachians to meaningfully utilise the previously uninhabitable (at least from the agricultural perspective) areas raised avid interest among landowners in subjugating of Wallachians and a more precise delimitation of their lands especially in the mountainous areas that had previously attracted very little interest. This led to

Starý hrad – Varín castle, Ivan Štubňa, woodcarving, Stredoslovenská galéria, source: webumenia.sk

Strečno castle, Ferdiš Duša, woodcarving, Ernest Zmeták art gallery, source: webumenia.sk

Budatín castle, Ferdiš Duša, woodcarving, Ernest Zmeták art gallery, source: webumenia.sk

centuries-long property-boundaries disputes between the respective feudal landowners.

The drivers and reasons for encouraging of Wallachian settlement

We first need to set the record straight: Wallachian colonisation certainly wasn't a controlled influx of Wallachian population and their organised settlement on the lands of the respective feudal lords. Wallachians often migrated spontane-

ously settling at altitudes and on lands that had been quite unattractive for the native population of peasant serfs. In these cases, the agreements with the landowner to whom the given territory belonged were often concluded ex post. This naturally applied mainly for the initial stages of the Wallachian colonisation. Later when the landowners realised very well what were the advantages that settlement of the Wallachians on their lands brought with it, they started to actively invite these populations and intentionally directed them to the more remote locations. This is how the Suňoga family did it in the lands belonging to the castle of Budatín, the Dersffy family in Strečno and, no doubt, also the Pongrác family in Starý hrad domain.

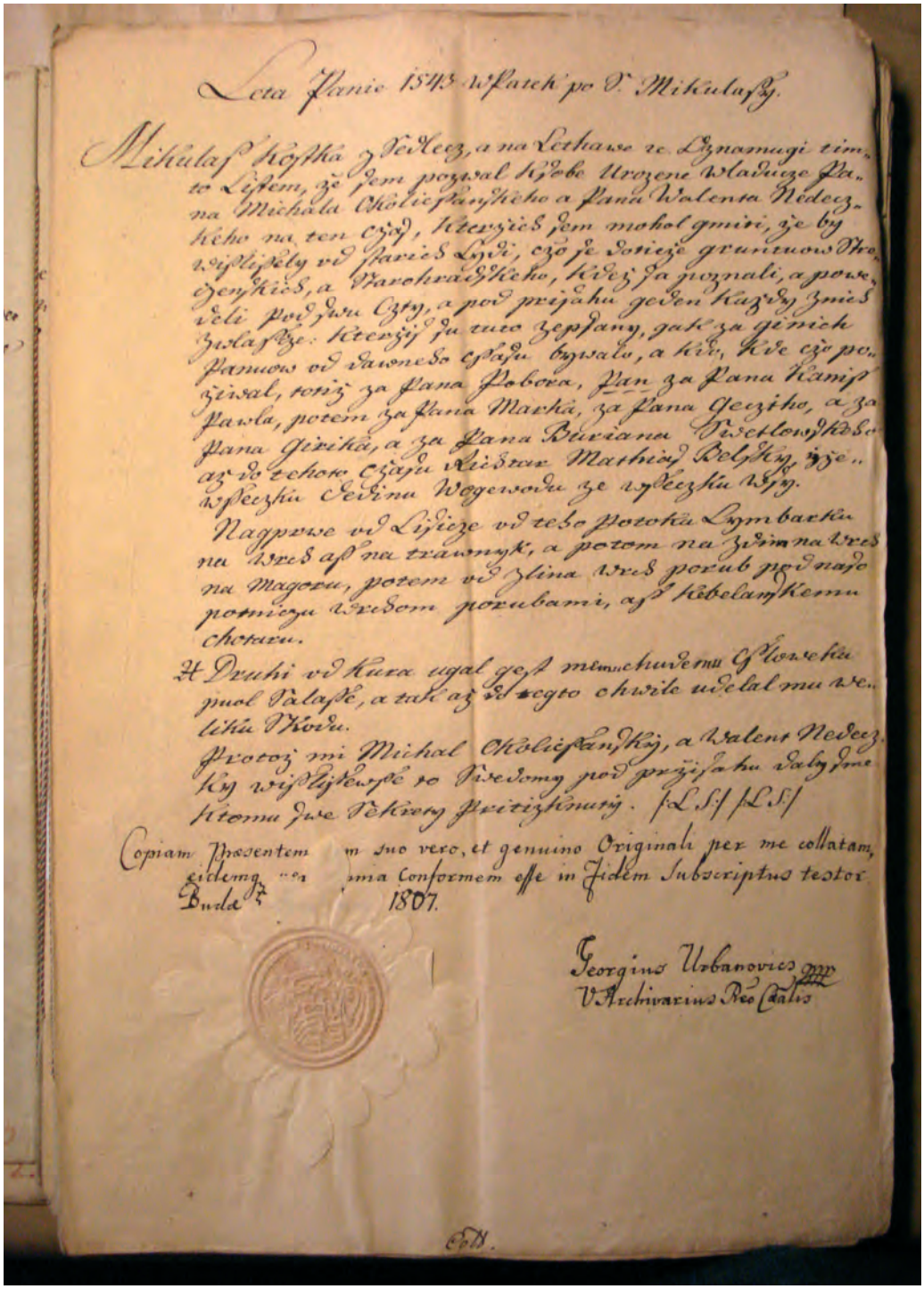
The process of Wallachian colonisation in the upper part of the Trenčín county

Wallachian colonisation gained more relevance in the first half of the 16th century, when Wallachians' presence is confirmed by the historical records on the lands belonging to the castles of Strečno, Budatín, Hričov, Starý hrad, Likava, Bytča and Považská Bystrica. Although the reports were still quite limited what suggest that the proportion of Wallachians in the total population in the area was rather small, it was rising quickly. At this time, we are still only talking about the first wave of the Wallachian colonisation, when the numbers of the arriving populations weren't very large, when the rather careful and suspicious attitude of the landowners towards the newcomers and their settlement in their own territories was another factor. Still, already at this stage, Wallachians under different landowners often got into disputes (often armed con-

flicts) because of the pastures. The respective landowners were perhaps supporting them in these disputes. Moreover, along with the conflicts between Wallachians pasturing their sheep on bordering lands between the respective feudal domains in the upper Trenčín county, there started to emerge (in the second half of the 16th century) also conflicts with Wallachians living in Morava and Silesia, who had just started to penetrate through the bordering mountains to the territory of modern Slovakia.

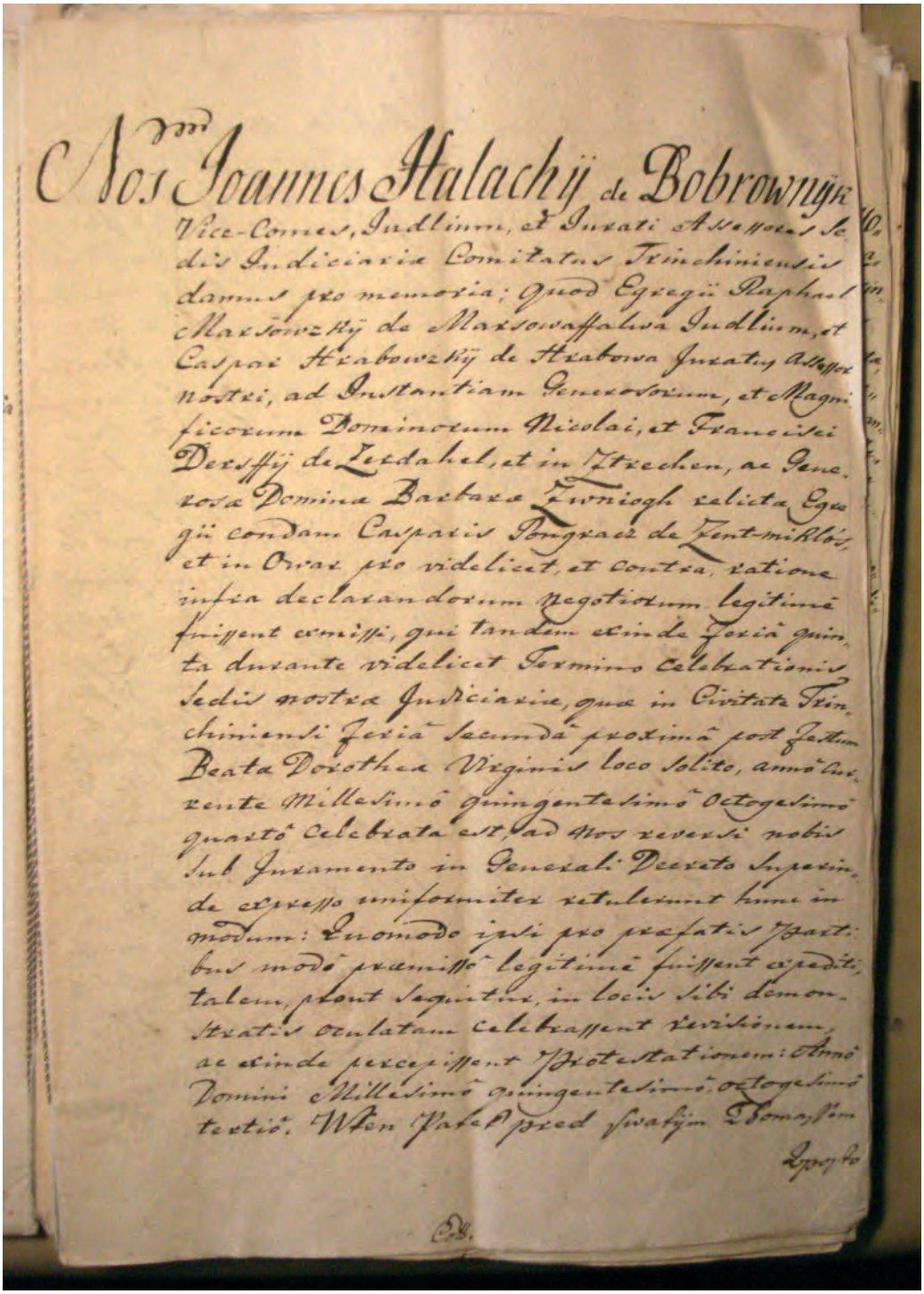
It is only in the second half of the 16th century when we can speak of a truly extensive and mass colonisation, when the number of Wallachians grew so dramatically, that there started to emerge settlements, which later become bases for establishment of other villages in their neighbourhood (e.g. Bystrica). While in the first half of the 16th century, Wallachians in the northern part of Trenčín county mostly lived as nomads continually moving to new pastures, approximately from the mid-century they started to combine shepherding with conventional agricultural activities. Wintering of their livestock was certainly a factor forcing them to do this as they had to prepare the suitable conditions for winter months spent down in the valley. After they had established certain ties with one specific location, they didn't get too far in summer either. Moreover, the whole area started to be increasingly populated and there were fewer and fewer new unused pastures. This led them to place more emphasis on agricultural cultivation of the area adjacent to their settlement which resulted in the first wave of extensive deforestation of the region.

In the first half of the 17th century, under the influence of dramatic influx of the new population, establishing of new settlements under the so-called Wallachian law continues. A specific phenomenon of this era is the fact that a number of Walla-



Mikuláš Kostka on the subject of border dispute between the Starý hrad castle and Strečno castle from 1540, where the Wallachian voivode and Wallachians are mentioned too, photo: Marián Liščák

chians started to settle permanently. Shepherding became only a marginal activity for many of them, they reduced the number of their livestock and many were gradually transforming to become peasants focused on plant-based agricultural production. It was in this period, when the rising populations of the older existing settlements (Čadca, Bystrica) enabled secondary colonisation in the form of new settlements that separated form them (Nová Bystrica, Klubina, Radôstka), or simply profiled as independent villages in their neighbourhood (Čierne, Skalité, Oščadnica etc.). The element they had in common were the so-called Wallachian voivodships, under which they still belonged and the voivoda1continued to be hierarchically superior to richtár, the reeve of the settlement. It was in the interest of landowners to populate their feudal lands as densely as possible in order to generate profit. The feudal lords therefore started to support also this new form of settlement of the upper ends of the mountain valleys by way of this domestic colonisation when they offered the population from the existing villages the possibility to gain even more extensive lands, the so-called zárubky (cleared land) freed from serfdom duties for a specific time. On the other hand, the land was usually located in a less favourable environment or location. These clearings were given to the settlers in a single plot of land that typically comprised land limited by the boundary of the municipal lands or perhaps by the natural conditions (mountains, streams etc.). These plots of land then also served as bases for imposing feudal duties to the small landowners. The division of these villages according to the respective plots (zárubky) then continued until the 19th century. At this stage, the Wallachian colonisation has exhausted its possibilities in the region and started to overlap with the new wave of colonisation – the so-called kopanice colonisation to finally merge into one. In the lower altitudes, this



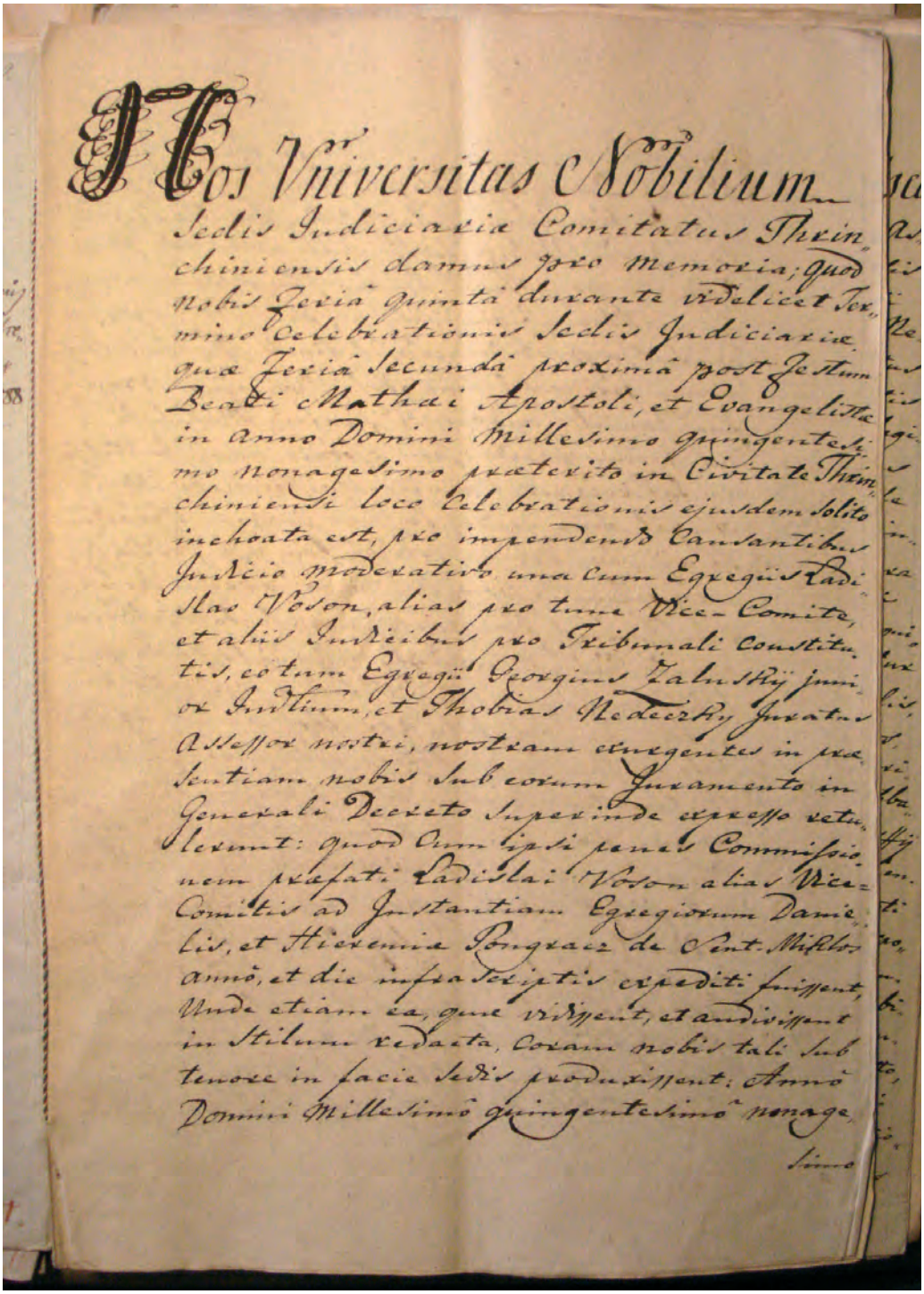
The Document describing the border dispute between the Starý hrad and Strečno castle owners from 1584, photo: Marián Liščák

type of colonisation was taking place parallel with the Wallachian colonisation already in the 16th century. Valleys had been settled also by the older population scattered in small hamlets that gradually merged with the Wallachian newcomers and mutually learned from each other. Moreover, we know from the archive documents that also when establishing settlement following the kopanice law in the 17th century, the populations still followed some parts of the Wallachian law, such as their subjection to the Wallachian voivoda as was the case in the area of Bystrica valley.

From the archives

In the early years of the colonisation, the Wallachian settlers and the general population in the northern part of the Trenčín county remained quite markedly divided and this also included paper documents. E.g. in the document from 1543 issued by Mikuláš Kostka, we read (together with other names) also the name of the reeve of the village of Belá, Matej Belský with the whole village but independently (even if not named) the Wallachian voivode with the whole Wallachian community.

In Čadca in the first half of the 16th century, a certain Boďa from Dolná Tižina and Lokina Slanina also known as Lokňa both had their cabins, sheep shelters and sheep, the latter farming with as many as 400 sheep. Mountain farms (salaš) are also mentioned in the territory of today's Oščadnica. In 1582, the settlement is labelled as Podjavorská Oščadnica, whereas the county officials were accompanied by the reeve of Kysucké Nové Mesto, Juraj Sumida. The documents also list the damages caused on the two local mountain farms by the Wallachians subject to Mikuláš Dersffy.



The document from 1591 describing the border dispute between the Starý hrad and Strečno castle owners containing a great deal of information about Wallachians, photo: Marián Liščák

In 1584, during a borderline dispute between the villages of Lysice a Tižina, sources mentioned the voivode of Tižina, named Ján Číž, who together with Ján Kaczina broke the sleigh and took away an axe and chain from Ján Kaliar, an inhabitant of Lysice. Several decades later, Ján Číž is mentioned as the reeve under emphyteutic right of the village of Bystrica and Slezák as a Wallachian farming on an extensive territory in the valley of Bystrica and later as the Wallachian voivode.

In 1591, the owner of the Starý Hrad castle, Daniel Pongrác asked to meet the county reeve, Juraj Záturský at the Veľhora mountain (993 m), where he showed him the heavily damaged and utterly destroyed mountain sheep farm while claiming that this land had always been used by himself, his brothers and ancestors but in that year the Wallachians under Mikuláš Dersffy from Terchová and Tižina started to push in, headed by the voivode of Tižina. Not only they destroyed the mountain farm and the shelter but armed they had also badly beaten Wallachians of Daniel Pongrác who had been pasturing his sheep there. Amongst other, this implies that by that time the local landowners had already been intensively involved in the Wallachian farming economy by establishing their own upland farms where the hired Wallachians where grazing and pasturing their sheep and goats.

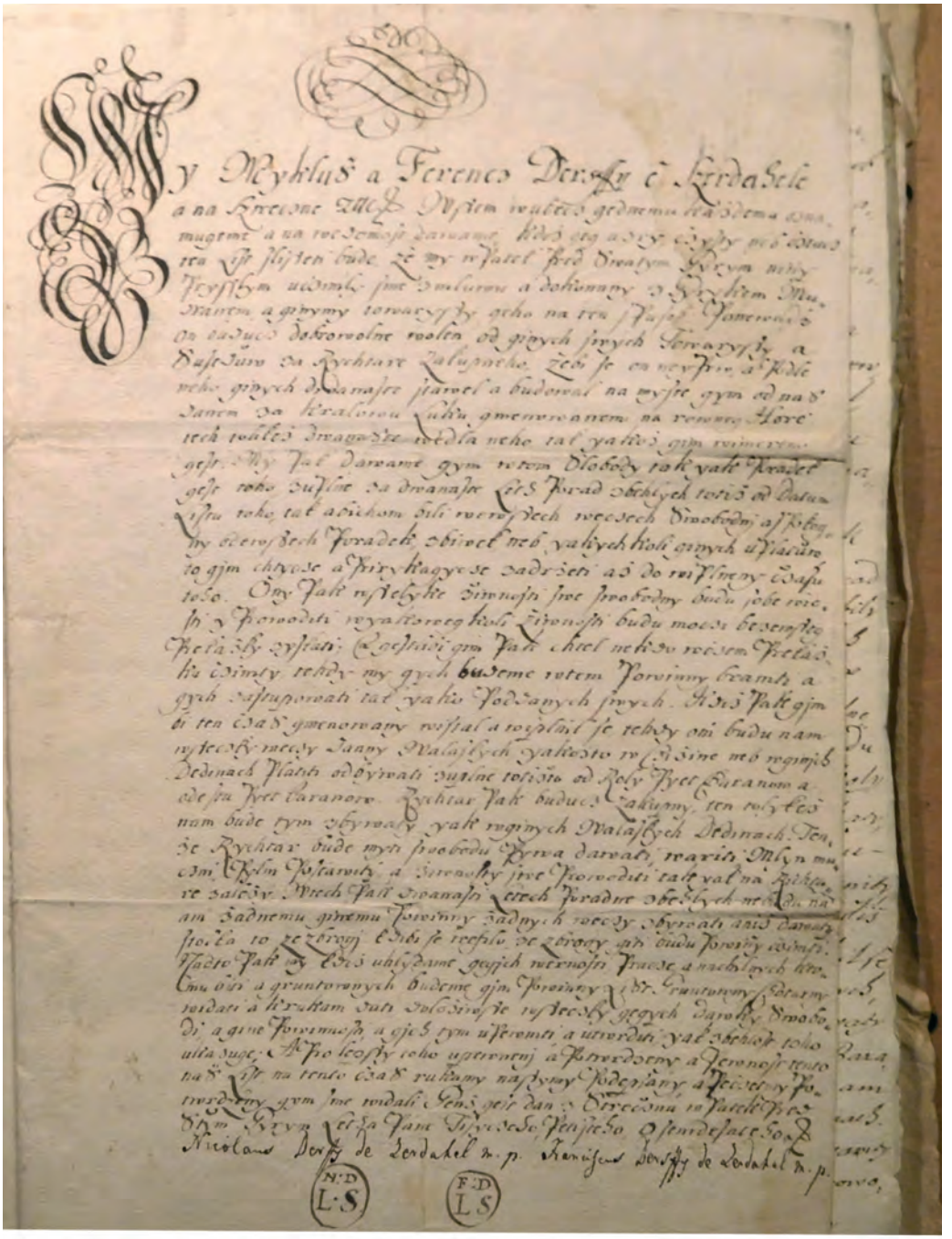
Another interesting story from the year 1650 is portrayed in documents from the interrogation of detained Wallachians from the territory around Čadca in Jablunkov, in front of the Wallachian court. The interrogation also mentions Jakub Jendriščák from Čierne who indicated that only one year ago he had moved in to the area from Poland. Similarly, among the detained men, there is certain Karkoščok Križek, who came from Piosek near Jablunkov, however, he had settled in Čierne, where he received a plot of land (zárubok). This not only points

out to the mutual overlapping of both major waves of colonisation – the Wallachian and kopanice colonisation but also suggests the territories form which the new-coming colonists in the territory around Čadca originally came from.

Wallachian law

The key features of the Wallachian law were shaped already in the 13th century in the region of southern Carpathians. Along with their gradual migration, Wallachians included some elements of Ruthenian law and also took a few legal principles from the so-called Russian Pravda, that is, the ancient laws that originated back in the times of Kievan Rus. However, Wallachian law has never been fully codified in writing.

One concept characteristic for Wallachian law was that the land based on this law could not be held by all the settlers, only the locator1. This mainly applied during middle ages, when the most substantial thing for any Wallachian was ownership of his flock and the lands only mattered in terms of subsistence for the flock of sheep. So, a fully-fledged Vlach/Wallachian was only the one who had his own flock and only then he may have become interested un holding land that could be then related to his other duties. For the people in middle ages and early modern era, it therefore become more advantageous to own a flock of sheep, become a Wallachian and thus enjoy more convenient conditions in case of settling new, hitherto thinly populated lands – this was why the locals were joining the Wallachians.



Founding charter of Terchová from 1580, photo: Marián Liščák

Settlements established under the Wallachian law

In the northern territories of the Trenčín county, there were multiple settlements established under the Wallachian law. Let us mention at least a few. Čadca is certainly the oldest settlement established under the Wallachian law in the upper Kysuce, its founding dates back to 1534, when it was established by the owners of Budatín castle lands, Ladislav and Mojžiš Suňoga with a substantial help of their influential relative, Ján Podmanický. Other villages established on the lands belonging to the Budatín castle included Nová Dedina (part of Divina), Lopušné, Ochodnica and Dunajov.

Another village established under Wallachian law that certainly deserves mentioning is Terchová. Luckily, the founding charter of the village has been preserved and we thus know that it was established in 1580. We even know the exact date of concluding the agreement, that is, Friday before the St. George's Day (23rd April) which would make the exact date 17th April 1580. On that day, Mikuláš and František Dersffy allowed Juraj Muráň, whom the Wallachian settlement selected as the reeve, to establish together with other Wallachians the village called Kráľová, that is today called Terchová. Together with the emphyteutic right to the office of reeve, the head of the community also received the right to brew and sell beer, but he could also build a mill in the village. Besides the above, the reeve as well as the whole population of the newly established settlement were freed from the serf labour for twelve years.

In the second half of the 16th century, the Dersffy family holding the lands of Strečno castle attempted to establish many other settlements, out of which only Bystrica (today Stará By-

strica) and Lutiše survived. Among the Wallachian villages established on the lands of the Strečno castle, we should perhaps also mention Pažitie.

Wallachian voivodeships

After arrival of Wallachians to the upper Trenčín county, certain territories of the respective castle domains were settled, However, since there were no villages in many of the locations in the first half of the 16th century, (and even if there were, the scope of the territory where Wallachians were grazing their flocks often crossed the boundaries of territories belonging under the respective villages) it was necessary to establish some kind of organisation among the Wallachians. On the territories belonging to the respective landowners, the so-called Wallachian voivodeships were being established, headed by the voivode as the leader of all Wallachians living in the given territory. These voivodeships continued also long after the respective locations were filled with newly established villages and ceased to exist for good only in the 18th century. Original Wallachian voivodeships developed already in the territory of Romania, where the first mention of this institution is from 1247.

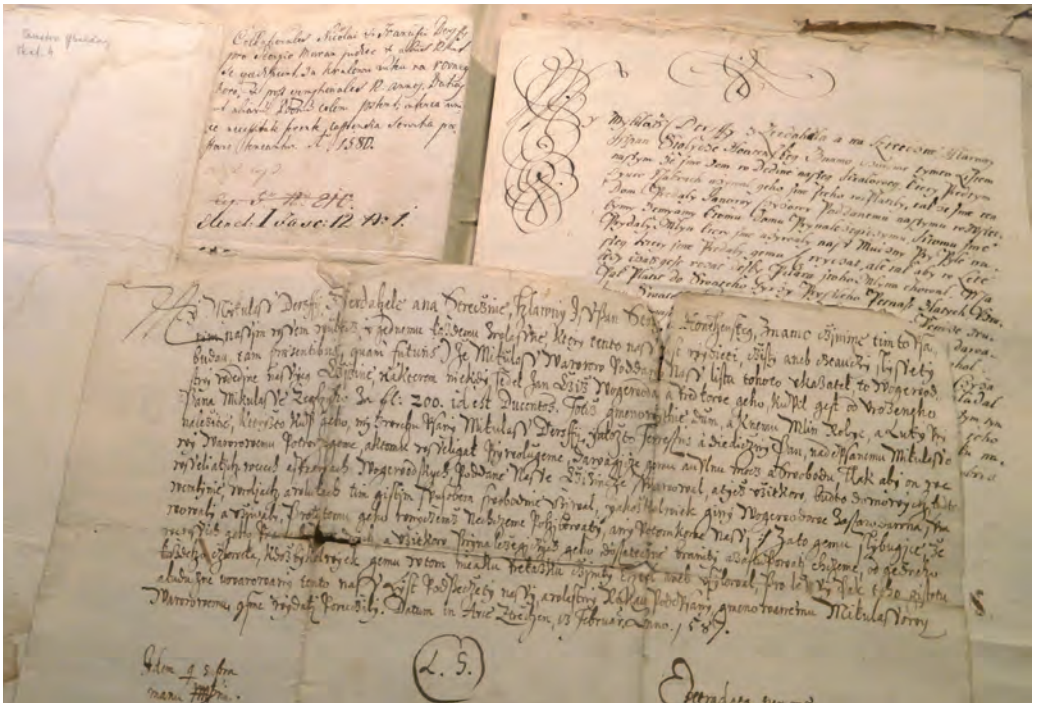
Wallachian voivode is mentioned in Slovak territory already in the privilege of 1474, where the above-mentioned three settlements were supposed to elect their voivode chosen by all the Wallachians from their ranks. Based on archive materials, we know that there was a voivodeship along the stream of Černianka with seat in Svrčinovec, another one was in Staškov, yet another in Čadca, to which all the settlements in the neighbourhood belonged. In the lower Kysuce, there was a voivode-

ship in Nesluša and there was one also in Bela, in the lands of the Starý hrad castle without any doubt although we do not have a written direct evidence thereof.

Tižina, as a bridgehead of the Strečno lands behind the settlements belonging to the Starý Hrad, constituted an important element in the Wallachian colonisation of the eastern part of the Strečno lands. It was a seat of voivodeship (perhaps as the substitute of the original voivodeship from Bela), which administered a large territory starting in today's Vrátna dolina going as far as Veľka Rača.

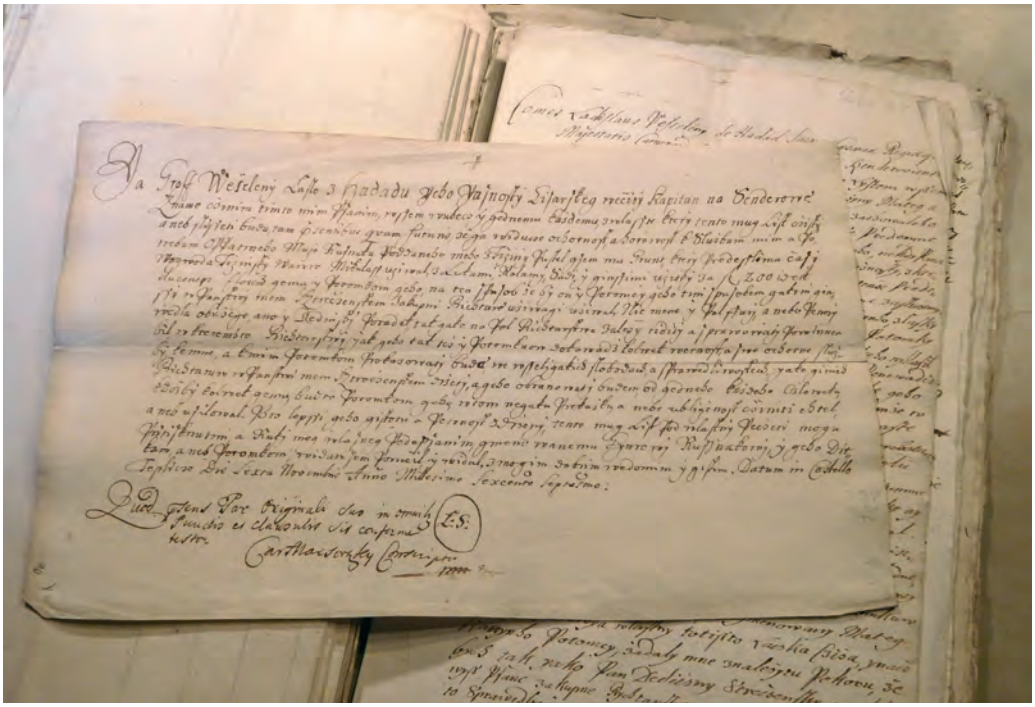
Wallachian voivode

In the northern part of the Trenčín county, the Wallachian voivode actually represented only some form of landowner's official who worked as an intermediary between the feudal lord and his Wallachian subjects. He oversaw fulfilment of their feudal obligations, collection of duties and payments but on the other hand also ensured that the Wallachian freedoms were respected by the feudal landowners. He also possessed lower-level judicial authority over the local population. He was responsible for the protection of the territory of 'his' voivodeship and therefore also of the feudal lord. Voivodes were elected by the Wallachian community living in the respective territory and subsequently confirmed into their office by the landowner; in some locations they could become voivodes through emphyteutic rights (i.e. through purchase) just like village reeves. Voivodes were leasing the mountain pastures on behalf of the landowners also to Wallachians or ordinary serfs from the neighbouring lands.



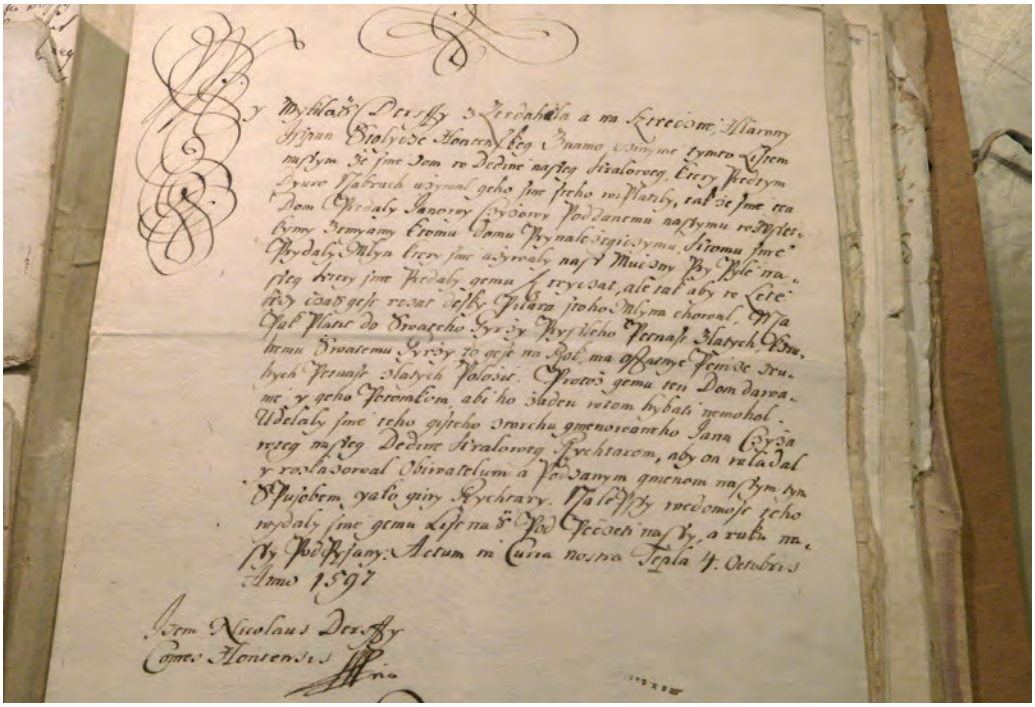
Emphyteutic lease of voivodeship title in Tižina for Mikuláš Vavro from 1587, photo: Marián Liščák

After founding of villages with their own reeves who actually took over some of the voivodes' responsibilities and duties, the latter still remained hierarchically above the reeves as the administrators of lands belonging to the respective voivodeship. As the Wallachian settlers were not arriving to the area all at once, but continually for almost two centuries, the office of the voivode was relevant and necessary almost until the end of 17th century. It is certainly of interest that the office of voivode survived in some locations of the upper Trenčín county until the end of the 18th century, although, naturally, the scope of their competences and powers was far from being as extensive as before and in the final years after the Teresian land reform it basically became just a honorary title.



Lease of the one half of the emphyteutic title of the reeve in Tižina leased to Juraj Rusnák, in the past used by voivode Mikuláš Vavro; from 1670, photo: Marián Liščák

Only a limited volume of information has been preserved in relation to Wallachian voivodes from the 16th and 17th centuries. Their names are usually indicated only in the documents related to delineation of municipal lands' boundaries. Despite the fact, at least the names of some voivodes from the upper Trenčín county have been preserved. Originally quite extensive voivodeship of Tižina was administered by Ján Číž in 1583 – 1584, but already in 1587, the title was obtained by purchase by a certain Mikuláš Vavro, who retained the office at least until 1596. In 1608, the voivode in Tižina is again Ján Číž, however in the same year, the said Mikuláš Vavro again acquired the title by purchase. It is certainly of interest that with the title of voivode, the office holder also gained user rights to the brewery and malt-house.



Lease of the title of the reeve with the related benefits to Ján Číž and his appointment as the reeve in Terchová (Kráľová) from 1597, photo: Marián Liščák

Mikuláš Vavro (the son or grand-son of the original Mikuláš Vavro) as the holder of the voivodeship is mentioned in the sources also in 1667. It is interesting that a document from 1670 states that until the given year, Mikuláš Vavro had also been using one half of the emphyteutic title of the village reeve in Tižina, which was in that year acquired by Juraj Rusnák from Tižina for the price of 200 golden coins.

The second half of the office of the reeve (and for some time, perhaps also the full office) was used by Ladislav Číž according to the charter from 1669 during the years of the landowner Štefan Vešeléni (the first decades of the 17th century). In 1669, this other half of the reeve office was acquired by his grandsons Matej and Ján Číž. It is certainly relevant to notice that the

benefits of the reeve's office also included the Rozsutec mountain in the territory belonging into the municipal boundaries of Terchová, what not only points out to Wallachian colonisation but also to the fact that the territory of the future Terchová originally belonged under administration of Tižina, or more precisely the Tižina voivodeship. It should also be noted that in 1597, Ján Číž became the emphyteutic reeve in the village of Terchová (originally Kráľová).

The Tižina voivodeship was later followed (and partially also replaced) by the voivodeship of Terchová, where the voivode in 1613 was Ján Kačineh (Číž), while in 1736 – 1755, it was Martin Cingel. In the Bystrica valley, the independent voivodeship of Bystrica was separated from the original Tižina voivodeship.

The names of Wallachian colonists

During the several centuries during which the Wallachian colonists were pouring into the upper parts of the Trenčín county, documents indicate hundreds of various names of new settlers. Among them, many have been preserved until this day but many more were forgotten or, possibly, they have only been preserved as the local names of the territorial wards or individual parts of the respective villages. Just to give the reader a better overview of the names of the newly coming Wallachian settlers, let us mention a few examples. Some of the names of the Wallachians from the first half of the 16th century from the lands between Kysuca river and Strečno castle included Peter Roman, Simon Rusnak, Stano, Mitru, Hricko, Alexa, Gavrišov, Andrys, Roman Kotnov, Bodia Valachus, Klimov, Ivan, Hrehus, Prehybach, Ivaško, Fedor, Kotrša, Hyncko, Romanus, Straštyn.

The names of Wallachians in the land register of the Budatín castle in 1658: Rudinska – Jantula, Ján Funsaty, Jakub Vransky; Nesluša – Ján Meliš, Jirik Štefunek, Šimek, Škovran, Jirik Puškat, Janoška Gall; Horelica – Ján Lemeš, Adam Mliečko, Ján Kucharčík, Valachus Ján Petrček, Juraj Kozubek; Dunajov – Katarína Hložna, Brodnan, Potočiar (fisherman); Čadca – Rumann, Vojtek Chriašt, Benko, Juroš, Matej Sedliak; Raková – emphyteutic reeve Gašpar, Podmola, Pavol Chromy, Korduliak, Turčiak, Drozd, Matej Gall, Cupka; Staškov – Vyhniar, Ján Čerepek, Vojtech Kozulek (game keeper), Pančuky,

A shingle-maker from Kysuce, Pavol Socháň, heliotype, Slovak National Gallery, source: webumenia.sk

Ján Koleno, Ondrej Švajdliak; Podvysoká – Ján Sliš, Jakub Mravec, Ján Ryzek, michal Nezgula, Vojtech Mravec, Gregor Trlik, Ján Pinka; Svrčinovec – Marek Zlatník, Ján Markveta, Juraj Slovaček (game keeper), Tomáš Kozelek, Ján Kuša, Ján Koptak; Povina – Marek Sidor (game keeper); Lodno – Ján Varek, Ján Novák, Ján Smolka, Ján Fraňo, Ján Valiašek, Michal Korytar, Ján Maršalek, Michal Kalinec, Martin Korchan. Naturally, these are not the names of all Wallachians living in the respective municipalities, only those who were subject to the administration of the Budatín castle as there was a large number of Wallachians in the upper Kysuce settlements who were subject to the Strečno castle domain.

Economic contribution of the Wallachian colonisation in the examined region

From the economic perspective, the influx of Wallachians brought also new forms of utilisation of the previously known farming animals – mainly sheep. Sheep had been farmed in these regions in smaller number also before the arrival of the new settlers, mostly for the purpose of wool production as well as for hides and meat. However, the sheep breed introduced by the Wallachians, which was labelled as valaška was more resilient with a rough wool and skin.

Wallachians extended the range of benefits of sheep farming to a great degree to include also dairy and cheese production while bringing with them also new methods of processing and storing of these products. They were making 'oštiepok' and 'parenica' cheese, crumbled cheese and bryndza soft cheese. They built stamping mills and fulling mills to manufacture Wallachian woollen cloth. Besides these activities, Wallachians

were skilled in a full range of other crafts e.g. manufacture of wooden instruments, hunting, wood felling, in some locations also manufacture of coal, and they used to breed not only sheep but also mountain horses, goats and oxen.

Guardianship ("Portášstvo") as an old tradition vs. highway robbery

A natural right of the Wallachians that was directly linked to their shepherding lifestyle was the right to bear arms. This right was retained for them also by the landowners of the upper Trenčín county as the feudal lords then utilised their services as guards of the border territories, which in Trenčín county made the Wallachians as successors to the older competence of the country guards, who were originally recruited from the ranks of the nomadic Cumans. Wallachians were thus becoming the so-called guardsmen (portáši). Their responsibility was to guard the border from any intrusion from abroad and keep order in their respective municipalities and settlements. Another task was to ensure the security of traders, travellers and in case of need to repair bridges in the borderlands in their leisure time.

On the other hand, the right to bear arms granted by the landowners could sometimes get out of hand. Indeed, Wallachians could also stray away and join the brigands, outlaws and robbers. One of the first highway robbers in historical archives of the upper Trenčín county is a certain Tomáš Sčotka, whose group of brigands was active in the borderlands in 1623 and 1624. The committee of Trenčín county officials found out in 1681 that in the mountains around Čadca, there operated the robbers Vojtek Vozni (Vožný) a.k.a. Kopušek (originally from

Svrčinovec), Martin Šimostek, Michal Mlynar a.k.a. Splza and Simon Jurašek. Another big name among the highwaymen who started to pillage villages and small towns in Upper Hungary, Austria, Silesia and southern Poland in 1688 with his 25-member company was Martin Portaš a.k.a. "Dzigosik." His company paid special attention to feudal courts and manors. According to the documents, he came from the borderline village of Bystrica, that is, either Stará or Nová Bystrica in Kysuce. He was caught in Polish town of Zywiec, where at the beginning of 1689 he first had two stripes of skin torn out of his back, his hands were then cut off and he was hanged on the hook by his ribs in front of almost 2000 people. In the case of Martin Portáš, it is evident according to is name, that he

Brigands, Wladyslaw Skoczylas, woodcarving, Slovak National Gallery, source: webumenia.sk

came from Wallachian environment. By executing the landowner's official from Wiegerska Gorka, Martin Portáš and his company left a negative trace in history and cast a dark shadow on their activities.

Logging and timber rafting as a consequence of Wallachian colonisation

Wallachians in the northern part of Trenčín county started with more intensive logging initially mainly to obtain new pastures for their flock of sheep. However, they also got involved in transporting of this wood, which gradually led to intensification of one of the important additional professions – timber rafting. Wallachians were acquiring pastures by forest clearing or burning. Already in 1614, a document mentions that logs are prepared near the stream of Kysuca ready to be rafted downstream. In 1637, the voivode of Jablunkov, Jurek from Kluz sends a message to the Těšín hetman that the Wallachians subject to the Suňoga family again built the cabins previously destroyed by Jurek, as well as the mill of Čadca that was repaired and now operational. Moreover, they reportedly felled a lot of timber in the local forests, they used to build rafts and send them downstream on the Kysuca river. This is actually the first historical record of timber rafting in Kysuce, which is moreover directly linked with the original Wallachian population of Čadca and its environs.

The heritage and importance of Wallachian colonisation in the regions of Malá Fatra, Kysucká vrchovina and Kysucké Beskdy

Although may people today live in the territories that were originally settled by Wallachian population, they don't know anything about this ethnic group and still – the heritage of the Wallachian colonisation surrounds us even today, in the shape of local names of municipal wards, locations, mountains and peaks but also in the form of traditions, customs and characteristic products of animal husbandry.

According to document from the first half of the 19th century, there were 1186 Wallachian sheep farmed in the village of Terchová (1833). Out of which all but 80 (which were kept in homesteads) were farmed at upland farms. Across the whole northern parts of the Trenčín county, it was mainly the mountain slopes of Mala Fatra that offered the best conditions for preservation of pasturing lifestyle thus - to a certain degree - helping to preserve the original Wallachian elements, which helped to colonise these mountainous lands in the 16th and 17th century.

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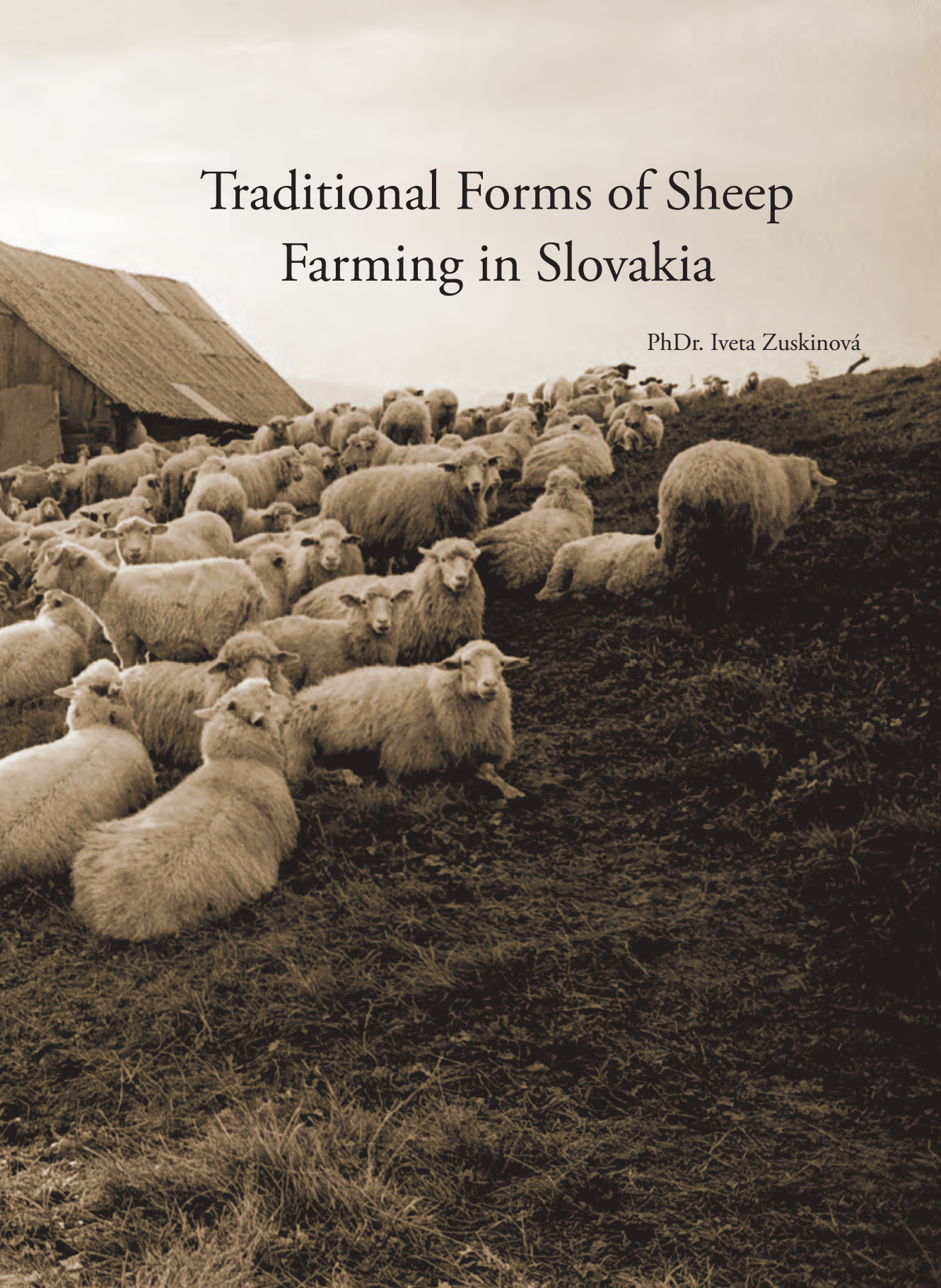
Sheep farm at Revišné 1980, photo Pavol Breier

Traditional Forms of Sheep Farming in Slovakia

PhDr. Iveta Zuskinová



Traditional Forms of Sheep Farming in Slovakia

Historical events and colonisation-style migrations have also contributed to origination of regions that are diverse and internally culturally differentiated, mainly if we consider the relatively small territory of Slovakia. The geographical location of Slovakia at the crossroads of west and east European cultures led to certain differences in shaping of regional specifics. Form the cultural and geographical perspective, Slovakia is located at the border between two large geographic units of Europe – the lowlands and the mountains. The lowland is linked to Pannonia and the Tisa-river basin spreading across the southern part of Slovakia, Moravia, parts of Austria, most of Hungary, as well as Croatia and Serbia. This region offers highly favourable climatic and soil conditions that significantly influenced also the general lifestyle of the population living here – the people became involved mostly in agricultural production. The mountainous part, spreading across most of the Slovak territory is a part of the so-called Carpathian crescent with cultural overlaps with Morava, Poland and Ukraine. Tough climate and lower quality of soil caused that the population of these lands focused more on logging, pasturing, livestock farming, rather modest agricultural activities and in some parts of the territory also on mining. While in the lower altitudes of the mountain valleys in the modern Slovak territory, there had already been domesticated sheep and established forms of sheep husbandry labelled as lowland sheep farming that was characterised by

A valach shepherd while pasturing sheep on Osnica, Zázrivá,
photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

driving of the animals to the pastures every day, the Wallachian sheep framing introduced utilisation of grassy uplands and pastures on alpine meadows in higher altitudes.

Communal pasturing of sheep (i.e. all sheep from the village in one flock) had been widespread in Slovak settlements already since the middle ages. Before spreading of the Wallachian method of sheep farming in Slovakia, there had been the lowland sheep farming closely associated to agricultural farming. The sheep farming year had been divided into two major seasons: the winter breeding season and thee summer season for pasturing – both forms focused on production of wool and meat.

In the 15th to 17th century, in the mountainous regions of Slovakia, a new system of sheep faring spread across the land from east towards west, known as Carpathian mountain sheep farming. As it was spread by shepherds, who were often labelled as Valachi in Latin sources, in professional literature, it was labelled as Wallachian/Vlach colonisation, or, more precisely, colonisation based on the Wallachian law. In the Slovak territory, this was a gradual process with unequal results that depended on natural and economic conditions, interest of the local agricultural population in the new methods as well the support of the respective feudal landowners. The methods of upland sheep keeping, specific farming related to processing of dairy products, characteristic shepherding constructions and artefacts, clothing accessories of shepherds, objects of shepherds' folk art as well as elements of folklore have been shaping the popular folk culture for centuries which has thus acquired truly unique forms thanks to these stimuli.

Milking of sheep, Terchová, photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

In the mountainous regions of Slovakia, we differentiate between two organisational forms of summer pasturing: individual and communal. Under the individual system of mountain sheep farming, sheep were grazing in flocks divided according to the respective farms and owners. In the areas with limited population, labour played a very important role. Summer grazing, pasturing, milking and overnight guarding of the flock but also for winter feeding – all of this required male labour which was mostly provided based on the division of labour in the respective families. Depending on the type of labour performed on the farm, the roles were differentiated and labelled as valach, ovčiar, baraniar (shepherd, ewe man, ram man). This made large family-based communities most suitable for this purpose, as all the important farming tasks could be assigned to male members of the family.

The system of rotation of sheep owners when pasturing the shared flock and when collecting the milk production of sheep had been preserved until the first half of the 20th century in numerous locations known for their mountain sheep farming tradition – villages around Žilina, in Orava and in Spišská Magura. Elsewhere the farmers were taking turns in pasturing, but everyone was milking their own sheep separately – e.g. in Lutiše, Dobroč, Belá near Žilina. Yet other villages had the respective homestead farm owners taking turns only in managing of the upland farm (known as salaš) and they hired a common flock-master or chief shepherd (called bača) to oversee only the grazing of the sheep – e.g. in Fačkov, Dubové, Šmigovec. Another passing phase between individual and communla mountain sheep farming was organisation of individual salaš

upland farms, where the owner could take over also the sheep of other breeders if necessary.

Young shepherd with sheep collars, Belá, photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

Establishing of common mountain farm collectives, where the care for the animals was delegated to professional shepherds enabled to breeders to get involved in uninterrupted agricultural work in the field or possibly to perform other additional tasks, employments or commit to crafts. Sheep breeders were associated in mountain sheep farming associations that were established based on the administrative arrangement of villages, property or family relations, forms of village architecture etc. The mountain sheep farming associations were labelled in regional dialects using various names, e.g. salaš, salašní spolok, ovčarski spolok, salašná spoločnosť, košar, košarna spoločnosť, košarní spolok [mountain sheep farm, mountain sheep farming association, shepherds' association, sheep breeder's society, mountain sheep farm company, sheep paddock, sheep paddock society, sheep paddock association]. Members of the association were labelled as "miešalníci" (the Liptov and Upper Hron regions), farmers etc.

The main right of every member of such association was to drive his sheep to join the common sheep flock and receive the appropriate share of cheese production. Major responsibilities included taking care of the pastures and the association's property, which was related to the duty of working for a fixed number of days on cleaning and keeping of the pastures, repairing of roads leading to the mountain sheep farm (salaš), building or relocating the objects at the mountain sheep farm, assisting in transporting of the mountain sheep farm inventory. The association was headed by one of the sheep owners, an elected official, called gazda (leading farmer), salašník (mountain sheep farm head), šafar (warden), košarnik (sheep paddock warden), šoltýs (reeve) etc. Mountain sheep farm head was an esteemed person in the village as he was in charge of the whole mountain sheep farming business and all the related activities. His major duties included selecting the suitable shepherds for the position of the bača (chief shepherd, flock-master) and valachs (shepherds, bača's helpers) sign a contract with them and determine the conditions of upland farming. Mountain sheep farm head was in charge of overseeing the work with milk, he supervised the distribution of products, took care of sale of the excess production to acquire funds for the association's treasury. Through the whole shepherding season, he oversaw the operations at the mountain sheep farm, resolved problems, advocated for the interests of the association against the chief shepherd as well as the landowners, and represented the association in general. For his work, he was compensated in kind by receiving a certain share of the mountain sheep farm products. In autumn, after the whole farming operation

was concluded, the accounts were settled, sometimes in early winter before Christmas, at a meeting which was labelled rachung[1] or poratúnok (accounting session) when the new mountain sheep farm head and bača for the upcoming year were elected.

Valach shepherd in the pasture, Zástranie (currently a municipal district of Žilina), photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

From the perspective of mountain sheep farming in Slovakia, we differentiate between two basic types of mountain sheep farm organisation, depending on the two major ways of hiring the bača – the head of the salaš and the flock master. Under the first type, bača and his shepherd helpers – valasi were hired for a fixed compensation agreed in advance, which was paid in dairy products or coins. The second concept of organising common mountain sheep farms is when the flock master was farming at his own risk. This basically meant that bača practically leased the sheep for summer from the individual owners in the village and for the 'lease', he paid out a fixed amount of cheese. All the mountain sheep farm's expenditures and salary to the shepherds were paid out by the bača from the cheese sold. The rest of the cheese that remained after payment of all expenditures and liabilities constituted the flock-master's compensation for work or profit.

Flock-masters and their helping shepherds significantly differed from ordinary shepherds pasturing other livestock in terms of their knowledge and competence in processing milk and dairy production. This was reflected in their social status and the pay they were receiving. The competence of heading a mountain sheep farm was passed from one generation to another and in some villages, there developed traditional bača and valach families with reputation of skill and competence in their sheep husbandry crafts. In the mid-20th century, the villages of Terchová and Zázrivá remained the major centres of shepherding. Sheep breeders from these villages would often leave for the whole season even to more distant regions to work on the local mountain sheep farms. Shepherds from Terchová and Zázrivá worked across the villages of the northwest Slovakia but also in central Vah valley and even as far as the surroundings of Senica.

Bača (chief shepherd) Ján Zaťko from Zázrivá, photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: the archive of the Shepherding Museum in Liptovský Hrádok

Farmers held chief shepherds in high esteem. They believed they know the diseases of sheep and know how to cure them – whether using the practical solutions or the means of magic. Every bača had to be hard-working, cleanly and tidy person, other important personal qualities included bravery, courage and honesty. Besides bača, the chief shepherd, the work at a mountain sheep farm were performed by other shepherds who were universally called valach or ovčiar (shepherd, sheep farmer). The general category of valachs was further divided depending on the type of work the respective shepherds were performing. After bača the most important position and status was enjoyed by the elder shepherd also called poubača, (half-bača, flock-master's deputy) who used to work around the sheep farm together with the chief shepherd the whole year round. The other shepherds were only prijednanci, that is, contractors agreed to for work at the uplands only for the summer season. The names typically used for these shepherds were paselník (pasture man), striščiar (shearer), dojčiar (milker, milking man), based on the typical jobs these shepherds were performing at the mountain farm. Shepherds pasturing the yearling ewes, young females that were not milked and rams were called jarčiar (yearling ewe man) and baraniar (ram man). Their major task was to pasture and guard overnight the sheep that were not milked and the rams as well as to provide help with other auxiliary works. The role of a helper at the mountain sheep farm was performed by honelník (junior shepherd, herdsman), a boy aged 10 – 15, often a son of the chief shepherd or a younger brother of one of the shepherds. When ranking the shepherds into the respective positions,

Valasi shepherds while making oštiepok cheese, Zázrivá, photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: the archive of the Shepherding Museum in Liptovský Hrádok

Weighing of the crumbled cheese on a steelyard, Belá, photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: the archive of the Shepherding Museum in Liptovský Hrádok

a procedure was established that was strictly followed. First, a boy had to be honelník, around the age of 15, he could become a poldojčiar (assistant to milking man), who was pasturing the non-milked sheep and rams. Only then he could become a dojčiar, that is, a shepherd responsible for pasturing and milking sheep.

Bača and other shepherds negotiated with the representatives of the mountain sheep farm association for a specific pasturing season for a fixed pay or compensation. This was put in a written contract that was entered into the mountain sheep farm register and was signed by both parties. In the contract, there was not only the amount of pay to the shepherds, but also their duties, obligations, orders, prohibitions etc. The compensation for shepherds was partially in coin and along with the pay, the shepherds also agreed to receive a certain proportion of cheese as well as the possibility to bring their own sheep to the mountain sheep farm. They could also keep and rear a pig at the farm. The pay was gradual according to the responsibilities of the shepherd at the mountain sheep farm.

In villages with well-developed tradition in sheep husbandry, the spring driving of the sheep to the communal pasturing outside the village in the uplands represented a significant ceremonious event of the farming year (in the local dialect it was called redik). Preparations for the sheep driving started several weeks before the actual day. Individual breeders had the duty to mark their own sheep with their characteristic marks. In some regions, there was a custom that on a Good Friday, shepherds were walking from one house to another marking sheep, treating their hoofs, preparing them for a demanding long-term stay in the uplands. They not only marked lambs de-

Bača's lodge with strunga enclosure for sheep in Malá Fatra, photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: the archive of the Shepherding Museum in Liptovský Hrádok

signed for further breeding but also older sheep that had been previously unmarked or the sheep that the breeder acquired by purchase. The most frequent way of marking sheep was on the animal's ear. Earmarking was performed by clipping with scissors, cutting with a chisel, axe or making small holes with empty gun shells. Essential markings in the respective families were not changed, they were inherited from one generation to another.

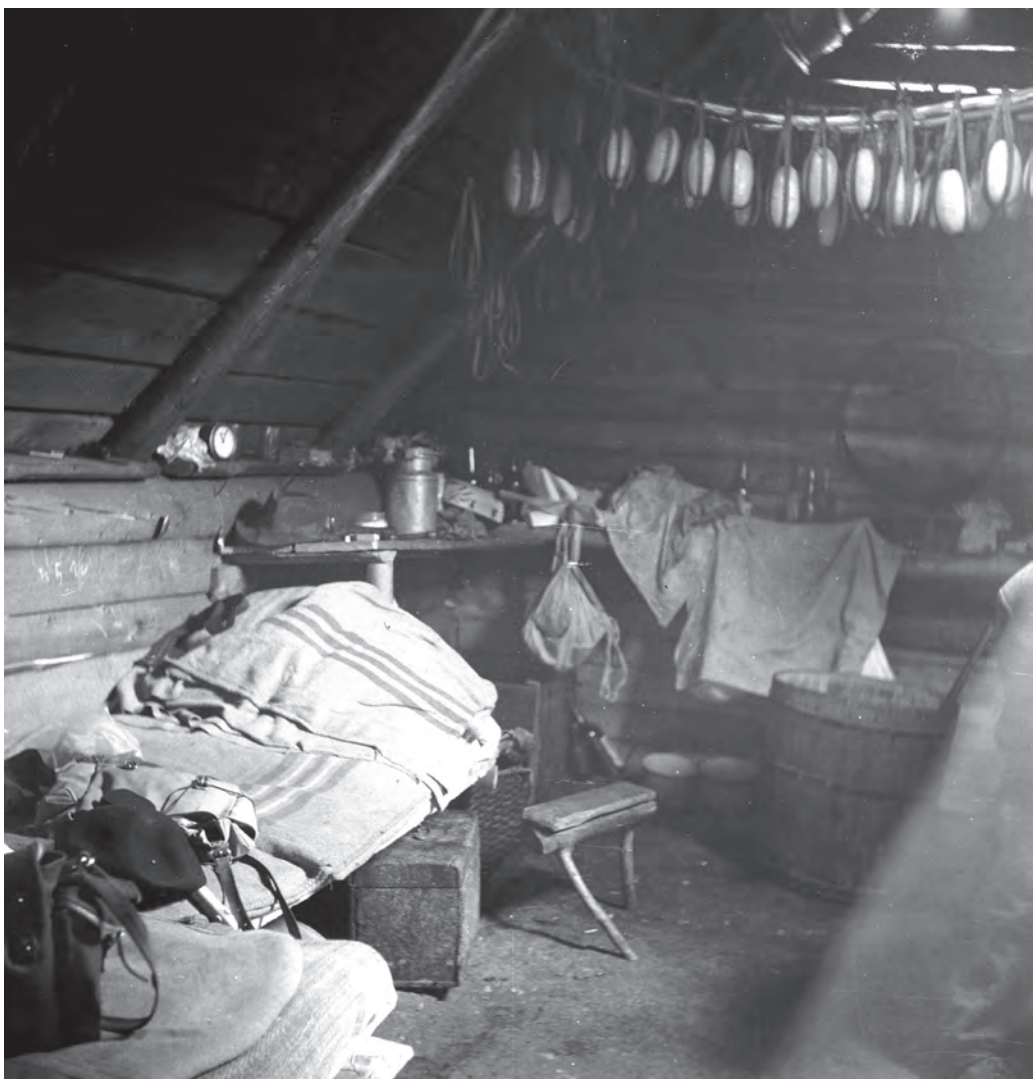
In terms of organisation of the communal sheep pasturing outside the village, which was connected to seasonal moving of the shepherds and the sheep to the uplands, shepherding constructions and buildings at the mountain sheep farm played a significant role. When selecting the location to build the respective objects at the mountain sheep farm, several factors were taken into consideration. Firstly, it was sufficient pastures, the possibility of good access to the surrounding pastures and grassy uplands and simultaneously communications enabling transport of dairy products to the valley. If on slopes, mountain sheep farms were mostly located in hollows and locations with the least steep gradient, if possible, facing the south or east, the most advantageous locations were protected from winds. And last but not least, a spring with drinking water was an essential factor for operating a mountain sheep farm. As a collective name labelling the whole group of constructions enabling seasonal sheep pasturing outside the settlements and villages, the central Slovakian dialects used the term salaš (in English, besides this term we will use interchangeably also the term 'mountain sheep farm'). The central object of the mountain sheep farm was the cabin (koliba), serving as the tempo-

rary home for the shepherds as well as the dairy production facility. The cabin was located so that it offered a good view of all the other buildings in the mountain sheep farm as well as the access paths. In the past, only wooden cabins were built using the technology of log-construction from logs of soft-wood trees, chipped typically only on one side. The cabin was built without basement and used to have no attic to enable the smoke from the fireplace escape to the house-top where a roof opening would be to let the smoke out of the cabin. The floor in the cabin was made of hard-packed earth, which was replaced by wood-boards only in the 2nd third of the 20th century due to hygienic and isolation reasons. Besides wooden log-cabins, there also used to be stone-built cabins, usually located at mountain sheep farms in the highest altitudes of the High and West Tatras, in places on the edge of the forest where the scrub-pine vegetation begun.

Chief shepherd's cabin was originally a one-room object fulfilling several functions. First of all, it served as premises for dairy products manufacture and storage and simultaneously a place for accommodation of the shepherds and a place to spend leisure time. The central location in the cabin belonged to the fireplace with loose construction located on the ground, the only protection from fire were the stones lining the perimeter of the fireplace. The cabin also served for storage of all important vessels, containers and tools for processing milk, namely "putera" (bucket for milk and cheese), cauldron and "trepáky" (whiskers). On the wall, the wooden tankards would be hanging for drinking "žinčica" (boiled sheep whey). They also had a decorative role and each mountain sheep farm, and

its chief shepherd took pride in them. There were also smaller containers for milking hanging also on the external wall called "geleta" (buckets for milking). They had to be always clean and placed on the bench upside down.

Interior of a koliba in Terchová, photo by Ján Podolák 1963,
source: AFn ÚESA SAV



Besides the chief shepherd's cabin, mountain sheep farms also featured various shelters for shepherds, known under various local names, such as kolibka, valaská kolibka, juháska kolibka, podkolibka (in Čičmany), strežiareň, stražáreň (in Terchová), postrieška, baraniarka, búda. Their major role was to provide shelter when guarding the sheep that were not milked and the sheep whose košiar (paddock) was not placed in the immediate vicinity of the mountain sheep farm.

The most important buildings at the mountain sheep farms included sheep-folds, paddocks, and shelters for sheep that kept the flock together, prevented the sheep from dispersing and partially provided protection from thieves and predators. From the evolutionary perspective, the oldest form of keeping sheep at mountain sheep farms can be regarded as placing of sheep in fenced enclosures in the forested areas on a clearing, where the felled timber logs were placed longitudinally on each other and served as the fence or railing. These enclosures were only used for pasturing of sheep in alpine environment. They were known as zaťatý košiar or košiar z priasma (felled-log paddock). The pattern of this enclosure depended on the number of animals, the location of the mountain sheep farm

Shepherds in their work clothes with geleta wooden buckets, Zázrivá photo by Ján Podolák 1968, source: the archive of the Shepherding Museum in Liptovský Hrádok

and the local tradition. Typically, the enclosure was divided into two parts: the first one was called honelnica, where the flock was concentrated before milking and the other was an enclosure where the flock was placed after milking. From the first to the second part, the sheep were passing through strunga, a small gated enclosed location, where the actual milking was taking place. It was a specific section in the whole enclosure, typically with 4 to 6 openings depending on the number of dojčiari, the milking shepherds who sat next to the sheep and milked them. If the enclosure served to keep also the non-milked sheep, these were simply let to walk thorugh the opening to the second part of the paddock.

The clothes worn by shepherds didn't substantially differ from the dress of the men from the village but as members of the so-called Wallachian estate or community, they usually added specific artefacts to their dress that served to identify and distinguish them from the rest of the society. The clothes were made of natural home-made materials, based on linen and hemp cloth, sheep wool and hide. The basic item was the shirt with its characteristic cut and decorations which differed based on the respective location. On the underwear trousers made of plain cloth, another pair of trousers would be worn made of woollen cloth with characteristic cut, decoration and patches. Shepherds would also wear a short vest made of sheep hides, decorated with embroidery and ornamental applications from coloured leather. In a cold and unfavourable weather, they used to wear woollen smocks known as suknice, širice, or guby. On their head, they would wear a hat with a brim, well-greased to protect them from rain. They would

also wear krpce, the traditional folk leather shoes and in later periods, also heavy boots. Along with the essential cloth-

Transporting oštiepok cheese in a basket, Zázrivá, photo by Ján Podolák 1963, source: the archive of the Shepherding Museum in Liptovský Hrádok

ing items, shepherds also used to wear traditional accessories which did not serve any practical purpose, but they were rather the symbols and badges of the Wallachian estate. Primarily, it was the wide belt with several buckles. This item however, also used be worn by peasants, lumberjacks, and timber rafters as it protected the waist of men from cold and injuries while they were performing heavy work. Shepherds' belts, however, had richer decorations using studs hammered into the leather as well as brass and nickel-silver buttons called banďurki (little potatoes). Hanging from their belts, they used to carry on a metal chain the šparcháč, the metal pipe cleaner. In the belt, they used to carry a pouch with tobacco, pipe as well as a secret pocket for keeping money. Another significant accessory carried by shepherds was the shepherds' bag. Inside, they used to carry food, knife for woodcarving, magic herbs applied in rituals during redik, the ceremony of driving the sheep to the uplands. Again, the major function of the bag was symbolic and decorative. The bag distinguished the owner as a member of the Wallachian estate and the width of the bag strap also his position in the shepherds' hierarchy. Shepherds also used to wear wide-brimmed hats decorated with a studded leather stripe or possibly with tiny shells from the tarns of the High Tatras. Shepherds and chief shepherds also used to wear metal badges determined for their profession only. Another shepherds' accessory was the valaška[2] axe, which used to be a working tool in the older era as well as a weapon – in case of an attack by another human or a predator. Shepherds also used to carry walking sticks, both simple and decorated.

In their leisure time, shepherds used to carve various objects from wood, mostly the things closely related to their life and work at the mountain sheep farm, objects of everyday use. Their taste in decorations was demonstrated on the ornamental carving of the wooden tankards, mugs, pots, cheese forms,

Črpák, a wooden tankard from Zázrivá, photo by O. Marko 1957,
source: documents of the Orava Museum

bača's ladles, utility objects such as salt boxes and various other small vessels. Črpák (wooden tankard or mug) was a symbol of the mountain sheep farm and a pride of every Slovak bača. A quality črpák had to last for several decades and that is why a suitable material was selected for each of its part – the bowl, the bottom and the handle. The bottom was typically made of soft wood of conifers, mostly spruce tree, while the bowl and the handle were made from hardwood, such as maple. For Liptov, Orava and Kysuce, the typical mug is the so-called north-Slovakian črpák. The shape and the decoration of the handle are dominated by the themes of various stylised zoomorphic heads (snake, dragon, peacock, horse, rooster) wearing a crown. Many shepherds were highly skilled in manufacturing of decorations and metal jewellery that was characteristic of their estate as Wallachians. Manufacture of folk musical instruments is a Slovak specific. These instruments were also used in shepherds' work: thesy were mostly diverse blowpipes, large fujara shepherd's pipe, bagpipe etc. Many shepherds were gifted musicians, they were skilled at playing musical instruments, they used to sing Wallachian songs and danced the shepherds' dances. The art related to shepherds' lifestyle is an integral part of the Slovak folklore.

Notes

1. The first wider research into shepherding in Slovak Carpathians was conducted by the Polish geographer L. Sawicki, followed by Z. Holub – Pacewicowa, V. Kubijovyč and J. Král. Czech historians K. Kadlec, V. Chaloupecký and J. Macúrek deserve credit for their research into Carpathian mountain sheep farming form the historical perspective. Discussed by Ján Podolák in "Tradičné ovčiarstvo na Slovensku", VEDA SAV Bratislava 1982 pages 9-14
2. Organisation of collective mountain sheep farms is analysed by J. PODOLÁK c.d. 1982 pages 85 – 92
3. The bača's cabins and shepherds' shelters are discussed by J. Podolák in c.d. 1982 pages 122-129
4. Typology of Slovak wooden tankards was elaborated by Václav Kautman as the visual artists in ÚĽUV in the 1950s.

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Sheep Farming and Cheese Making in Zázrivá Is Not Only a Matter of the Past

PhDr. Elena Beňušová

Sheep Farming and Cheese Making in Zázrivá Is Not Only a Matter of the Past

The contemporary Oravian mountain sheep farming has become an agritourism destination on its own also thanks to sheep-farm dairy products.

Grazing sheep in Zázrivá - Havrania, photo J. Huba 1974,
source: documents of Orava Museum

In Orava, after the mid-15th century and under the influence of the Wallachian colonisation, Carpathian method of shepherding started to spread introduced by the Wallachians.[1] With the Carpathian mountain sheep farming, there also spread a new breed of previously non-native sheep called valaška (Wallachian sheep) suitable for breeding in tougher climate conditions which was highly suitable particularly in the Orava region.[2] Shepherding and cheese-making used to belong to the profitable professions also in Orava. Sheep farming was most widespread in the 11 settlements belonging to the Lower Orava village of Zázrivá, where the individual form of sheep husbandry has continued until the present, today characterised by pasturing of sheep as well as cattle in the proximity of the owners' homes and combined with home production of the processed dairy products.

The origins of mountain sheep farming in Zázrivá

Sheep farming of a flock amounting to 700 animals was ordered to the inhabitants of Zázrivá already in 1615 by Juraj Thurso, the large regional landowner. In the archive doc-

Grazing sheep in in Zázrivá - Končitá, photo by Š. Janičiar, 1976,
source: documents of Orava Museum

Salaš farm in Zázrivá, photo by Izsofová, 1981,
source: documents of Orava Museum

uments, we found the largest number of sheep in the early 19th century, when the reeve of Zázrivá, Adam Matuss had

his own mountain sheep farm (salaš) with 288 sheep and 52 yearling ewes (young females that haven't been pregnant yet). Later, in 1823, their number fell by more than one half. Sheep were grazing in the surrounding grassy uplands – Ostrý vrch, Okrúhlica, Kozínec, Havranský vrch, Rozsutec – in the altitude of 900 - 1312 meters. In the early 19th century, the uplands of Zázrivá served as pastures 109 - 385 of sheep and yearling ewes. Besides the sheep in upland farms there were also the house-farmed sheep, i.e. sheep reared and kept at the respective households in the village itself, with average number between 25 to 182 pieces. Their total number between 1818 - 1825 was increasing and usually reached between 1043 to 1607 sheep in total.

The sheep species that was reared and bred in Zázrivá was the so called valaška (Wallachian sheep) mostly white, with spiral-shaped horns pointed backwards but some animals also without horns with black colour on their heads, called murga. Pure white sheep were called belica and the sheep with black stains around their eye were called okaja. Native valaška sheep wasn't demanding in terms of fodder. This was convenient with regards to breeding at the less abundant grassy uplands and alpine meadows. Even though it gave less wool, approx. 2 kg of wool from 2 shearing turns annually (which required a higher number of sheep to obtain the sufficient volume of wool to produce woollen cloth). Whereas in the early 19th century, alpine sheep farming was widespread on the grassy uplands, at the turn of the 20th century, the sheep farming was moving to the lower altitudes. The field-based sheep farms enabled the sheep to graze near the homes of the owners taking advantage of the valley pastures.[3]

Winter sheep farming

In winter, sheep were kept at a dedicated winter sheep stable. If there was a smaller number of sheep, they shared the stable with other livestock in a separate enclosure called cárok.

Feeding sheep in Zázrivá – Ústredie, photo by J. Podolák 1968, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

Sheep were impregnated in autumn to ensure lambing in spring. Often, they would have two lambs instead of just one which required more care and attention while breeding. During a tough winter, owners would take the feeblest lambs to the house to protect them from freezing temperatures. As the litter in the stable, they used cut spruce branches or dry leaves they raked from under the trees in autumn. On a Good Friday just before the Easter, the lambs were separated from their mothers and the farmer started to feed them with a better-quality hay so that they put on more weight allowing the owner to sell the lamb quickly or keep it for the future breeding, this sheep was called príchovok (i.e. additional livestock).

Summer communal sheep farming

In each of the settlements of Zázrivá, there were several 'professional' chief shepherds (called bača) who – besides agricultural activities – were also shepherding relatively more numerous flocks of sheep amounting from 30 to 100 pieces. They owned between 3 and 8 hectares of land but some of them owned no land at all and used to rent it. These 'professional' shepherds used to add to their own flock 2-3 sheep from other farming peasants in the village. In exchange, they would give the owner 6-9 kilograms of cheese per sheep. To keep things clear and comprehensible, they also had to keep evidence.

A flock of sheep between 30 and 80 pieces was pastured by a shepherd who used to be a relative to the bača – he was called ofčär (shepherd) or by a stable professional shepherd from the settlement who used to work alongside the bača also during winter to feed the sheep. In spring when the grass started to

grow green, sheep were first driven to the pastures near the village. In the village of Plešivá, there was a custom that both chief shepherds living next to each other used to pasture the sheep together in one large flock, while taking turns. By 1947, they also had a shared cabin in the backyard and used to make cheese together. Then, in the same year, each of them built their own cabin and started their own dairy production while they continued grazing sheep together. Milk was then processed by bača alone in the cabin built in the backyard near the house or even inside the house itself. Bača also called ofčár (shepherd) simultaneously had to work the agricultural land, prepare the necessary fodder to keep the sheep and cattle for winter. In his work, he was assisted by his relatives. Other peasant farmers, who used to own smaller flocks of sheep used to lease out part of their flocks to the 'professional' bača for summer pasturing near the village and kept the rest in their own homesteads. These sheep were pastured by children together with cattle. These peasants then used to process sheep and cow milk on their own to make dairy products and sold them.

The profit from selling cheese was the key motivation mainly for the professional bača shepherds, from Zázrivá, who were known for selling large volumes of cheese. From the large number of local chief shepherds and shepherd helpers (bača and valachs), only one part remained at home in their own private mountain farms. Most of them travelled in summer to work on communal and later cooperative farms across Orava, but also Liptov and Turiec and even further to west Slovakia, Morava and the Czech lands. In the first half of the 20th century, their numbers rose to 150 - 200 men. The tradition of shepherd farming was retained across several generations in as many as 22 families of Zázrivá and some of their descend-

Bača shepherd Jozef Jurčík from Zázrivá – Horná Plešivá, photo by P. Čaplovič 1980, source: documents of Orava Museum

ants are working as professional bača shepherds until this day. The families mentioned above include Karcolovci, Jurčíkovci, Žúborovci, Drengubiakovci, Teličákovci (Mária Teličáková coming from this family is known as bačová – a female chief shepherd, who also used to travel for work as a professional flock-master outside Zázrivá), Kokoškovci, Plančovci, Prílepk-

ovci, Jankyovci, Mäsiarovci, Smolkovci, Macekovci, Zubajovci, Pagerkovci, Kôpkovci, Otrubovci, Červeňovci, Pitelkovci, Gaššovci, Chudašovci and Vojvodovci.[4]

Shaping of oštiepok cheese, photo by J. Podolák 1963, source AFn ÚESA SAV, source: documents of Orava Museum

Processing of dairy production

When processing crumbled cheese from sheep milk, the same procedure is applied across Slovakia in regions where the salaš-based sheep farming is widespread. Even today, the bača shepherds of Zázrivá take a great pride in the quality of their cheese, while they have always paid emphasis on compliance with the right process when milk is coagulated using rennet and when cheese is collected. Crumbled cheese is also today processed using the traditional Wallachian method called kľaganie – milk fermentation using kľag (rennet) that was originally prepared from the stomach of young, milk-fed calf, lamb or goatling. Later, on privately-operated farms, they started to use chemically-produced rennet. Cheese was regarded to be mature, when a hollow formed after pushing on the cheese mass with a finger. It should be soft, greasy and sticky, if it was crumbling too much, like a curd would, it was regarded to be of inferior quality.

The most widespread and simultaneously the oldest method of preserving sheep cheese in salaš-based sheep farming also in Orava is making of bryndza[5] (a type of soft sheep cheese). Bryndza was used in cooking to sprinkle potato-dumplings or potatoes, eaten with milk or to make pies. They also used to take it with them as a dry meal to work in the field in wooden containers with a lid. Until this day, Bryndza is enjoying huge popularity not only in Orava-based cuisine but generally across Slovakia. Although in many cases bryndza was replaced by other dairy products in the retail market, in Slovakia and especially in Orava, it represents the major and dominant product of salaš-based sheep farming even today.

When collecting crumbled cheese, there remains whey as a side product, which is later used mainly to produce žinčica, boiled sheep whey. In the salaš farms, it was the main meal of shepherds, who used to drink it from the wooden tankards called črpák, but it was equally beneficial for private sheep farmers with their own salaš farms as well as small sheep breeders. Any remaining žinčica was sold to those interested and

Bača shepherd Ján Karcol with his oštiepok cheese, Zázrivá-Horná Plešivá, photo by P. Čaplovič 1980, source: documents of Orava Museum

until today, people believe it has healing effects. Whey and sheep milk were also used to produce butter that was used in traditional healing for internal and external application and if sanctified, even as a magical cure for prevention and treatment of sheep diseases. Older butter was also used for preservation of leather and metal objects.

Wooden mould for pear-shaped oštiepok, photo by O. Marko 1956,
source: documents of Orava Museum

In Zázrivá, the bača churned butter after collecting the top layer from the sweet boiled whey called urda. It was of high quality, durable and suitable for baking. **Bača who was leaving from Zázrivá to any of the communal salaš farms, used to collect 2-3 kg of butter from sheep milk and he washed his working shirt in this butter, then he dried it in smoke and used to wear it during the whole summer and no insect would even bother him.** When the shirt became worn out after some time, he would again apply the grease that he used to put aside as it was dripping from oštiepok cheese during smoke-curing. All bača shepherds used to say that their skin was like silk under this shirt. Sheep butter was also used to treat scab.[6]

Cheese preserved by smoke curing – "oštiepok"

Cheese preserved by curing with smoke was another traditional she dairy product. In this category, the originally most widespread and best-known cheese was oštiepok. The essential process of its production in sheep farms was the same in Orava as well as other parts of Slovakia. Bača shepherd first shaped the oštiepok mould that he used to manufacture on his own, or the local woodcarvers would help in this respect. Some skilled woodcarvers form Orava would receive orders for oštiepok moulds from shepherds working as far as Upper Hron valley.[7]

However, cheeses had various shapes and forms, as documented by three-piece wooden moulds from the mid-19th century, some of them shaped as apples with rich inside carved decoration and with central writing: "Glory to the Lord in Heaven and peace be to the people on Earth", these moulds were called literary moulds. Other moulds were shaped like

Wooden mould for rooster-shaped cheese, photo by O. Marko 1956, source: documents of Orava Museum

pears.[8] The highest quality oštiepok was made from sweet cheese processed immediately after milking. Oštiepok made from older, slightly sour, moderately fermented milk tasted differently.[9]

Smoked cheese made by bača shepherds from Zázrivá included various animal figures such as small roosters, red deer, birds, sheep and even came in the shape of hearts – the so-called srcká ("small hearts"). In salaš farms, they were usually made from cheese remains. To make them look even more beautiful, they used to colour them in concoction form cherry and alder-tree bark where they used to macerate the raw and solidified cheese for 2-3 minutes. Later, they would colour them with a purchased food colouring used in pastry baking.[10]

Sale of oštiepok cheese, photo by Zápotočná 1975,
source: documents of Orava Museum

Oštiepok, photo by O. Marko 1956, source: documents of Orava Museum

Bača shepherds then used to give away these cheese figures as a gift, most often to children or good friends when they visited the salaš farm and later they would sell them as attractive souvenirs to tourists who would accidentally visit the mountain salaš. Younger shepherds then used to present cheese hearts as gifts to girls as a show of their favour.

Oštiepok together with cheese animals, srcko little hearts and later also korbáčik (braided string cheese also called cheese whips) were sold by shopkeepers and pub keepers – as local small traders – (sometimes called ošťiepčäri and srckári) most often in the local pub, on Sunday in front of the church, in markets and fairs or at railways stations. Great numbers were sold mainly during Christmas, as these cheese souvenirs were

an essential part of the holidays.[11] And they have also become popular and topical even today. Cheese figures are an attractive product and represent an engaging form of presentation of the traditional form of cheese production for the wider public at various events. Simultaneously, they also form an essential part of Christmas dinners in every family in Zázrivá.

Bača shepherd Ladislav Kazár, photo by J. Jurík 2017

Other traditional products of salaš sheep farms also include cheese preserved and cured by steaming called "parenica". After the town of Brezno, Zázrivá was the second traditional centre of steamed cheese production, their manufacture was widespread also in the close and more distant environs of the village.[12] The widely famous and well-known braided string cheese (korbáčiky) of Zázrivá with their characteristic shape are enjoying great popularity until this day. In the first half of the 20th century, only certain Zázrivá families, mainly Piklovci family knew the art of making the cheese strings. Cheese strings were manufactured in almost every household which bred sheep and cows but also other households. Their manufacture was mainly a task for females in the household. Older manufacturers used to monetise their goods right in the centre of the village, while the younger ones used to travel to sell the cheese strings outside Zázrivá, in the towns across the whole Slovakia, where they also travelled to get work.

Women from Zázrivá later oriented in particular on manufacturing of fresh cheese strings, which they also sold daily. Braided and individual cheese strings that are currently manufactured in Zázrivá are hand-made using the traditional method. The hand-made processing of steamed cheese material by kneading and pulling gives the strings their rare and characteristic fibrous texture. Today, braided cheese strings from Orava (Oravské korbáčiky) are protected by trademark from any unfair competition. Traditional manufacture is combined with modern elements of shaping and packaging, which further improves the taste and quality of manufactured cheese and extends its durability. Demand by consumers form near and far away as well the possibility to sell cheese strings by way of retail chains brings the local small-trade manufacturers valuable profits and at least an occasional additional income based on

extended home production. This revenue, although irregular, represents improvement of current difficult financial situation of many families in Zázrivá.

Sale of braided cheese strings, photo by P. Čaplovič 1980, source: documents of Orava Museum

Cheese products from Zázrivá, photo by J. Juríк 2017

Traditional cheese production and a wide range of cheese products (cheese strings, braided strings, cheese hubs, sticks, sheep milk oštiepok, bryndza and other shaped, flavoured, fresh and smoked cheese, žinčica boiled whey, butter, curd and parenica steamed cheese) as well as their sale in Orava is until today practiced at individual and collective salaš farms as well as modern salaš and koliba facilities that feature restaurants as well as wooden-stalls located near the main roads with distinctive advertising attracting attention, cooperative manufacturing facilities, companies larger and smaller family farms and extended private (even non-legal) family production of private sheep, cattle and goat farmers. In their attempts to attract customers and their attention, many traders and manufacturers enable people to peep into the production facility as well as to try out some manufacturing procedures on their own. In the village, there operates the Association of Zázrivá Cheese String Makers (združenie zázrivských korbačikárov), several smaller companies in the village offer a wider range of their products across various retail networks and chains in Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

Presentation of manufacturing of a wide range of cheese and cheese products of various shapes, forms, tastes, and sizes and weights as well as their manufacturers has simultaneously become featured at a large number of regional events. In Zázrivá, a regular event Zázrivské dni is organised. One of the attractive shows of this cheese-making fair is annual competition display of figural steamed cheese products, competition in quality of sheep cheese associated with engaging presentation of the current traditional manufacture of cheese products, in particular cheese figures. Simultaneously, there is municipal competition held in pulling of cheese strings, contest among children in cheese string eating and other engaging activities. The municipality annually organises also the very popular competition in cooking and eating of dumplings called "Zázrivské halušky". Since 2015, after many years of hiatus, the municipality regularly organises the event called "Ovčiarske obyčaje - Redikaňä in Zázrivá" which renewed the tradition of redik, the spring ceremony of driving of sheep to the upland pastures. In the most recent two years, also its autumn counterpart called rôsadz was held, which represents an official conclusion of the salaš farming season in the region. The current salaš sheep farming in Zázrivá has become a destiny in agritourism also thanks to the products of the dairy manufacturing at salaš farms.

Shepherding event –"Redik" – traditional spring drive of sheep to the pastures in Zázrivá, photo by J. Juríк 2017

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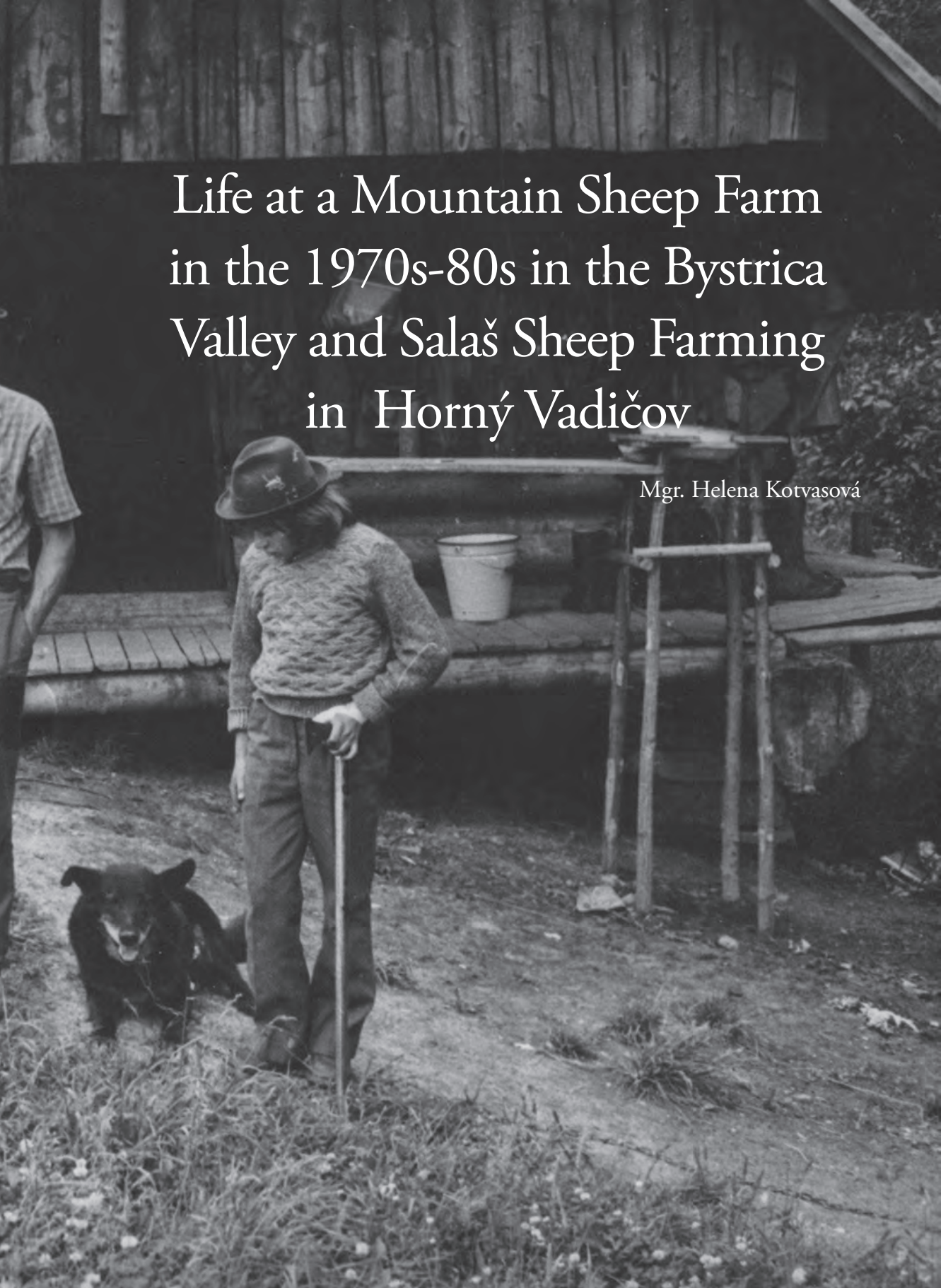


Life at a Mountain Sheep Farm in the 1970s-80s in the Bystrica Valley and Salaš Sheep Farming in Horný Vadičov

Mgr. Helena Kotvasová

Life at a Mountain Sheep Farm in the 1970s-80s in the Bystrica Valley and Salaš Sheep Farming in Horný Vadičov

Villages in the area of the Bystrica valley (Bystrická dolina) are the municipalities located to the east of Krásno nad Kysucou (Zborov nad Bystricou, Klubina, Stará Bystrica, Radôstka, Nová Bystrica as well as Riečnica and Harvelka that do not exist anymore). These municipalities are located in the northeast Slovakia on the borderline between Kysucké Beskydy and Kysucká vrchovina mountain ranges in the valley of the Bystrica river. No detailed research of mountain sheep farming (known as salaš in Slovak) has been conducted in this location yet. Salaš-farming was performed here individually to a greater degree than at other locations. Sheep were grazing together with cattle, horses and even geese. Just like in the other mountainous areas of Slovakia, pastures and meadows were utilised for this purpose.[1] Pastures were a part of agricultural land located in the more remote parts of the village. Some inhabitants used to walk to take care of their livestock at salaš farm also known as bačovisko or cholvárok[2] for several kilometres. Those leaving the village to work at the upland farm, were mostly single youths or newlyweds and they typically worked and stayed here from spring to autumn. Their task was to take care of the animals, ensure production of milk and some families even planted potatoes there which had to be taken care

of, hay had to be dried for winter fodder. Hay was obtained by mowing the meadows and pastures that were not ploughed or used for plant production. After obtaining hay, the pastures were used to let the livestock graze them. Meadows close to the villages were mowed two times a year, in summer and then in the early autumn, when after-grass was mowed. In more remote locations, meadows were mowed just once a year and then they were utilised for animals to graze on.

Harvelka, salaš farm called 'u Maruny', photo Helena Kotvasová 1986

Sheep husbandry

Since the times of Wallachian colonisation, sheep have been an important part of the life of the population in the Bystrica valley.[3] Sheep husbandry belonged to the basic components of farming production in Slovakia as the land and nature offered very convenient conditions for sheep farming.[4] Pasturing of sheep in the Bystrica valley was done in two basic ways – individual and collective. Individual grazing was performed by families with smaller number of sheep that were grazing pastures together with cattle. Overseeing them was most often a responsibility of the grandparents or school-age children.

Bača Cingel with a junior herdsman and a shepherd at the salaš farm in Riečnica-Kyčierka, photo by an unknown author in 1978, source: documents of the Kysuce Museum

Farmers with larger homesteads preferred collective pasturing. The village of Riečnica serves as a good example for collective pasturing of private sheep flocks as there were as many as three professional chief shepherds or flock-masters (called bača) who pastured between 50 and 150 sheep. Farmers gave their sheep to the salaš mountain farms for the period from spring to autumn, the season would typically end on St. Michael's day. Although the sheep were privately owned, cheese had to be submitted to the state authorities. Each farmer then received 6 kg of cheese per season and sheep, the remaining cheese was used to pay the chief shepherd and his shepherd helpers. In autumn the old sheep were slaughtered and only the young ones were kept for winter stabling. Sheep were wintered in enclosed stables, sheep sheds. Before the farmer gave his sheep to the communal salaš, he had to earmark them. In Riečnica, they were marked on horns using a piece of wire or the marks were clipped into the sheep's ear with a perforator. Bača would write he specific numbers and marks and so did the farmer – owner of the sheep. When a bear or a dog killed a sheep, the farmer would not receive any compensation.[5]

Vychylovka, salaš farm ‘u Kubátky’ (Šadibol, Koleno, Čierňava),
photo by Helena Kotvasová in 1988

Vychylovka, 1981, salaš farm ‘u Chmúry’, Halvoník Jožko,
photo by Helena Kotvasová 1981

What was the life like in the Bystrica salaš?

The salaš farming season usually started in early May, when the "beech forest would open up" as people used to say. On the first day upon arrival to the salaš, everything had to be eaten, no food remains were allowed – so as to ensure an augury of a successful season. The open fire that was ignited on the day of arrival could only be put out on the day of departure, it must have been kept all the time so that it does not die out. Life on the sheep farm was merry; people used to come over for a visit very frequently, however, everybody who entered the farm had to cross the threshold of the koliba, the farm cabin, a superstition against carrying away good sleep and hap-

Vychylovka - Podrycerová, salaš farm 'Pri studenej vode' (Judák, Poništ, Tomčala)
photo by Helena Kotvasová 1981

piness. Besides these superstitions, the above-mentioned chief shepherds never practiced any rituals with herbs and incensing of sheep. Working with sheep was a very demanding physical work. The pay was good, though, along with the wage, the chief shepherd would also receive allowance for his dog – 5 Czechoslovak crowns per day. There was one dog for every 100 sheep. Moreover, everybody who worked at a salaš farm could also keep a pig there which would be fed with whey and wheat grits.

Salaš farm comprised the koliba – a cabin house that was prepared one week in advance, before the actual arrival to prevent water leakage during rain. There were kitchen utensils

Sheep enclosure with koliba cabin in Riečnica, photo by an unknown author in1978, source: documents of Kysuce Museum

and other instruments for milk and dairy production such as buckets for milk collection, milk cans, cauldron, pots and some food for the start, iron rails that served for creating sheep enclosure and a trailer where the chief shepherd would sleep. Koliba was typically a three-room building. The front part featured a fireplace with benches around, in the rear part, there was a pantry, where food was stored and the cheese room, which always had to be clean and tidy. Sheep were still milked into wooden geleta buckets. In the morning, the day would start at 4 am. Milking started at 4:30 am and took 2 to 2.5 hours. In spring, sheep would have more milk and milking therefore took more time. The milk was then poured into milk cans that were carried into the cabin, where it was strained into a large tub through a cotton cloth. On top of the cotton, small green spruce branches would be placed to screen for larger impurities such as sheep wool. From a 120-litre cauldron, roughly 15 litres of quality boiled whey (called žinčica) would be prepared, or perhaps a little more. The crew at the sheep farm were taking turns – one went out to let the sheep graze at the pasture, the other worked around the koliba cabin and the other was making cheese and žinčica. There was no strict hierarchy between the chief shepherd (bača) and his shepherd helpers (valach). Bača's responsibility, along with the above, was to sell the cheese at good price and ensure the wages. Every bača, who had his own private sheep agreed with other farmers (who were placing their sheep at the seasonal farm) how much cheese he would give to the farmer per sheep, the rest was his profit. Every chief shepherd tried hard to produce one full half of all cheese volume for the given season before the St. John's day, because after this date the milking capacity of sheep gradually declined. Once a week, the dairy production facility from Liptovská Osada would send its truck to the

farm and collect the produced cheese. The cheese would be transported to the main road on carts. In a week, at least 1.5 ton of cheese would be produced in a single salaš farm. The collection of produced fresh cheese would be a responsibility of one of the farmers who was at home and didn't have any other responsibilities. For his willingness and help, bača would give him a piece of cheese, oštiepok or a bottle of spirits. From the cheese remaining at the farm, oštiepok (dried smoke-cured cheese) would be made, which was sold at 25 to 40 Czechoslovak crowns per piece. Oštiepok was typically sold from Kysuce to Orava and reciprocally.[6] The produced oštiepok cheese would be placed into small baskets, that every bača shepherd would manufacture on his own. Chief shepherd (bača) Varinči-

Blocks of cheese at the Riečnica – Kyčierka salaš farm, photo by an unknown author in1978, source: documents of Kysuce Museum

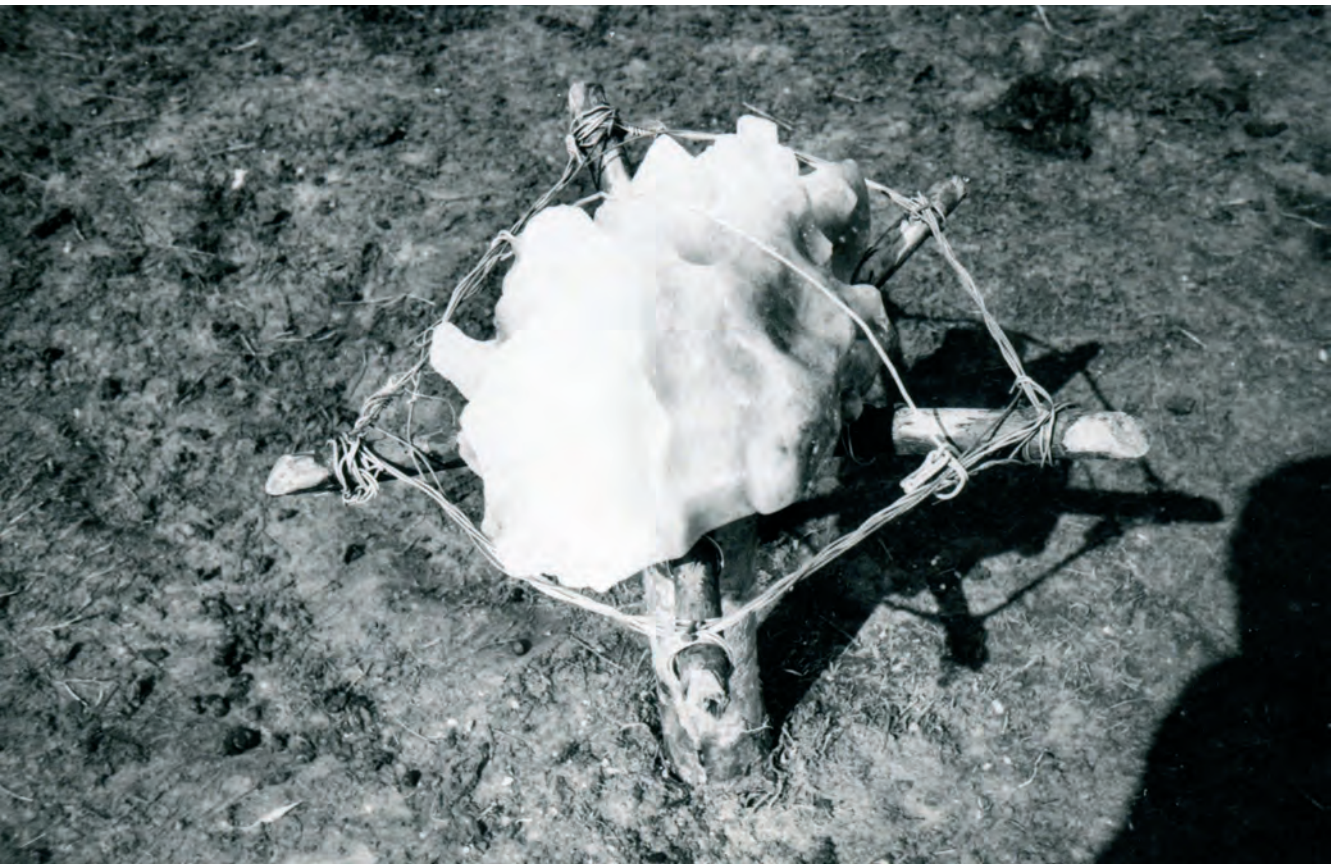
ak used to make them from oak bark, bača Tomčala from straps and lashes, bača Fulier from linen ropes and some others even from wires. Oštiepok would be placed into salty water for 24 hours. If the cheese fell to the bottom of the water container, the water was not salty enough, but if it was floating on the surface, it was over-salted. The water had to be salty enough to ensure the cheese would be floating under the surface but be fully immersed. Then it was smoke-cured for 1-2 days, depending on how strongly the cabin was heated. The forms for oštiepok were made by the father of Ľudvík Cádrik and later also by Ľudvík himself, who also used to work as a shepherd with bača Š. Cingel–Varinčiak. Privately owned sheep were usually collected from the farm and returned to their owners at the end of September, typically on the St. Michal's day (29 September), the sheep owned by the cooperative were on the pasture until the first snow fell. In winter, the shepherds used to be appointed to other agricultural operations. When the sheep started to lamb in February, they all convened again to get ready for the next season of mountain sheep farming at a salaš.

Sheep wool as an important clothing product

Sheep would be sheared two times a year, in spring before lambing and in summer before the rams were brought to the flock. Lambs would be typically sheared on the St. John's day and this would be the only day in the year for shearing lambs. Sheep were sheared usually in a garden or at a barn and a large sheet would be placed under the sheep. When shearing, dark wool would be separated from the white one. Some farmers even separated wool depending on the age of the sheep. Wool from the older sheep was harder, sharper and was usually spun to produce woollen cloth. The wool from lambs and younger sheep was softer and was used to make stockings and sweaters. The sheared wool was stored in large sacks that were placed on the attic and waited there until a buyer from the processing facility came over.[7] Specialised weaving providers were used for cloth weaving. With the advance of collectivisation and industrialisation (after 1948), sheep started to be bred in co-operative salaš farm, electric scissors were used for shearing and the fleece was provided for processing into industrial facilities. Small farmers ceased to process fleece in their homes. It was more advantageous to sell it and buy ready-made cloth. Form the wool, water- and cold-resistant clothing could be manufactured. The cut of the individual clothing pieces used to be very simple but convenient at the same time. For example, hats used to have a very wide brim, to ensure water would not stream down behind the wearer's neck, the long overcoat was deliberately made a little broader and reached almost to the ankles to ensure water during the rain would run off directly to the ground and also protected the shepherd's legs from cold. Sheep hides would be used to manufacture fur coats, shoes and belts, various poaches for tobacco, water and

food. Also, it was used for making musical instruments, such as bagpipes. Shepherds used to make simplest musical instruments such as the blowpipe on their own. It enabled them to compose beautiful Wallachian songs describing the life of shepherds on the pastures. Shepherds were well-trained, stur-

A lump of salt for sheep at the Riečnica – Kyčierka salaš farm, photo by an unknown author in 1978, source: documents of Kysuce Museum



dy, fit and inventive men, which was the basic prerequisite of the swift and energetic shepherd dances. Indeed, in the uplands they would regularly encounter predators that would pose threat to their flocks that often moved in the terrain with difficult accessibility.

Bača Fulier in front of the cabin in salaš 'pod Príslopom',
photo by Helena Kotvasová 1977

Salaš farming in Horny Vadičov

Sheep farming in Vadičov has a long-standing tradition. Between 1800 and 1960, sheep of private owners would be pastured together with bulls in the meadows of the Malá Fatra mountain range. Sheep were driven out to the pastures on St. Sofia's day (15th May), first only to the nearby pastures and in the second half of May they would be driven further to the grassy uplands. In April, the chief shepherd (bača) would be elected. Usually, the vote would be taken at school, but there is also a mention of chief shepherd election under the large linden tree u Cabadaja or u Stolárov hamlets. The one who could offer the farmers largest share of cheese would become the

Bača Anton Zajac in front of the cabin on 'Vadičovska hoľa' in Mala Fatra in the 1950s, source: private archive of the Zajac family

chief shepherd. Larger farmers would have the decisive vote in the process - the more sheep, the more votes. The elected bača then purchased a keg of beer to entertain the farmers in exchange for their show of trust. While the shepherds were moving with the sheep to the upland salaš farm, which would take as much as two weeks, the bača with one more shepherd helper would prepare the cabin (koliba) and repair the fence of the sheep enclosure. In the morning before every milking, the shepherds would pray Our Father, Hail Mary, The Apostles' Creed and after the milking the praying would be repeated once more. Up to 300 sheep would be milked and there would be around 90 sheep per person. Around 7 pm, the evening milking would start. By the time everything was tidied up and cleaned, it was 11 pm and then the shepherds would go to bed.[8]

A traditional salaš mountain farm would consist of the wood-log cabin, enclosure – the sheep paddock (called košiar), where the sheep would be closed for the night and the strunga, smaller enclosure where the sheep were milked. This one was portable and was transferred depending on the weather. Sometimes it would be on one place for two weeks but when it rained it would be placed to a new spot more often so that sheep would not have to be standing in mud during milking.

Bača Anton Zajac from Horny Vadičov in front of the cabin with his dog on "Vadičovska hola" in Mala Fatra in the 1950s, source: private archive of the Zajac family

In the 1950s, sheep farming in Kysuce when into decline. There appeared a revival in the 1970s, as the sheep wool started to be purchased centrally. Except for small private farmers, sheep started to be bred on a larger scale by state-run farms, agricultural cooperatives and individual farmers too who were selling fleece to obtain some extra income.

In the 1980s in Kysuce, the Birka sheep breed started to spread as it offered a richer, longer and higher quality fleece. In 1984, small sheep breeders still had 152 sheep.[9] In 1985, we know of two bača shepherds - Ján Jurčík from Zázrivá, who was the chief shepherd at Hájnica and Ďurčo from Budatínska Lehota, who was the chief shepherd at Okrúhlica. Small farmers used to provide them with 126 sheep to pasture. In 2004, a private farm from Kysucký Lieskovec which ran a farm in Horný Vadičov kept 250 sheep and

Bača Emil Zajac from Horny Vadičov, who worked as the chief shepherd on the Vadičovska hoľa in the 1930s and 1940s, source: private archive of the Zajac family

there were also small private farmers in the village who kept 60-70 sheep in total. One year later, the company made the chief shepherd and his helpers redundant and the sheep were grazing to no avail and economic benefit. In 2010, the farm changed hands and the new owner focused entirely on cattle farming.

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10 Kronika obce Horný Vadičov

Traditional Sheep Farming in the Terchová Valley in the First Half of the 20th Century

Bc. Tomáš Mrázek

Traditional Sheep Farming in the Terchová Valley in the First Half of the 20th Century

The territory of Terchová valley (Terchovská dolina) consists of around 14 to 16 municipalities - Teplička nad Váhom, Kotrčiná Lúčka, Nededza, Mojš, Gbeľany, Varín, Nezbudská Lúčka, Krasňany, Dolná Tižina, Stráža, Belá, Lysica, Lutiše, Terchová and we include here also Strečno and Stráňavy (under the term "Terchovská dolina" we understand the current delimitation of the micro region based on the municipal lands' boundaries as the valley has never been defined as a purely geographical unit and the term has always been used in popular speech as the name for a loose association of municipalities). In this paper, we will deal with sheep farming mainly in the villages laying in the river basin of the Varínka stream, that is – Terchová, Belá, and Dolná Tižina. For these villages, the typical method of sheep farming was pasturing of sheep at high-altitude alpine farms (called salaš) placed on the ridge of the Malá Fatra mountain range. In the villages with lower altitude, such as Teplička nad Váhom, Kotrčiná Lúčka, Nededza, Gbeľany, Varín and Krasňany, sheep farming was less widespread.

The valaška (Wallachian sheep) has been the most widespread breed of sheep in the mountainous regions of Slovakia since the 16th century. This breed with rough fleece was suitable for farming in tough climate of the mountain regions of the Carpathians.[2] Valaška sheep has a long hanging fleece that is convenient for keeping the rainwater on the surface and for

Milking of sheep at the salaš in Zástranie, J. Podolák 1966,
source: AFn ÚESA SAV

not letting the skin get wet. The breed became very popular because of its resilience, perseverance and good ability to walk long distances.

Purchase of sheep and reproduction of the flocks

Sheep flocks were established and reproduced using several ways. The most frequent way of sheep reproduction was from the farmer's own breed. The quality of breeding depended firstly and foremostly on the correct selection of tupping rams. The tupping rams were let to mate with the ewes usually at the age of 1 to 2 years. In the Terchová valley, the typical way to obtain lambs was in exchange for wintering the sheep of other owners. Those who wanted to establish a flock of their own took over sheep for wintering from an owner who didn't have enough fodder for the winter. Usually around the All Saints Day, the provider of winter fodder took over the agreed number of sheep in lamb (i.e. pregnant) from their owner, to whom he was providing care and fodder until spring. In exchange for the wintering, he then received all the lambs born in spring. In this way, any farmer could establish their own flock in 2 years' time as well as breed lambs that he could then conveniently monetize at spring-time markets and fairs.[4]

Besides obtaining sheep through reproduction of other framer's breeds, sheep could also be purchased. In all towns and villages, regular fairs and markets would be held, where sheep could be sold and purchased. Inhabitants of the Terchová valley were most often visiting the markets and fairs in Žilina and Varín. Buying flocks outside the Slovak territory also played an important role. Sheep farmers from the Terchová valley would stock themselves up with Wallachian sheep pur-

The return from the pasture, Lysica, Ján Podolák 1966, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

chased in the shepherding centres of Verchovina (verchovina sheep), in the Hutsul villages (hucul sheep) as well as in the Maramureš region. Until the WWI, sheep from the northern parts of Transylvania were preferred. After the WWI, sheep were typically purchased in Ruthenia. Sheep farers of Terchová liked to buy sheep in the Rachov region and transported them by train to Sučany, where the flock was divided, and every-

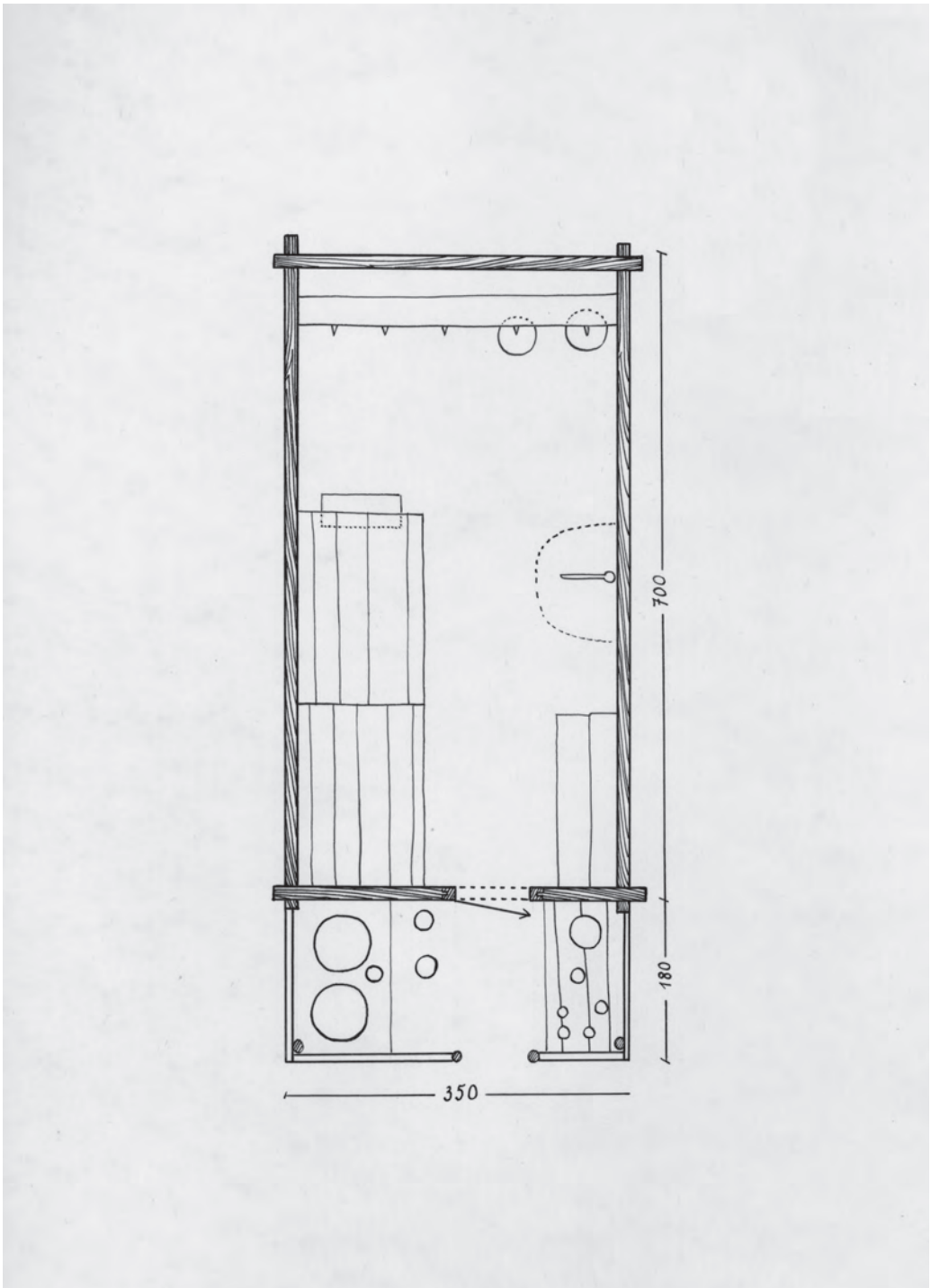
Salaš under Malý Rozsutec mountain, photo J. Podolák 1963,
source: AFn ÚESA SAV

one would individually drive their own sheep over the ridge of Malá Fatra to Terchová.[5]

Forms of pasturing organisation

From the perspective of organisation of summer grazing and pasturing of sheep in the Terchová valley, individual salaš farming was most common in this area. Under this system, sheep were pastured in flocks put together according to the respective small homesteads. This system of individual salaš husbandry had survived until the 1950s and the advance of collectivisation of agriculture and animal husbandry. In the villages without summer field-based stables, the flock had to be driven to the pastures every day. This system was widespread in all villages in the valley of the Varínka stream. Where the conditions allowed for it, individual sheep farms were established (salaš) which focused on milk production. To establish such a farm, one needed 40-60 milking sheep. If a homestead owner didn't have enough sheep to establish his own farm, he could 'lease' the sheep from other small farmers to whom he gave an agreed volume of cheese per each milked sheep. In some hamlets of Terchová, two to three farmers with similar number of milked sheep would combine their flocks and they would take turns not only in pasturing the flocks but also in processing of milk.

Under the system of individual salaš-based husbandry, it was quite common to hire shepherds for pasturing only when there were no suitable persons in the family of the flock owner. Shepherding responsibilities of valach shepherds were usually given to school-age boys. Farmers would usually hire them only for summer pasturing or, alternatively, for the whole year.



A floor plan of a koliba cabin at the salaš under Malý Rozsutec mountain, 1963, drawing K. Fulierová 1963, source: AK ÚESA SAV

Milking and processing of dairy was performed by the famer or his wife. The compensation for pasturing sheep was food, clothing, accommodation and a modest payment in kind or in cash. In the upland salaš farms on the ridge of Malá Fatra,

Interior of the cabin in Terchová, photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

which were remote from permanent settlements, the crew used to consist of 2-4 valach shepherds and 1-2 honelníci junior herdsmen.

Buildings at salaš farms

When selecting the location for an upland farm (salaš) various circumstances had to be considered. The key factor was naturally the abundance of lands for pasturing. The salaš had to be located so that it offered an easy access to all the grazed pastures. Another factor was the proximity of the farm to the communications used for transporting the dairy products. Alpine farms located on the ridge of Malá Fatra were built in the proximity of mountain paths that could be used for transport by animals (e.g. the Terchovský salaš under Malý Rozsutec mountain). Proximity of a water spring was important as well.

The sojourn of the shepherds at the salaš required building of a shelter, a cabin called koliba. It served to accommodate the chief shepherd (bača) and his helpers called valachs and in case of truly remote alpine farms also to process milk into dairy and its subsequent storage. When selecting the location for koliba, the main factor was that it had to provide a good view of the other buildings of the upland farm as well as access roads or paths. Cabins were log- constructions usually built from softwood timber that were without attic or without proper floor.

In Malá Fatra, upland farms were operated until the 1960s, where the cabin was located right next to the strunga (an enclosure used for milking of sheep) an actually they formed a single building unit. Such layout was maintained for the longest

time in the upland farm in Štefanová as well as in Porubská hoľa under Rozsutec. For the night, the sheep were closed into wooden paddock (košiar). This paddock was moved every 4 to 5 days for the purpose of košarovanie – applying of manure on the pastures[7] form the historical perspective, the oldest prac-

Strunga for milking sheep at the salaš in Terchová, photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

tice was to close the sheep into enclosures in the forest built from felled logs placed longitudinally on each other. Such enclosures or paddocks were called zaťatý košiar (felled-log paddock). At some alpine farms on the ridge of Malá Fatra, there was a long-lasting tradition of not closing the sheep into the paddock for the night but letting them sleep in the open near the bača's cabin. The shepherds reasoned for this prac-

Moving of the upland farm and driving of the sheep to the uplands – redik, Terchová, photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

tice mainly by claiming that if a large flock of sheep would be enclosed in a paddock the bears would cause even greater damage in contrast to sheep being placed in an open space.[8] In terms of the layout, the paddock would be divided into two parts: honelnica – the section into which the flock would be driven before milking – and the additional enclosure, where the flock wood be kept after milking where it would also stay

Milking sheep in Belá, photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

overnight.[9] Honelnica was separated from the other part by an individual unit with openings called strunga. In the stable (i.e. fixed) paddocks, strunga used for milking sheep was also fixed in a single location inside thee enclosure. During milking, the shepherds would be sitting on wooden logs or tree stools. Near the paddock there would be stražáreň – a smaller shelter for shepherds serving to guarding of sheep for the night. This shelter was a place for sleeping of the shepherd who took the turn of watching the sheep overnight.

Life and work of shepherds at an upland farm

The year in sheep husbandry was divided into two major seasons – the winter and summer season. The boundaries between the two seasons were firmly fixed based on traditions, however the individual farmers naturally adjusted the dates depending on the climate conditions of the given year as well as the status of their stocks of fodder for winter. The outdoor pasturing season would start on the St. George's day ('na Ďura' i.e. 24 April). Some breeders with smaller stocks of fodder would drive sheep to the pine and spruce forests right after the sheep lambed. Other breeders with sufficient fodder usually waited until the snows melted. In the spring, the main pastures for sheep were the meadows in the neighbourhood of the village.

Owners of sheep who 'leased' their sheep to the upland farms (salaš) to other farmers used to earmark their own flock on sheep's ear. Most often the mark would be a circle-shaped clip or a cut on the ear or their combination. In his note-

Shepherd at a pasture, Belá, photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

book, bača would write down the names of the farmers and the marks of their sheep. The date of combining the privately-owned sheep into larger flocks would be announced to the owners briefly before the driving of the flock to the uplands, typically on Sunday in front of the church. Traditionally, mixing of sheep into flocks had a ceremonious character. The cere-

mony of driving of the sheep to the upland pastures was called redik and would come with a traditional order of ceremonies and customs. The flock-master or chief shepherd (bača) and his shepherds were walking at the head of the flock, the flock was followed by the carts filled with utensils, instruments and food as well as personal belongings of the shepherds. At the end of the procession, there were the wives of the shepherds. Shepherds were wearing their best clothes. Until the mid-20th century the first spring drive was accompanied by a large number of customs and superstitious rituals with the objective of ensuring the prosperity of sheep and their shepherds. After arriving to the upland farm, the bača consecrated with holy

At the Tižina grassy upland, Dolná Tižina, source: archive of Vladimír Trnka

water all the farm buildings and inventory. In the cabin, a fire was ignited which had to be kept uninterrupted until the very end of the upland farming season, as the custom said. Other customs were practiced upon first driving of the sheep into the paddock, during first counting of sheep as well as during the first milking.

In the morning, the chief shepherd used to get up as the first. Typically, this was around four in the morning. He would fan the flame and put the water to heat in to the cauldron. In the meantime, other shepherds would get up, wash and prepare for the morning milking. After milking, shepherds would eat breakfast and drive the sheep to the pasture, one of them would stay with the chief shepherd to assist hm in the cabin. In the late morning, the chief shepherd with his helper would perform various works in the cabin, such as bring water, move the paddock or process milk into dairy products. Between 11 and 12 in the morning, the other shepherds would return from the pasture. Bača would call them by blowing on the large Wallachian pipe (Belá, Terchová). The lunch break usually took two hours and the lunch was prepared by the chief shepherd. The afternoon milking would start between 1 and 2 pm and it was followed by repeating of the morning program: straining, and coagulating milk, collecting of cheese, making of oštiepok, working around the cabin. Afternoon grazing took at least 4.5 hours. After return from the pasture, there followed evening milking. Great emphasis was placed on precise keeping of the milking time. Shepherds only had 5 to 6 hours of sleep overnight. The lack of sleep and not enough leisure time was the key factor of limited interest of people in working at an upland salaš farm also in the past.

In the morning, the sheep were grazing the meadows close the cabin. In the afternoon there was more time for grazing

and the sheep were therefore driven to the more remote pastures. When the summer heat would get intolerable, sheep were driven to the pastures sooner in the day so that to protect them from sunstroke during the noon.

Sheep were regularly counted at all upland farms. Shepherds most often counted the sheep when letting them out of strunga (the milking enclosure). At the alpine farms, they would also count their sheep at the pasture, especially when passing through narrow paths where the sheep had to pass one by one.

Bells used to belong among the most important aids in pasturing sheep. Bells would be classified according to the material and the method of manufacture into metal-plate bells and cast bells. In the Terchová valley, most bells applied were made from metal plates. Using the metal-plate bells made more practical sense as the fragile cast bells could be easily damaged in the alpine terrain. The chief shepherds of Terchová would buy the bells mainly from bell-makers from Zázrivá. The manufacture of bells in Zázrivá survived until the second half of the 20th century (bell makers Jozef Pikla – Pivničiar and Ján Marko) and has continued until this day (Stanislav Otruba).

Cheese blocks and oštiepok cheese in an upland farm cabin, Belá,
photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

Salaš farm milk production

Sheep represents a very profitable animal suitable for husbandry. Except for milk, it also provides fleece (wool) as an essential product as well as skin (hides) and meat. The actual volume of milk that a sheep was able to produce depended on the time spend on the pasture, the method of grazing, the weather and overall care and treatment provided to the sheep Average milk production of the valaška breed is between 3 and 4.5 dcl per day. Average production was measured in spring after arrival to the farm, so that the chief shepherd could determine the volume of dairy products that would be distributed to the respective sheep owners during the whole upland farming season. However, milk yield was changing throughout the respective stage of the season. According to the experience of most chief shepherds, milk yield was highest before the St. John's day (24 June).

Milk was collected into wooden containers called geleta. While milking, each shepherd was sitting on a wooden stool. Manual milking of sheep is regarded as the most demanding work at the farm. The difficulty of milking is one of the major factors causing little interest in the profession of a shepherd. On the mountain farms at lower altitudes, the produced milk was continually transported for processing to the chief shepherd's house. At alpine sheep farms, milk was processed directly on the spot, in the shepherd's cabin.

Crumbled cheese is the main sheep milk product; it is made by fermentation of milk using natural rennet called kľag in the local dialect. Rennet was originally prepared from the stomach of young, milk-fed calf. Cheese production was transported from the farm to the village approximately once a week and usually it was the sheep owners who would pick up the pro-

Bača – chief shepherd with a geleta bucket for milking, Belá,
photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

duced cheese. Cheese is adequately matured when it is soft, greasy and sticky. Dry cheese that would crumble was regarded to be of inferior quality. The quality of cheese was traditionally tested on a heated pan. If the cheese melted like butter it was good, but if it started to stick to the pan and burn it was of poor quality. The most widespread method of processing sheep cheese was manufacture of bryndza. Bryndza was prepared by manual kneading and later by grinding of cheese blocks while adding salt. Whey was originating as a side product during collection of crumbled cheese. Whey was further processed to produce žinčica (boiled sheep whey).

Oštiepok was the other main dairy product. Oštiepok is made of crumbled cheese, from which smaller pieces are separated and pressed into wooden containers to push out and separate whey from the cheese mass. Then the bača shaped the block of cheese with his hands to give it a shape of an egg then steamed it up in hot water. Then the oštiepok was placed in the two-piece wooden mould with a carved ornament which was tightened fast with a fibre sleeve. Then the almost-ready oštiepok was placed for half a day into the cooked salty solution called rôsol. Still in the fibre sleeve, the salted oštiepok was then placed for 5-6 days of smoke-curing over the fireplace in the cabin, which gave the cheese harder crust and the yellow-brown golden colour. Oštiepok mainly served for sale. It was sold mainly at fairs to Varín, Žilina and Ružomberok. The revenue from sale mainly served for purchase of necessary tools for the sheep farm and the pay for the shepherds.

Shepherds' food and clothing

The main source of shepherds' summer subsistence was dairy produce. Žinčica (boiled whey) was the staple of shepherds' food as it was relatively cheap and highly nutritious. It was typically consumed with bread. Besides žinčica, shepherds mainly ate lower-quality crumbled cheese, fresh bryndza and sheep butter. Higher-quality crumbled cheese and oštiepok was eaten only occasionally. At lower-altitude sheep farms, warm meals were cooked regularly while at high altitudes on alpine salaš farms, food was only cooked on Sunday and sometimes also in the middle of the week. Potatoes, flour, barley and legumes were the main cooking ingredients. The most typical meal was dumplings with bryndza, various types of porridge and mash as well as soups. Demikát was the typical soup eaten at the sheep farm (bryndza is the main ingredient in this meal). Meat was always scarce at the salaš. Meat was either obtained by stealing – when a sheep was heavily injured or possibly by purchase. It was usually cooked in water or in sheep whey. Food was provided by the chief shepherd. Form the lower-altitude sheep farms, he used to travel to obtain food and ingredients once a week. In alpine sheep farms, this happened less often. Food and ingredients brought by the peasant farmers (owners of grazed sheep) who would sometimes ascend to the uplands were a welcome diversification of the regular meals. These peasant farmers used to visit the upland farm to pick-up the produced cheese and would often bring bread, bacon and tobacco (Dolná Tižina). When going to the pasture, a shepherd would put merinda in his bag – a dry meal consisting of a flat bread baked on hot embers (Terchová, Belá) with bacon, bryndza or sheep butter.

Preparing food at a sheep farm in Terchová, photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

Besides milk, sheep wool was another important product. Sheep were usually sheared two times a year, first round in spring and the second at the end of the summer. Before shearing, sheep were bathed – most often by driving them across a stream several times. Shearing was a job performed by men and women alike.

Basic materials to make clothing comprised woollen and linen cloth. In the areas of high-altitude alpine sheep farming, it was customary to impregnate shirts by soaking them in hot melted butter and then curing them with smoke of the open fire. This ensured the shirt was water-proof and protected the owner from parasites. Wearing of greasy and smoke-darkened shirts was a custom that survived until the interwar period (Terchová, Belá). In Terchová, shepherds gradually started to back away from this custom after the WWI, when tourism started to develop in Malá Fatra and the visitors of salaš farms did not want to purchase žinčica from shepherds wearing this particular apparel.[15]

Bača Vincent Patrnčiak from Terchová in the traditional folk costume,
source: archive of Rudolf Patrnčiak

Finishing the pasturing season and sheep husbandry in winter

Sheep husbandry at salaš farms culminated at the end of the summer when the sheep were driven to the pastures at lower altitudes. Then the flock was driven down to the village where the sheep were distributed and returned to their owners. This particular act was called rozsad (loosely translated as splitting, or division of the flock). In Terchová, it was customary to perform rozsad as early as the 8 September. This date was also marking the end date of agreed service of the shepherd helpers (valasi). Some chief shepherds remained at upland farms until the St. Michal's day (29th September). On the day of rozsad, the bača organised a feast for the shepherds with their wives. This fest would always include live music. When the bača worked in another village than his native one, he would usually organise one more celebration with shepherds also in his home (Terchová).

Over the winter, sheep were kept in the sheep stable. If there were fewer sheep in the homestead, they would stay in a shared stable with cattle. If the flock was larger, there would be a separate sheep stable. Until mid-20th century, along with winter paddock, there would also be quite widespread summer field stables, called choľvarki. These were seasonal constructions built at more remote pastures. In the valley of Terchová, they were located in the vale of the Varínka stream – in Terchová, Bela, Lysica, Stráž as well as Dolná Tižina.

With regards to its economic importance, sheep husbandry and alpine sheep farming have been influencing the way of life of the valley population for centuries. Although the basic

Bača Vincent Patrnčiak near the cabin under the Malý Rozsutec mountain, source: archive of Rudolf Patrnčiak

forms of shepherding in this region were identical to the methods used also in other Slovak regions with individual sheep husbandry, specific natural conditions and economic development in general have caused that the shepherding culture in this particular microregion has developed its peculiar local specifics.

Notes:

1 From Belá in 1496 and from Strečno from 1508.
2 PODOLÁK, J.: Tradičné ovčiarstvo na Slovensku, Veda Bratislava 1982, page 22
3 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 23
4 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 25
5 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 29
6 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 84
7 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 121
8 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 130
9 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 132
10 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 143
11 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 148
12 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 150
13 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 177
14 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 158
15 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 158
16 PODOLÁK, 1982, page 50

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The Importance of Breeding of the NATIVE Wallachian Sheep in Slovakia

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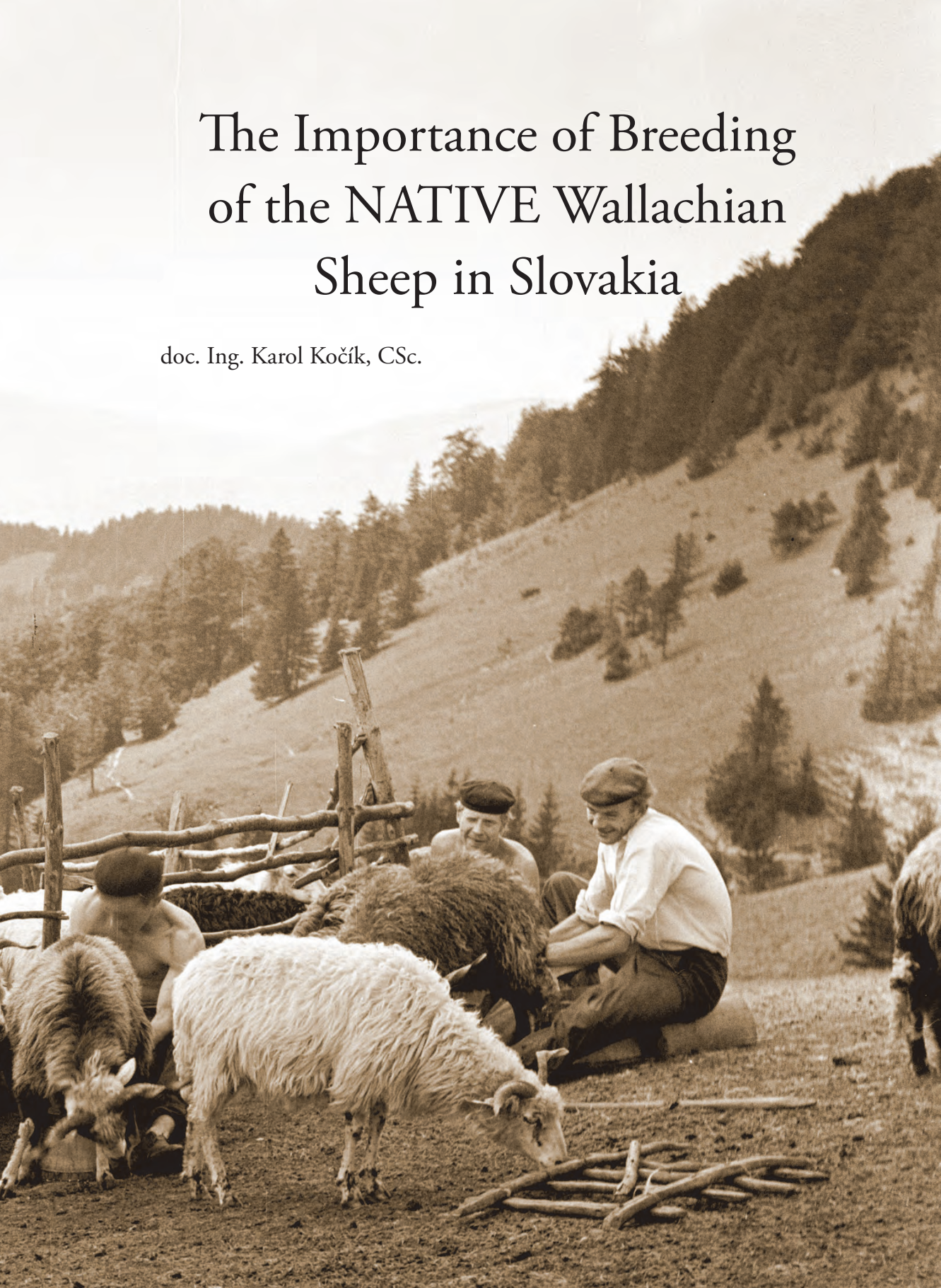

The Importance of Breeding of the NATIVE Wallachian Sheep in Slovakia

Introduction

Sheep husbandry belongs among the most important sectors of animal husbandry. This situation is further underlined by the fact that sheep, together with goats are among the oldest domesticised species of animals used in agriculture, the so-called farm animals. From the agricultural perspective, the purpose of sheep husbandry is the production of quality meat with very interesting nutrition characteristics, another factor is production of fleece to make wool, sheep hides and last but not least, production of milk which is the key ingredient in making of various kinds of cheese. In the past, another appreciated benefit was production of high-quality sheep manure which belongs among the best types of manure thanks to the excellent content of essential biogenic elements and very positive characteristics improving soil fertility.

Based on the above, also in the past, there were naturally efforts to select such individual sheep for breeding and involvement in the process of reproduction who demonstrated some, or possibly all of the above significant utilisable traits. In the following years, also under the influence of the requirements by the processing industry, the sheep breeds from later periods were further cross-bred and cultivated until, gradually, the present modern breeds of sheep came into existence.

In these modern breeds, we can register high-level utility in one particular aspect, depending on the preference for selection criteria defined in the cross-breeding process. It can be assumed, that further progress will bring origination of other new breeds with genomes that will respect the transformed climate conditions or possibly also some specific local conditions and requirements. Slovak Dairy Sheep, the breed registered in Slovakia in 2017 can serve as an example.

The Improved Wallachian sheep, Tsigai, Askanian Merino and Native Wallachian sheep all belong to breeds that have been bred in specific conditions for a long time and can now be included among the endangered breeds and are therefore very important in terms of protection of genetic animal resources.

The latter of the four breeds (Native Wallachian sheep) represents one of the oldest breeds farmed in our territory and can be therefore included in the group of native breeds. In the process of shaping of this breed, the important factors included not only the selective pressure of the environment (sheep husbandry in demanding climate conditions) but also preference for higher milk-production performance. In the past, it was also wool production performance, however, from the perspective of today's qualitative criteria, this wool is evaluated as providing lower to poor quality material of rough type. The fact that in a certain historical periods, there was a requirement to improve the quality and production of wool, to enlarge the animal's physical frame with respect to meat production and achieve the above while retaining or slightly increasing the milk production all combined to result in gradual genetical reconstruction of this ancient breed. The result was the breeding of the so-called Improved Wallachian Sheep and the older breed gradually disappeared from Slovakia. If

we base our assumption on unvalidated data on existence of approximately three million of sheep in the Upper Hungary (i.e. the rough territory of present-day Slovakia) in the 19th century, with approximately 80% prevalence of this particular breed, we observe the most dramatic decline in the number of this particular breed in a single century as in the 1990s, the breed almost teetered on the brink of extinction.

Along with other requirements, revitalisation of the breed of Native Wallachian sheep will request searching for the new significance and application of this breed in practice and its role in society as a whole.

Carpathian sheep as a part of the group of regional breeds

(Hortobágy racka, Gyimesi racka, Turcana, Čuška, Wallachian Sheep)

Wallachian sheep also called Native Wallachian sheep basically is not the breed that was spread by the Romanian shepherds to our territory, but it is a breed that is related to the ovis aries strepsiceros species. These sheep developed spontaneously during the period of sheep domestication, most likely from the steppe sheep (Ovis vignei Blyth) and arrived at Europe via Asia through the present-day Turkey and their husbandry extended to Slovakia from the territory of present-day Greece, Albania, partially also southern Italy, Croatia, Macedonia, Serbia and Bulgaria. Their breeding was probably spreading parallelly to the present-day Romania. On this relatively large territory, we can set apart an enclosed territory of some sort of

disturbance centre of oves aries strepsiceros that can be found across all Europe and could be genetical relatives of our Wallachian sheep. The fact that we know of the disturbance centre of oves aries strepsiceros and the gradual evolution of the local forms can lead us to the assumption that after the spreading of this sheep to the north to north-east along the Carpathian crescent and into the Carpathian basin, in our local conditions approx. 500-600 years ago, not only that husbandry of this particular breed of sheep was initiated but also new, local forms were being created. This insight suggests that the valaška sheep bred in the territory of Slovakia (today labelled as Native Wallachian sheep) can be rightfully regarded as our domestic sheep breed that is genetically similar to other forms of oves aries strepsiceros that are today often presented as local and native breeds. In Hungary these are known as racka, in Romania it is turcana, in Ukraine it is čuška and in Slovakia and Czech Republic, it is Wallachian sheep or perhaps Improved Wallachian Sheep. (Chov Oviec magazine 4-2013)

Brief characteristics of Carpathian regional breeds of coarse-wool steppe sheep:

Hortobágy racka (Ovis aries strepsiceros Hortobágyiensis)

This is an old-Hungarian breed with the first written record known from 1255. Since the second half of the 19th century, new over-improved breeds are promoted, mainly Merino, which results in rapid reduction in the number of pieces in breeding. The repeated spreading and therefore saving of the breed took place near the town of Hortobágy after the WWI

and after 1950s and the sheep has thus been labelled as Hortobágy Racka. It is bred in two colour variations – while and black. It is a coarse-wool breed with temperament, horns grow on ewes and rams alike, they are erect and spiral-shaped. The sheep are not very demanding in terms of grazing and stabling, they offer three types of utilisation (milk, meat and wool) and come in medium size. The adult rams weigh 70-75 kg, ewes weigh 40-50 kg. Ewes produce 60-100 litres of milk per season that can be used to produce curd and cheese. The volume of wool per one shearing is 2-3 kg.

Gyimesi racka

Gyimesi racka produces white wool but black stains on the head and limbs are quite common – most often around ears, eyes or snout. If they are on limbs, it is usually at the end. Lambs after birth are white with black stains. The head in proportion to the body is medium-sized. The skull is wide but getting narrower towards the front. The sheep has broad and short crescent-shaped horns. The horns are spiralling and come with 1 ½ or 2 ¼ rotation. Their eyes are fair and medium-sized. The neck is of medium length and moderately sinuous. The bottom is moderately steep, rather long, wide and sinuous too. The bones are robust, of medium-length and the limbs are muscular. The tail is long, their udder is well-developed and long. The greatest length of wool is found in sheep weighing 45-50 kg and rams weighing 80-90 kg. Wool is longer than that of Hungarian racka and is finer and softer to the touch. The length of wool is between 30-40 cm.

Turkany

This is the most popular sheep among breeders in Romania thanks to the animal's resilience, adaptability and utility performance. It is the most numerous breed in Romania accounting for 80.5 % of all sheep. These are black, grey or

Valaška and racka sheep in a traditional stable – Kováčová, 2014
(author: Karol Kočík)

Valaška belongs to the group of ovis aries strepsiceros. Their closest relative breed in this part of Europe is the racka as well as the Romanian tsurkan sheep. The former is known to come in two modifications: gyimesi racka, which is very similar to valaška and the well-known hortobágyi racka, which is also its relative. Apart from the valaška, it is bred on flat lands of the Hungarian puszta (in the region around Hortobágyi).

white coarse-wool sheep. The length of their fleece is between 12 and 36 cm. With their looks, they are similar to the Scottish blackface. Their eyes, snout and limbs as well as other body parts may carry black stains. The rams weigh usually between 60-80 kg while the ewe reach around 40-55 kg. Milk production reaches 140-160 litres. Approximately 50 % of ewes grow horns. They are highly resistant to diseases.

Native Wallachian sheep

Native valaška is an old breed of sheep that comes in numerous local alternatives depending on the location of breeding and farming. Their origin is in the Carpathians and the Balkans. They are bred in Romania (čuška), in the Balkans, in the mountainous parts of Poland, Slovakia and Morava and to a limited degree also in the lowlands of Hungary. Valaška is a sturdy sheep, with good ability to walk long distances, resistant to cold, not very demanding and suitable for outdoor paddocking (rainwater flows down on the surface of their long confluent wool) and offer utilisation across a full range of benefits. Their milking performance prevails over the meat and wool yield. The system of their breeding is paddock-based, i.e. the sheep is driven to the mountain meadows and pastures in spring, where they are left until autumn regardless of the weather and altitude. This sheep doesn't mind grazing on steep, difficult-to-access pastures that they simultaneously supply with manure as a result of paddock-based keeping – in return this results in improved vegetation. Sheep are also adjusted to this type of grazing with their limbs which carry sturdy and hard hoofs pinned back against each other. They also show lively temperament and robust constitution. To en-

able grazing low grass (often matt-grass) they have long neck with narrow snout, also helping them to graze the grass between rocks, bushes and sparse vegetation. Wallachian Sheep has a fine, dry and wedge-shaped head. It is covered in white wool, in coloured sheep, the colour is the same as the colour of their fleece or with stains, their legs are not covered in fleece. Rams have curved nose and, apart from the ewes, their horns are spiral-shaped and curved along the side of their head. Horns are rarer in ewes. The wool from valaška sheep is white or coloured. Approximately 20% of them have coloured wool. Black colour is accepted. The wool is coarse, long, composed of wavy hair and guard hair. In the past, the native valaška was mainly bred for milk to produce cheese. However, they also have relatively good meat. The weight of ewes is around 40 kg and rams weigh around 70 kg. Czech valaška sheep is only bred in mountainous regions.

Polish mountain sheep

It is bred in the mountainous regions of Polish High Tatras and Beskydy. It belongs to the group of coarse wool sheep with mixed wool colour. It has robust body and can therefore be bred even in the toughest climate conditions. In Summer season, it is bred on the uplands farms (salaš) on alpine pastures, where sheep cheese is made from their milk. An adult sheep weighs 45 kg while a ram weighs 65 kg. Milk production capacity ranges between 60-100 kg, fertility at 120 %.

Šumavka – Czech peasant sheep

In the tough conditions of the Šumava forest, there originated a domestic sheep that people favoured thanks to its characteristics. After WWI, there started the decline in sheep husbandry in the region and also this breed lost its importance. The šumavka breed survived only in small individual farms and for tupping, the Merino and sometimes Bergamo rams were used. Šumavka is an undemanding breed, sturdy and resistant to cold, a breed that perfectly tolerates the tough and unfavourable climate conditions of central Šumava with frequent rains. Šumavka weighs between 35-45 kg. Compared to valaška, it has larger frame, higher and thinner legs.

Characteristics and prevalence of valaška sheep in the Carpathians

Wallachian Sheep comes in two forms:

a) Unimproved valaška (the primigenius form) – the Native Wallachian sheep

b) Improved form of valaška – improved (cross-bred) Wallachian Sheep

Wallachian sheep, also known as valaška arrived at present-day Slovakia together with the so-called Wallachian colonisation in 13th and 14th century. Wallachian Sheep ranks among steppe sheep and belongs to the group of ovis aries strepsiceros bred in the Balkans. In our territory they were typically bred in the altitude of 600-1200 m. For generations, the valaška was bred mainly in Orava, Liptov, Kysuce, Spiš, Low Tatras, Spišské Ru-

A collection of tupping rams of native valaška – the salaš mountain sheep farm at Zbojská, 2016 (author: Karol Kočík)

At present, the breed of Wallachian Sheep is being revitalised. Tupping rams have important task in this process as well as further reproduction. When selecting rams, besides standard veterinary and zootechnical indicators, emphasis is placed on phenotype specifics. On the photo we can see grey or perhaps black rams (called lajčiak) as well as spotted ram with dark head (murgaš) and a white ram with facial pigmentation (mušiak).

dohorie as well as Veľká and Malá Fatra. At present, it is bred as a genotype reserve also in the Czech Republic where the breed is currently being revitalised. In Slovenia they are registered as

a genotype reserve of the bovec sheep. This sheep breed is very close to our Wallachian sheep or possibly Improved Wallachian sheep in terms of its utility yields, phenotypes and phylogenetics traits. The sheep with their phenotype very similar to our Wallachian sheep are also bred in the Carpathian crescent as well as Romania, Poland, Ukraine and Bulgaria. The valaška was a subject of great interest also by the Pro Specie Rara foundation from Switzerland in the second half of the 1990s. Later, breeders of valaška from Germany also showed

A collection of ewes selected for mating – the mountain farm at Zbojská, 2016 (author: Karol Kočík)

Along with tupping rams, successful revitalisation of the breed also depends on gradual raising of young ewes (jarka). In their selection also, phenotype diversity is an important factor. The photo from the salaš at Zbojská, which houses an acknowledged reproduction breeding facility is a good example of the above. On the photo, we can see ewes without horns (šuta) as well as horned ewes (kornuta), with white colour (belica) as well as those with black wool (lajka).

their interest. This sheep served as the basis for cross-breeding a new breed that was called in Slovakia as Improved Wallachian Sheep and the Czech Republic and in Poland they use the term ovca gorska (mountain sheep). The breed is characteristic for its temperament, resistance to cold, and good ability to walk even in a rugged terrain. The sheep perfectly resists unfavourable climate (snow storms, spring and autumn frosts). They are suitable for outdoor paddock-keeping even in rainy weather with corresponding composition of wool. They have excellent ability to adapt to rough sub-alpine and alpine conditions of the central and northern Slovakia.

General characteristics of the Native Wallachian sheep

Native Wallachian sheep is a breed that is known for its lower physical frame, confluent fleece and coarse wool with a soft underfur; from zootechnical perspective, this breed is undemanding, with good ability to walk, excellent ability to graze in less accessible and lower-quality (in terms of nutrition) grass vegetation. In the past, it was selected mainly for milk production and with partial preference for wool colour.

General identification characteristics of the breed:

A. Physical frame – smaller, lighter;

B. Wool characteristics – confluent in waves, with central division of the fleece on the animal's back, straight hair often curled at the end, the fleece comes with soft underfur;

C. The snout is dry, with softly curved nose, narrow the head is light, not overgrown with wool (wool grows only on the back of the head);

D. Ears are medium-sized to small;

E. The tail is long, fully covered in wool;

Grazing tupping rams at the salaš in Zbojská saddleback, 2017 (author: Karol Kočík)

Native valaška is known for being undemanding in terms of its farming conditions and its ability to survive even the most difficult climate conditions of the Carpathian Mountains. On the photo, we can see that the rams are calmly grazing in late autumn on pastures covered in fresh snow. Many breeders actually recommend this method of breeding as it helps to increase the animals' resistance to cold and has favourable effect in the hygiene of hoofs.

F. Legs are naked, not covered in wool, on the back of the second pair of limbs, soft curly wool cover is acceptable;

G. Frequently grown horns also in yearling ewes and adult ewes;

Young ewe of the native valaška – breeder Eva Sekerková, Terchová - Podžiar, 2017 (author: Eva Sekerková)

Note to the image: young ewes and rams of the native valaška, often with interesting colour can actually represent a very tasteful and aesthetic addition to our gardens: these animals combine cultural heritage and simplify utilisation of grassy vegetation. Moreover, lamb meat from the native valaška offers excellent taste and nutritional value.

H. Great colour diversity – indicating high genetic diversity of the breed (Kočík, 2017).

Phenotype diversity of the Native Wallachian sheep

Phenotype is a general condition, an external demonstration of utility and other characteristics of the animal. Phenotype has two components, one of them is genotype, i.e. what the animal inherits; or we could also say that phenotype is an external demonstration of the animal's genotype. The second component is how the environment where the individual lives and develops influences the animal. The environment influences the individual through the external factors (e.g. light, darkness, nutrition etc.) and internal factors (e.g. metabolism,

Detail of a grazing tupping ram (murgaš) in a later autumn season – at salaš Zbojská, 2017 (author: Karol Kočík)

hormonal activity etc.). We could conclude that phenotype is a product of influence of the genotype and the organism's external environment (Višňovský, Malík, 1995).

Also, in Wallachian sheep, we recognise phenotype diversity that was analysed by Kočík (2017) which states three basic groups of attributes respected in Wallachian sheep across the whole territory:

A photo of auction market of rams with a beautiful spotted murga-type of tupping ram – Bludovice, 2017 (author: Karol Kočík)

Revitalisation of Wallachian sheep breed is successful also thanks to the cooperation of breeders from Slovakia and the Czech Republic, where particularly in Morava (the region of Valašsko) and Silesia, where these sheep were traditionally bred in the past. Today, many of the animals bred in these regions for mating offer a valuable genetic material to refresh the gene pool and further breeding, such as this tupping ram that today lives in Slovakia in the Podpoľanie region (Hriňová).

a. colour of the sheep:

b. character of the horns

c. specificity of ear shape (as an auxiliary attribute)

The history and the process of revitalisation of the primigenius form of valaška (the Native Wallachian sheep)

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, the process of improving

Wallachian sheep on the Ponice meadows – Ponická Lehôtka, 2017
(author: Ivan Pavlík)

Today, Wallachian sheep are an integral part of the Slovak natural scenery in the alpine and sub-alpine areas and the sheep husbandry in Ponická Lehôtka (the owner: Vladimír Magna) is a proof of the above as it belongs to the most interesting farms and serves as a role model for many supporters of this sheep breed.

of Wallachian sheep was initiated, concluded in 1982 with official acknowledgement of the Improved Wallachian Sheep as a specific breed in Slovakia. In this breeding process, gradually the native form of valaška started to disappear and perhaps the very first targeted attempt for preservation of the native valaška and its gene pool was conducted by Doc. Ing. Bora Čumlivski, Csc. by purchasing several animals of the breed in Biely

Tupping ram of native valaška – Rožnov pod Radhoštem, 2015
(author: Karol Kočík)

Note to the image: we are often used to automatically attributing white sheep with black head to the tsigaja breed. But such animals also occur among valaška sheep. When determining the breed, we also need to consider other specifics that characterise this breed not only the wool colour.

Potok near Ružomberok and concentrating them in his own breeding facility in Prague. Unfortunately, this population was destroyed by wolves in 1955. Another population of valaška sheep is currently in the breeding facility of Valašské Musuem v Přírodě, in Rožnov pod Radhoštem. In the 1980s, a group of Wallachian sheep was exported to Germany under the program Pro Specie Rara. This population is still preserved there, and the husbandry of its native form is gradually spreading there. In 2004, an exchange if individual animals took place

Black valaška sheep in the paddock near the Koliba u dobrého pastiera (The Good Shepherd's Cabin) – Čutkovská dolina, 2018 (author: Karol Kočík)

As the ancient breed of Wallachian Sheep is today perceived as not productive enough, the importance of its breeding lies rather in the perspective of protection of natural and cultural heritage. It is a precious situation when it can be presented to the public, just like at the photo from the leisure time facility called Koliba u dobrého pastiera in the Čutkovská dolina valley close to the Lower Liptov village of Černová.

with subsequent reintroduction of 20 ewes and 6 rams from the German population of valaška in order to expand the domestic base of the breed. In Slovakia, the Club of Breeders of the Native Wallachian sheep (KCHVO), was established in 1992 which focused on searching for animals with phenotype most corresponding to the native valaška in the flocks of the improved valaška. This club is located in Ružomberok. The situation is currently improving and the interest of owners in

Black tupping ram – the salaš at Zbojská, 2018 (author: Karol Kočík)

At a certain period of valaška sheep breeding there seemed to prevail the preference for animals with white wool as processing of such wool was simpler from the perspective of further colouring. The positive aspect of the breed' revitalisation is the fact that the share of sheep with other than white colour is increasing and approaches the situation at the end of the 19th century when black or grey sheep often accounted for almost one half of the flock.

breeding valaška is rising, which is mainly the credit of the Association of Sheep and Goat Breeders in Slovakia. In the cooperative of Liptovské hole, Kvačany, on 22 June 2011 on the occasion of tupping ram purchase fair, the Club of Breeders of the Native Wallachian sheep (KCHPV) was established. Association of Sheep and Goat Breeders (ZCHOK) registers an increase in the number of ewes of this particular breed as well as applications of other breeders who would like to breed this particular sheep. Breeders of the ZCHOK participate in strict selection of animals based on the exterior criteria (in compliance with the breed standards). The animals are selected mainly from the breeds of the improved valaška, among breeders who show interest in this cooperation. Let us hope that the steps made by the ZCHOK in cooperation with KCHPV to save the valaška breed are correct and will lead to further increase in the number of the breed and final preservation and revitalisation of our native breed of sheep. The perspective of breeding of the native valaška sheep in Slovakia

The possible prospects of breeding the valaška sheep in the Czech Republic was analysed by Milerski (2014) while in Slovakia Kočík (2016) presented a simplified concept of possible multi-purpose husbandry of valaška sheep in his lecture at the KCHPV session in Ponická Lehôtka. At the theoretical level, these are the purposes and advantages brought by breeding of the native valaška sheep:

1. Renewal of the gene pool of the native sheep;

2. Natural revitalisation of the landscape affected by succession processes;

3. The possibility of efficient use of durable grass vegetation rich in multiple species – as a form of rational protection of the environment in the territories under State Nature Protection;

4. Renewal and protection of natural and cultural heritage of the sub-alpine and alpine regions of Slovakia;

5. Increasing of the potential for rural tourism;

6. Production of high-quality lamb meat;

7. Production of high-quality sheep cheese and other upland sheep farm dairy products.

Wallachian sheep while receiving additional fodder in autumn – Čutkovská dolina, 2018 (author: Karol Kočík)

Oh, my sheep cornuted looking at the upland pasture, and from the upland pasture down to the valley to see if there's any greenery. Wallachian sheep would often inspire our ancestors to compose popular folklore songs or poems. Sheep husbandry is today often associated with resurrection of the ancient and long-forgotten Wallachian traditions. Still, it applies that our popular folk traditions will only live as long as valaška sheep are grazing on our pastures.

The benefits can be basically classified int three pillars:

a) ecologically-environmental (protection of biodiversity, protection of gene pool, optimisation of biotopes of semi-natural grassy vegetation);

b) natural-cultural (renewal of the cultural context of the subalpine and alpine regions of Slovakia, support of traditional crafts and products in the region)

c) production-oriented (production of milk and quality dairy products, production of quality lamb).

The breeding potential of the native valaška sheep offers significant possibilities also for development of multi-functional farming and animal husbandry also in the marginal agricultural areas of Slovakia.

Young tupping ram (okaliak) grazing at the borderland between Morava and Slovakia, at the location called Grúň, 2018 (author: Ľubomír Jančura)

Note to the image: with respect to its modest needs, Wallachian sheep is also suitable for small-scale husbandry in sub-alpine and alpine regions. With their physique, they truly help to shape the aesthetics of the landscape scenery.

A small flock of Wallachian sheep in winter feeding season, the location called Nýdek, 2015 (author: Karol Kočík)

Winter feeding season is often one of the most demanding parts of the sheep farming year, mainly for smaller-scale breeders (up to 20 sheep). Thanks to their sturdiness and resilient character of wool, Wallachian sheep are able to withstand extreme outdoor conditions even at low temperatures and stronger layers of snow. Naturally, in such conditions the missing volume of food needs to be replaced by dry fodder (hay), although they are able to find some grazing under the snow as well. We know of some cases from the past, when valaška sheep wintered in very unhostile conditions, which is also indirectly proven by the words of this popular folklore song: "...where did you stay my dear Johnny – on the upland meadow, on the mountain my dear famer, and what would you do there my dear Johnny – I wintered my sheep my dear famer, and what did you give them to eat, my dear Johnny – spruce tree branches my dear famer, and what did you given them for drink, my dear Johnny – melted snow water, my dear famer, and how did you get out of there through that snow, my dear Johnny – I waited until the snows melt my dear famer..". All of this was made possible thanks to our valaška sheep.

Wallachian Sheep during milking – Malá Fatra -Terchová, photo J. Podolák 1963, source: AFn ÚESA SAV

In the old upland sheep farms (salaš) in higher altitudes of Slovakia, valaška sheep used to be bred for centuries as they were known for their good ability to walk large distances, having smaller physical frame, coarse wool and phenotype diversity. On Fig. 1. in a paddock full of valaška sheep, we can see that many of them have typical horns (also called kornuty) and the flocks frequently features spotted sheep (called bakeš or murga) as well as grey and black animals (lajka, lyska etc.).

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Meadows and Pastures – Our Cultural and Natural Heritage

RNDr. Anna Dobošová

Meadows and Pastures – Our Cultural and Natural Heritage

Introduction

Colourful grassy uplands in full bloom, the alpine and sub-alpine meadows and pastures emphasise the pleasing aesthetic experience from beautiful mountain vistas and landscape sceneries around the Kriváň-section of the Fatra and the neighbouring territories of Kysuce and Zázrivá. And although we certainly like to look at a meadow entirely filled with dandelions in bloom, we simultaneously perceive very differently a colourful meadow full of various flowers and grasses. It was expressed plainly and clearly by one of the locals in a conversation while waiting for the bus: "When I went with my daughter to pick some flowers for a full bunch, we only picked two pieces of each flower species". A simple and plain explanation of the concept that we like to label as 'biodiversity'.

How did the meadows and pastures originate?

Before being settled by humans, the land was not fully covered by the forest. Even in the periods of the most extensive forestation of the Earth, on some extreme positions, there were some non-forested surfaces – e.g. steep slopes with thin layer of soil, avalanche furrows and their endings, snow fields etc. Also, large herds of herbivores contributed to sustaining

of some deforested areas. These surfaces were the source of plants that are shaping today's meadows and pastures. After human settlement of the areas, the original forests were felled and instead of them, there appeared extensive agriculture areas around the settlements and villages. Terrace-shaped slopes with meadows and little fields were quite typical for the area in focus of this paper. The terraces were interchangeably cultured as fields or mowed meadows, often grazed by the respective pieces of livestock after mowing. Pastures were originating on less fertile lands as well as in mountain and alpine altitudes. Meadows and pastures are therefore a result of interaction of the nature and humans. People have been influencing the nature in harmony with natural factors for many centuries. This all resulted in a mosaic of forests, bushes, wetlands and non-forested communities (phytocoenoses) known under the professional term permanent grassy vegetation.

Natural conditions:

From the geomorphological perspective, the territory analysed in this text belongs to Malá Fatra, and its sub-section of Krivánska Fatra and the adjacent parts of the Kysucké vrchy mountain range. Along with the northern foothills of the Fatra, there is Varínske Podolie that forms a sub-section of the Žilina basin. It gets narrower from Varín to Terchová. Its northern border goes along the mountain sides and the ridge of Oravská Magura.

Krivánska Fatra itself is typical for diverse, rapidly variating geological bedrock. It comprises dolomites and limestone of various origin and qualities, and acidophile rocks such as gran-

ite, quartzite, and marlites. It is the westernmost truly high mountain range of the Carpathians exposed to the northern winds. Kysucké vrchy are a part of a flysch belt comprising clay and sandstone with a significantly thin chain of the klippen belt going along the whole territory. This variable relief also leads to different microclimate conditions. Oravská Magura is another flysch mountain range influenced by a colder and more humid climate.

Old documents, photos and paintings bear witness that everywhere in the wider neighbourhood of the settlements, on the ridges, on the less steep slopes or saddlebacks, there were terrace fields, meadows and pastures. There was an effort for maximum agricultural leverage of the lands. The landscape retained this image to an extent also after the WWII, although the remains of the small terraces covered with older trees and the juniper bushes in the forests bear testimony of being reforested further deep in the past. During the process of agricultural collectivisation there occurred changes that continued until the 1980s. In this period, large-scale agriculture had the major impact on vegetation, when the divides between the fields and terraces on the less-steep slopes were eliminated, the wetlands were dried and instead, larger intensively-cultured surfaces originated. On the other hand, the steeper slopes, more distant lands, and permanently wet areas were inconvenient for this type of agriculture and therefore remained unused. Already at the beginning of this millennium, we witness a gradual loss of interest in agricultural farming in general. The number of farmed livestock is on the decline, the area of cultured land is shrinking. Tracts of arable land are sewn with grasses. This monotonous grassy vegetation is found close to settlements, is easily accessible and can be

cultured by large mechanisms. Farmers (both small and large) therefore prefer them for production of hay as well as grazing of the existing herds. These fields are less important in terms of keeping of diversity of plants (but also various insect, small rodents and other animals and microorganisms). Surfaces with more diverse and valuable flowering vegetation are gradually disappearing, they are covered in bushes and forest or are intentionally reforested. Their decline in recent years can be labelled as alarming, even though we were warning about the danger more than 20 years ago.

Classification of meadows and pastures:

Meadows and pastures represent a diverse range of plant communities whose character depends on the natural conditions, period of origination and the method of farming.

Thermophilic and xerophilic grassy vegetation:

In the southern part of the concerned territory, there are the remains of thermophilic and xerophilic communities spreading from the Žilina basin to the foothills of Mala Fatra, Varínske podolie valley and along the klippen belt of the mountains. There are only the remains of these communities on the steeper slopes, maintained thanks to the sheep grazing. Only small part is irregularly mowed. Also, the area of these remains is on the decline. As a result of termination of grazing, they are gradually grown by timber species or are intentionally forested. These

biotopes can still be saved by renewal and continued farming.

As an example of preservation of these biotopes, we can mention Borová in the municipality of Dolná Tižina. The major vegetational grasses include heath false brome (Brachypodium pinnatum), quaking-grass (Briza media), furrowed fescue (Festuca rupicola), Balkans moor grass (Sesleria albicans), and other species also feature, e.g. cream scabious (Scabiosa ochroleuca), glossy scabious (Scabiosa lucida), dwarf thistle (Cirsium acaule), carline thistle (Carlina acaulis), blue sedge (Carex flacca), horseshoe vetch, (Hippocrepis comosa), squincywort (Asperula cynanchica), St Bernard's-lily (Anthericum ramosum), shirley blue (Veronica teucrium), field cow-wheat (Melampyrum arvense). The value of this particular location is further increased by prevalence of local orchids, from the Orchidaceae family. Among the xerophilic, there are military orchid (Orchis militaris) and greater butterfly-orchid (Platanthera chlorantha). We also register smaller populations of valuable burnt orchid (Orchis ustulata) and white adder's mouth (Malaxis monophyllos).

These biotopes and species have been preserved also thanks to sheep grazing. As a result of unsuitable location of sheep shelters and sheep-folds and the subsequent spreading of weeds, the surface area of these valuable pastures is shrinking, and their quality is also on the decline. Pastures require care, the areas infested by weed need to be cleaned and renewed before the weeds spread seeds, sections that were not grazed need to be mowed and self-seeding timber vegetation needs to be felled. Further damage is caused by motorbike riders riding across the pastures.

Mesophilic meadows and pastures

Sub-alpine meadows and pastures, grazed meadows:

Towards the north, mesophilic vegetation (plants preferring more humid environment) is spreading, such as false oat-grass (Arrhenatherum elatius), orchard grass (Dactylis glomerata), yellow oat grass (Trisetum flavescens), sweet vernal grass (Anthoxanthum odoratum) etc. In spring, these meadows are brightened up with flower clusters of early-purple orchid (Orchis mascula) and the pink fragrant orchid (Gymnadenia conopsea). Furthermore, towards the north, there increasing-

Burnt orchid, a valuable species of orchid found in Dolná Tižina, Borova, photo by Anna Dobošová

ly prevails spring gentian (Gentiana verna). In summer, these meadows are diversified by Turkish marsh gladiolus (Gladiolus imbricatus), dropwort (Filipendula vulgaris) and rich populations of other species of the genus Orchis. In Zázrivá, we can find the attractive orange lily (Lilium bulbiferum). Another species present here is protected Campanula serrata, which favours meadows and pastures on terraces. This type of meadows is usually mowed irregularly, and they are often grazed after mowing. They belong to the most beautiful and most diverse ones. The most valuable ones are located in Zázrivá (e.g. Biela), around Belá and Terchová (Huličiarovci, Štefanová, Mažgutov-

Subalpine meadow in Terchová, location u Huličiarovcov, endangered by construction, photo by Anna Dobošová

Mowed subalpine meadows in Zázrivá –Biela, photo by Anna Dobošová

ci), in Lutiše and elsewhere. Unfortunately, large part of them is now deserted. Mulching that should replace farming is not suitable for them. There is also a bad habit of burning them off, which leads to development of a layer of dry remains, which decomposes resulting in accumulation of Nitrogen which is fatal for species with lower ability to compete. Aggressive grasses start to prevail and conditions for timber vegetation are being created. Sadly, in the most beautiful and valuable plant communities, buildings are erected, quite often of recreational character. The location and the construction process itself are often insensitive towards environment, ignoring the character of the landscape as well as the natural riches and values.

Wetland, a part of the pasture in Zázrivá–Biela, photo by Anna Dobošová

Hydrophilic meadows and wetlands

Hydrophilic meadows represent a mosaic with other biotopes in locations with a higher level of underground water. Hydrophilic species, such as pink-blooming plume thistle (Cirsium rivulare) purple loosestrife (Lythrum salicaria), the interesting cabbage thistle (Cirsium oleraceum), wild mint (Mentha longifolia) blooming in blue meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria) etc. create colourful impressions at these locations. Where the underground water is close to the surface, there appear moors, springs and brown sedge vegetation. In the past, they used to be farmed just like the surrounding meadows and pastures, what preconditioned their current character. Typical plants

are white broad-leaved cotton-grass and common cotton grass (Eriophorum latifolium and angustifolium), that are visible from far away. In spring, we shall be intrigued by red-coloured western marsh-orchid (Dactylorhiza majalis), later on also dark-pink marsh fragrant-orchid (Gymnadenia densiflora), attractive marsh lousewort (Pedicularis palustris), small carnivorous plant with blue flowers - common butterwort (Pinguicula vulgaris). In these locations, we can find marsh helleborine (Epipactis palustris), one of the most beautiful orchids found in Slovakia. The importance of wetlands as a water-retaining element of the landscape is increasing particularly in the current context of rising temperatures and frequent droughts.

Matt-grass vegetation

These are pastures on the bedrock with less abundant nutrients and leached soils. Matt grass vegetation in Zázrivá is specific for featuring orchards with alpine elements, must beautifully developed in the location of Paseky. The main grass is moor mat grass (Nardus stricta), common bent (Agrostis capillaris), heath grass (Danthonia decumbens), pale sedge (Carex pallescens), alpine meadow-grass (Poa alpina) etc. One of the most precious species linked to these biotopes in the foothills is Carpathian gentian (Gentianella lutescens ssp. carpatica). They are very sensitive to intensive farming with increased supply of nitrogen as well as resignation to pasturing. In this case, the meadows are gradually grown over or transformed to different types of communities. Wood vegetation is spreading as well as high-stem plants or possibly blueberry prevail. We shall find them also on the ridges of Oravska Magura and in top altitudes of Mala Fatra. A major dominant plant of late

A hydrophilic meadow with s brook thistle, photo by Anna Dobošová

summer on the upland pastures is willow gentian (Gentiana asclepiadea), greater wood-rush (Luzula sylvatica) is another eye-catching plant with broad leaves.

Alpine meadows

Located in higher altitudes and on the ridge of Mala Fatra. They originated after deforestation, were used for mowing but also grazing and mainly in the locations above the upper limit of the forest. They typically occur in deep soil, in winter they are covered by a thick layer of snow. Relatively large surfac-

es can be found on the ridges of Krivánska Fatra. They are typical for broad-leaved grasses of the genus Alchemilla, such as blue-velvet woodland geranium (Geranium sylvaticum), yellow-coloured northern hawk's-beard (Crepis mollis), pink-coloured common bistort (Bistorta major), among grasses, yellow oat grass (Trisetum flavescens), tufted hairgrass (Deschampsia cespitosa), sweet vernal grass (Anthoxanthum alpinum) etc. In spring, in Zázrivá and on the location known as Dubovské lúky there blooms globeflower (Trollius altissimus), and we can also find here alpine snowbells (Soldanella carpatica). One part of these meadows is grazed by livestock every year. The rest is, unfortunately, grown over by timber vegetation and is gradually changing into forest. Model case of alpine meadows with a high level of plant diversity can be found in the location known as Medziholie, which has been used as a pasture until this day. However, compared to the past when sheep would graze here, now it is used for grazing of young cows. For the farmer using Medziholie, grazing of sheep in this location is not interesting.

Grassy uplands

The belt of grassy uplands in Mala Fatra is a characteristic and significant landscape-forming element of this mountain range. If the grassy uplands are preserved, the hope of survival for a large number of endangered plants species and precious communities will be increased. Malá Fatra is the westernmost high mountain range of the Carpathians and is exposed to the northern winds which led to prevalence of sub-alpine plants and communities in a relatively low altitude. The grassy uplands originated in the 16th century by clearing of the scrub-

Matt grass vegetation with a willow gentian under Koniarky,
photo by Anna Dobošová

pine vegetation and reducing of the upper limit of the forest. One part of the deforested locations was taken by non-forest subalpine communities that have extended from their original locations – steep rocky slopes, avalanche furrows and their endings, hill wash residues, meadows in the pine-scrub retained by the wild deer, locations with extreme temperature, snow and climate conditions.

The plants were spreading into this environment after deforestation and the result are the alpine meadows offering a diverse look as early as in spring. The first plats to show up are true oxlips (Primula elatior) and violet Carpathian snowbells (Soldanella carpatica). They are followed by blue Clusius and spring

Matt grass vegetation with Carpathian gentian, Zázrivá – Paseky, photo by Anna Dobošová

gentians (Gentiana clusii and Gentiana verna). Afterwards, it is the time for the low-rising shrub of eight petal mountain-avens (Dryas octopetala) creating genuine white carpets. This represents a glacial relict - a remnant from the most recent ice age and it is a part of the northern tundra until this day. Another attractive plant is narcissus anemone (Anemone narcissiflora). We observe blooming Carpathian glossy pink (Dianthus nitidus) that are found inly in western Carpathians (i.e. an endemic species) and a number of other colourful flowers and grasses significant also from the perspective of nature protection. In most recent decades, changes have been observed as a result of the human factor's impact on the direct utilisation of the grassy

Alpine meadows under the Veľký Kriváň, photo by Anna Dobošová

uplands, which is a result of the changes of social order, ownership relations and economic situation. The reduction in the surface area of this significant landscape-forming element has been influenced by termination of grazing, advance of succession, planting and subsequent spreading of scrub-pine. They are also substantially endangered by erosion as a result of excessive tourism and poor discipline of visitors. The pressure on recreational utilisation of the land (including during the winter season) is increasing, which has destructive consequences. At the moment, the grassy uplands only survive thanks to extreme alpine conditions. We can envision saving the selected locations and areas by clearing of the scrub-pine and grazing of sustainable number of sheep.

An alpine meadow under Hromové photo by Anna Dobošová

Why preservation of meadows and pastures actually makes sense?

Along with the productive role that is obvious, we offer a list of other functions performed by grassy vegetation.

1. These plant communities represent our cultural heritage. They were created by our ancestors who have maintained them for centuries. It should be our effort to keep them and preserve them as they are a genuine part of our history.

Grassy uplands with a Turk's cap lily on Hromové, photo by Anna Dobošová

2. Meadows and pastures reflect the history of our nature – according to prevalence of some species, we can deduce the development of natural conditions in the past – relict species are a typical example, as they have survived in this area since the Tertiary era or the glacial periods. Other species are an evidence of the periods of warmth and draughts in different eras and yet other ones prove the damp and cold eras. Farming has also contributed to spreading of the species and their survival as witness to the nature's past.

3. They serve as indicators of the environmental characteristics and qualities. According to the composition of species at

A view of the grassy uplands of Kriváns ka Fatra and the adjacent Kysucké vrchy, photo by Anna Dobošová

a particular location, we can estimate presence of underground water under the surface, predict which surfaces are prone to landslides, what bedrock is underneath, and which areas were ploughed in the past.

4. Subalpine and alpine meadows and pastures as well as the grassy uplands are a characteristic and significant landscape-forming element. The grassy uplands and the picturesque country in the valleys, basins and foothills have their major share on the overall attractiveness of the territory for recreational activities.

5. They have great significance as a source of gene pool. Only few original regularly-mowed meadows have been preserved. Large-surface vegetation is farmed whose value in terms of biodiversity is low. In areas where turf hasn't been torn-out drastically together with the surface layer of soil and there are adjacent smaller flower locations with traditional farming continued, the diverse species composition gets gradually renewed.

6. They possess a high level of water-retention ability and favourable impact on a territory's water management and regime.

7. They have significant influence in terms of nature protection. It is exactly here where rare and endangered species of plants and animals survive. Many of the are relics (remnants of the distant past), others are West Carpathian endemic species (living only in this region). Their preservation increases the hope for survival of a number of endangered animal and plant species as well as valuable communities in the current era of macroclimate changes and global impact of humans on nature. The above territory comprises 60 protected species of plants and 16 protected biotopes pursuant to Slovak as well as EU legislation.

8. Few people realise that the transformation of grassy communities to bushes, scrub and forest creates shelter and conditions for spreading of deer including large predators. The landscape is getting less accessible for humans.

Glacial relic of eight-petal mountain-avens, photo by Anna Dobošová

Conclusion:

At present, only one part of the population is able to live off farming, agriculture is generally just an additional activity to provide additional source of income. For larger agricultural subjects, the most precious (grassy) meadows and uplands are largely unattractive. It cannot be expected that the population will return to the traditional forms of farming (with the exception of activities associated with growth of tourism). It is, however, possible to copy these forms of agriculture such as

A picturesque mosaic of the landscape around Zázrivá – Biela,
photo by Anna Dobošová

using small mechanisms in the more demanding conditions, when processing milk at traditional upland sheep farms and shelters (salaš) where hygienic procedures must be complied with, milking and cheese making facilities are required too. Although the work of sheep shepherds or farmers in general is very demanding, with the exception of upland sections, most meadows and pastures are accessible through roads and thanks to vehicles capable of driving in rugged terrain. It is, however, regretful that there are increasingly fewer people who are willing to work on preserving and developing our natural values. Work in agriculture has seasonal character, workers are often separated from their families, have to put up with unfavourable

A view of the landscape affected by an intensive construction activity on the former terrace fields in Terchova, photo by Anna Dobošová

climate conditions which may be regarded as a disadvantage. Still, how does this differ from a job away from home in, say, civil engineering and construction? We can perhaps conclude that the difference would be the financial remuneration, social respect and willingness to spend time in nature. We only have to believe that young people will find motivation to take up this career, they will realise its impact on saving of natural values and on preservation of the results of the work of numerous generations of our ancestors.

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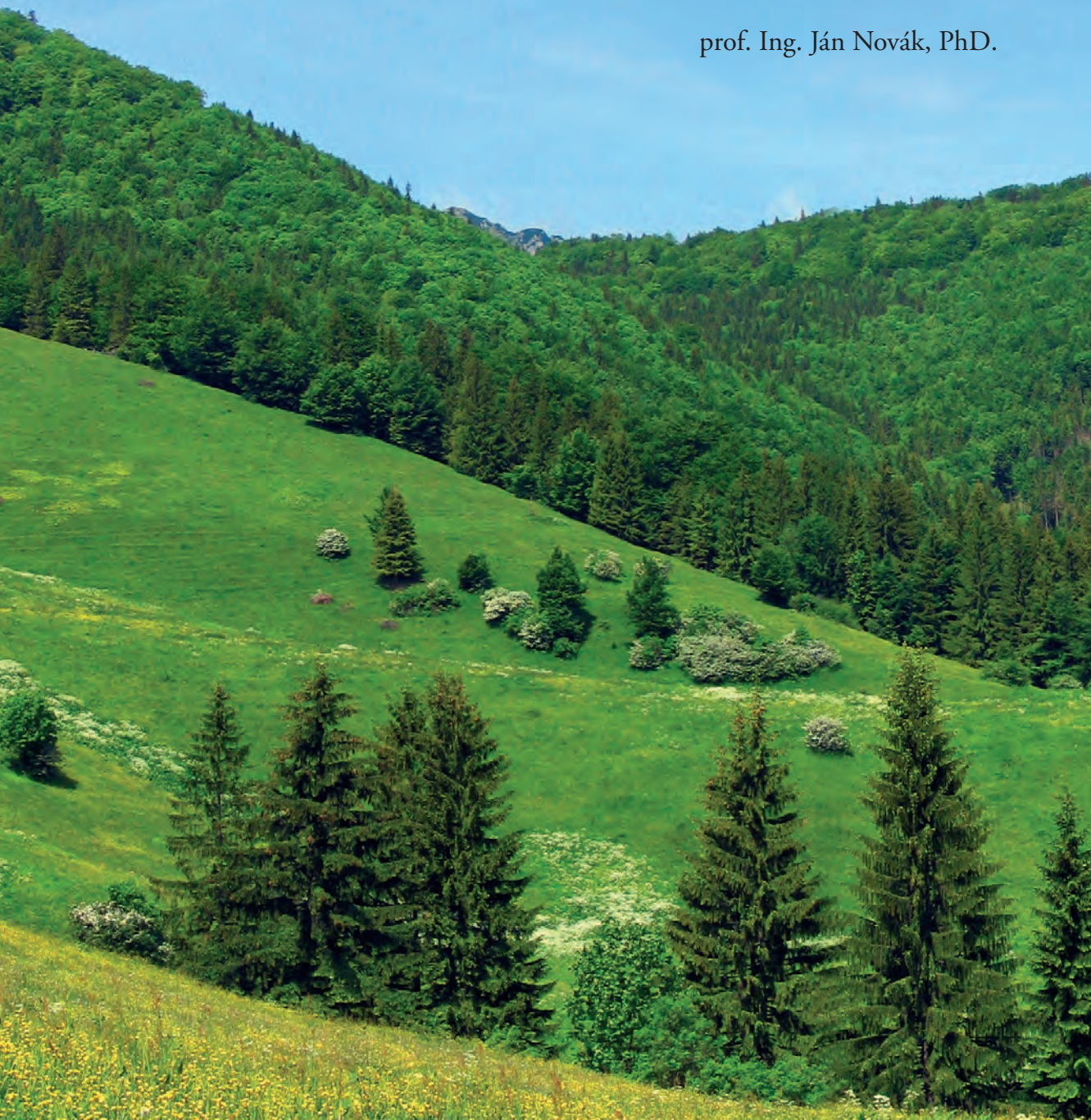
Research in the Malá Fatra National Park – the Strungový príslop Saddleback (1 150 m)

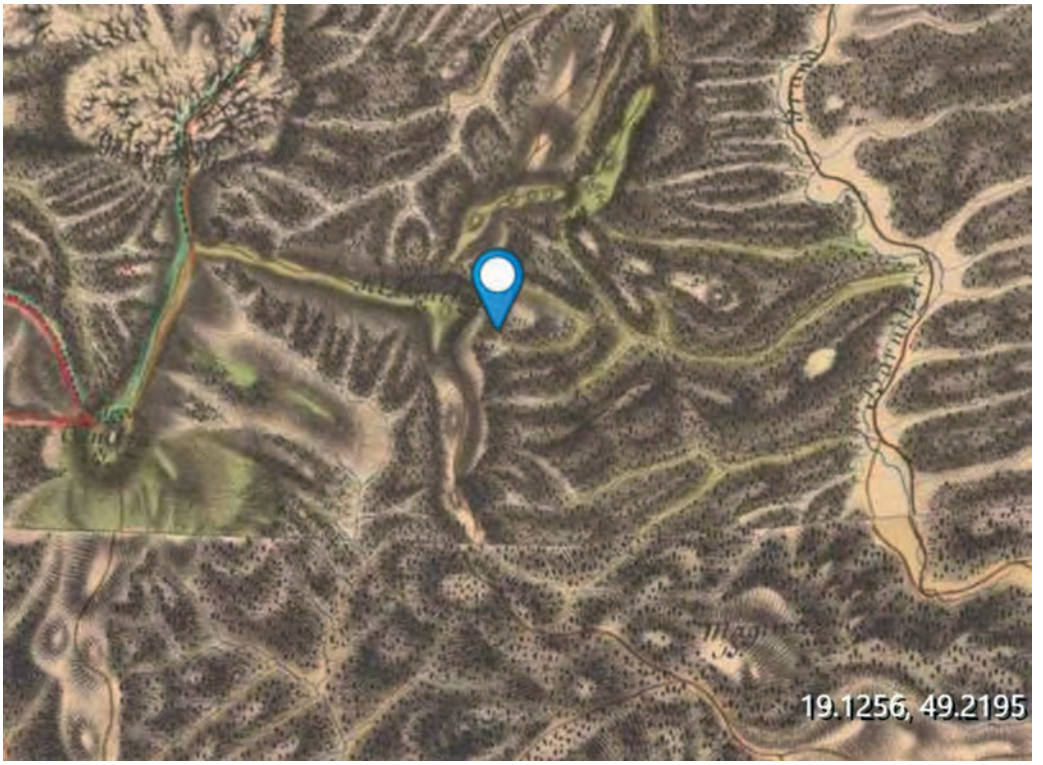
prof. Ing. Ján Novák, PhD.



Research in the Malá Fatra National Park – the Strungový príslop Saddleback (1 150 m)

In 2003 to 2011, research was conducted in the former mountain sheep farms (salaš) in the National Parks of Malá Fatra, Veľká Fatra and the National Park of Low Tatras. As the leader of all the individual projects funded by VEGA agency, namely project no.1/0591/03 "Local degradation and ruderalisation of used semi-natural pastural vegetation and its influence on biodiversity in the silvopastoral landscape of national parks and protected natural areas" (2003 – 2005), no. 1/3453/06 "Revitalisation of ruderalised areas of pastures with dominant Rumex obtusifolius and Urtica dioica in the national parks of Slovakia" (2006 – 2008) and no. 1/0851/10 "Biodiversity, synanthropisation, ruderalisation and deforestation of grazed secondary grassy uplands and their influence on the shaping of landscape in national parks of western Carpathians" (2009 – 2011) with the collective of co-operators from the Slovak Agricultural University in Nitra, we have conducted research also on the former mountain sheep farm (salaš) Strungový príslop, which is located in the Krivánska Mala Fatra National Park. Strungový príslop saddleback can be accessed along the blue-colour hiking path via the longer route from Párnica or a shorter route along the yellow-colour hiking path from Lučivná, which both lead thorugh the Strungový príslop saddleback to the top of the Osnica mountain (1363 m), and through the Medziholie saddleback to Veľký Rozsutec (1610 m) and other mountain tops. The presence of sheep

1: The view on a part of Krivánska Malá Fatra National Park with the experimental plot of land Strungový príslop, source: VKÚ Harmanec



2: Strungový príslop on the historical map from 1763 – 1787 (URL 1)

and mountain sheep farms in this area is also proven in tourist maps by mountain sheep farming-related toponyms – the geographical names of mountain tops (Novák, 2018), e.g. Žiar (750 m n. m.), Čierťaž (849 m n. m.), Kykulka (821 m n. m.), Kykula (919 m n. m.) and Magurka (1008 m n. m.) and other names **(fig. 1)**.

On the historical map from 1763 – 1787 (URL 1), we can see the paths near the researched area which are located from both sides of the mountain top of Magura, as a typical salaš-related toponym found across the whole of Carpathians **(fig. 2)** and are an evidence of intensive mountain sheep farming in the past. The pasturing areas in long-term use (there is an as-

3: Overall view of the Strungový príslop location (1 150 m) with the cabin and the mountain top of Osnica in the background (1 363 m), photo by Ján Novák (2003)

sumption that it may have been used for several centuries) for grazing of sheep and livestock can be regarded as an archetype (Hreško, Petluš, 2015) typical in the regions with Carpathian-type of mountain sheep farming (salaš-farming).

The researched area on the pasture (former mountain sheep farm) in the National Park Malá Fatra is a part of the West Carpathians and is located in the altitude of 1 150 m. **(fig. 3)**. The coordinates are N 49° 13›, E 19° 08›, the location is exposed to north-west and its slope gradient is 15°. In terms of agro-climate classification, it belongs to the cold and predominantly cold macro-area, a very humid sub-area. Average temperature in the vegetative period (months IV. – IX.) reaches 10˚C. The temperature sum per vegetation period is 1000˚C. In 90 % of climate provision, the annual maximum air temperature is 25˚C, annual minimum air temperature falls under -18˚C, average annual precipitation is between 800 and 1000 mm and the average temperature per vegetation is 10˚C. Average number of days with snow cover (above 10 mm) is 100 to 120 (Novák, 2008).

4: The dig-in probe with the soil profile cross-section, photo by Ján Novák (2009)

The location of interest is situated between the municipalities of Párnica and Zázrivá. The main ridge and the northern face are covered by Secondary rock of the mantle series of the Krížna and Choč overlying rock (limestones, dolomites, quartz, marlaceous limestone, marlite, marlaceous shale and sandstone). Geological core of the area is composed of granitoid rock that comprises two types: granodiorite to quartz di-

orite and granodiorites to granites of the magura type. On the granitoids, there lies overlying rock from limestone and dolomite. In the less resilient rocky sections, there developed a rugged relief with characteristic cliffs, gorges, and rocky towers. Although the reserve of humous soil in the surface layers was large, its quality was very low. The humous soil content in the overall soil profile had a falling tendency with the increasing depth **(fig. 4)**. At the experimental location, limestone and dolomite limestone rich in macro-biogenic elements dominate. Therefore, the soil pH is between 6.12 and 6.18. The soil is characterised by high potassium content (in depths of 0 – 100 mm as much as 890 $mg.kg^{-1}$), which represents a fourfold excess of the indicated optimum level. This is an evidence

5: Ruderalised (weed-infested) vegetation dominated by stinging nettle and broad-leafed dock, photo by Ján Novák (2003)

of over-fertilisation of the soil by animal excrements following a long-term stay of animals at a single location **(tab. 1)**. Geological composition supports good water permeability. In terms of a wider territorial perspective, the area belongs to the Váh river basin, the water is drained from the area by the Zázrivka stream and its tributaries. Approx. 200 meters above the researched location, a spring is located. The water from the nearby stream influenced the pseudo-gleying process. Cambisoil is the resulting formed soil type, with pseudo-gley subtype with a considerably skeletal character with dominant oxidised iron.

Tab. 1: Agrochemical properties of the eutrophicated soil at the beginning of research

Depth [mm]	N_t [$g.kg^{-1}$]	P [$mg.kg^{-1}$]	K [$mg.kg^{-1}$]	Mg [$mg.kg^{-1}$]	C_{ox} [$g.kg^{-1}$]	Humus [$g.kg^{-1}$]	Ratio C: N	pH v KCl
0 – 100	4,60	107,00	**890,00**	253,75	48,50	83,61	10,55	6,18
101 – 200	4,39	90,50	**797,50**	214,50	37,50	64,65	8,54	6,12

Nt – Nitrogen, total, P – Phosphorus, K – Potassium, Mg – Magnesium, Cox – Carbon, oxidable

The extensive pastures at the former sheep farm (salaš) operated by the Párnica cooperative were used before 2003 also for loose pasturing of cows, while the animals stayed in the open unenclosed outdoor area overnight. Pasturing took place annually between 15 May and 15 October depending the sufficient water supply for the livestock. The test area had been free of any agricultural management for a long time (i.e. no mowing, grazing and treatment) located in an attractive tourism area and had an effect on reducing the aesthetic value and decreasing the quality of environment.

Eutrophicated soil at the deserted mountain farm after the previous long-term excessive fertilisation by solid and liquid

6: The enclosed experiment on Strungový príslop in the first year after establishing, photo by Ján Novák (2003)

animal excrements caused ruderalisation (excessive growth of weeds) of the grass vegetation by the ruderal species of broad-leafed dock and stinging nettle **(fig. 5)**. Every year the plants produce a large number of seeds that penetrate the soil and are a potential source of weed infestation in the following years. This vegetation has been preserved in an unchanged condition with a very low diversity of species, a high proportion of empty locations and low quality of feed. The content of nutrition in the soil had been reflected also into the proportion of nutrients (Ca + Mg) : (K and Ca + Mg) : (Na : K) in the overground phytomass that was unsuitable for animal nutrition.

The experimental location was represented by ruderal species of broad-leaved dock (30 %) and stinging nettle (15 %). Three variants

were established by applying the block-based method with random arrangement of the testing elements into three variants. Small land plots, each taking 15 m^2 were enclosed in four repetitions. Variant 1 remained free of any management and Variant 2 comprised mechanical removal of the ruderal species without sowing, mowed 2 times in the vegetational period. Variant 3 comprised mechanical removal of the ruderal species, followed by sowing of 16 autochthonous plant species (from the manual collection of seeds of the plant species growing wild in the neighbouring pasturing areas, i.e. autochthonous species) **(tab. 2)**.

Tab. 2: Sowing of seeds of autochthonous plant species in the mixed land plot

Floristic group	**Species**	**Proportion in the mixed plot**	**Sowing rate**
		[%]	**[g.m^{-1}]**
Grasses	Orchard grass	25,00	0,88
	Meadow fescue	10,00	0,53
	Timothy grass	10,00	0,26
	Common meadow-grass	10,00	0,35
	Red fescue	5,00	0,22
	Golden oat grass	5,00	0,18
Clovers/trefoils	White clover	15,00	0,39
	Red clover*	3,00	0,11
	Bird's-foot trefoil	3,00	0,06
Other herbs	Narrowleaf plantain*	2,00	0,06
	Yarrow*	2,00	0,07
	Caraway*	2,00	0,11
	Dandelion*	2,00	0,09
	Common lady's mantle*	2,00	0,05
	Wild carrot	2,00	0,04
	Self-heal	2,00	0,04
	Total	100,00	3,44

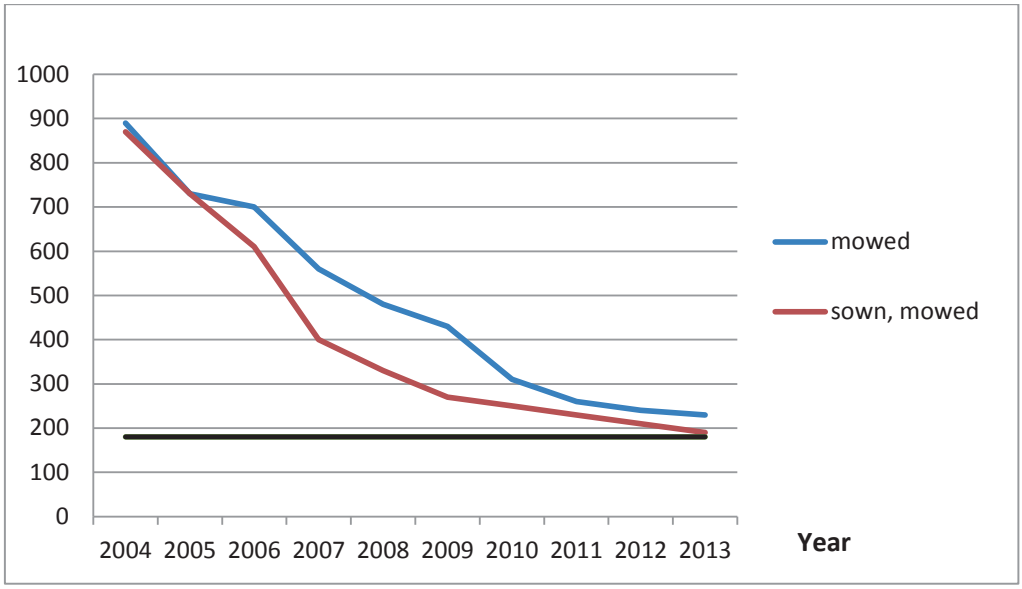
* Officinal plant

Fig. no. 6: The objective of the experiment was elimination of the excessive content of certain nutrients in the soil that contributed to the overgrowth of ruderal plant species and, simultaneously, by sowing of suitable types of grasses, clovers and other herbs, to improve the unsuitable species composition. The experimental Variant 1 without any reconstruction didn't result in any substantial changes in the soil and the floristic composition. On the Variant 2 without sowing and after mowing of the plot 2 times annually, there resulted a visible reduction in the dominant species of broad-leafed dock and stinging nettle. After their retreat, the vacated places were taken by rough bluegrass with its above-ground shoots and among clovers, particularly the white clover. The species diversity and the value quality of the feed (EGQ) by the respective years has increased only to the minimum extent. The Variant 3 with sowing of autochthonous plant species after two treatments of mowing during the vegetational period appeared to be the most advantageous alternative. Out of 16 sowed species, already after five years, timothy grass, Orchard grass, Meadow fescue, golden oat grass and the common meadow-grass with its long underground shoots. Among Leguminosae, white clover thrived significantly. The content of minerals in the over-ground phytomass was limited by the content of the nutrients in the soil. As demonstrated by table 3, representation of grasses as increased to 57 % and Leguminosae to 15 %. By sowing of the plants and herbs, the number of plant species has increased from 13 to 35 and species diversity has increased. Grass vegetation has significantly improved in quality, while the value (EGQ) has increased from 18.13 to as much as 76.38 **(tab. 3)**. By reduction of the over-ground phyto-mass by mowing during the experimental years, only after eight years, the excess nutrients were drained away from the soil

(phytoremediation), in particular the potassium content has been reduced fourfold and only in 2013 it eventually acquired an almost optimum level **(fig. 7)**. Together with its original qualitative function, the renewed grass vegetation in the attractive tourism areas of the Malá Fatra National Park has thus again started to fulfil also its landscape-forming and aesthetic purposes **(fig. 8, 9)**.

Tab. 3: Floristic groups (%), increasing the value of grass vegetation (EGQ) and the number of plant species in the respective years and on the individual experimental plot variants

Hodnoty	**Rok**									
	2004		**2005**		**2006**		**2007**		**2008**	
	1	**3**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**3**	**1**	**3**
Grasses combined (%)	10	25	18	40	20	52	25	55	31	57
Leguminosae (%)		10	+	13	+	15	+	15	+	15
Other herbs combined (%)	65	38	42	41	32	28	26	26	24	26
Vegetation coverage combined (%)	75	73	70	94	52	95	51	96	55	98
Vacant places (%)	25	28	30	6	48	5	49	4	45	2
Value (E_{GQ})	18,13	18,13	20,38	62,83	21,75	73,50	23,10	76,25	27,38	76,38
The number of plant species	13	13	13	31	14	32	15	34	15	35



7: Potassium content in variants 2 and 3 in the respective years

8: Variant 2 without sowing, mowed two times during vegetational periods, after eight years, photo by Ján Novák (2011)

9: Variant 3 with sowing, mowed two times during vegetational periods, after eight years, photo by Ján Novák (2011)

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Conclusion

The publication titled Mountain Sheep Farming under Rozsutec – the heritage of the Wallachian colonisation in Malá Fatra and Kysucká vrchovina mountain ranges brings the reader a great deal of knowledge – including existing as well as new insights – from the history of settlement of the region, traditional sheep husbandry and mountain sheep farming at salaš farms, breeding of the native sheep breed known as valaška, but also about the significance of pastures, meadows and sustainable agricultural and livestock farming of the countryside. The featured papers combine several authors of the young advancing generation with the experienced and well-respected names from the respective professions, which resulted in complication of a truly interesting book. From the introduction, the publication allows the reader to genuinely immerse into the topics such as mountain sheep farming, sheep husbandry, it literally pulls the reader into the particular analysed regions, that is, the picturesque areas of Malá Fatra or Kysucká vrchovina. The key mission of this book is to provide comprehensible explanation and introduction of basic outlines describing the immense wealth hidden under the phenomenon of traditional salaš farming and sheep husbandry, its history, cultural and natural overlaps and their context in the past as well as the present of the region in focus. With respect to the limited space for preparation of the given publication as well as the limited number of pages available, it was not possible to deliver truly exhausting and comprehensive clarification and analysis of the topic in the selected region. This required a certain selection of the particular information provided. Therefore, this publication should be perceived in the context of the effort to popularise the given subject. On the other hand, this limitation

has brought a whole range of new questions and stimuli on the table, which point out to the need for further analysis and processing of this topic in the context of Malá Fatra and Kysucká vrchovina. Perhaps it may seem that the publication is mainly an output and the conclusion of a specific project and particular activity, but after certain immersion into the theme, we do hope that it rather represents a beginning of a long-term initiative. And perhaps, the authors as well as the entity implementing the project managed at least partially to fill-in the blank spaces and, above all, to disseminate information, stimulate thinking and hopefully motivate others to get involved in further activities in documenting, preservation and saving of the local cultural and natural heritage.

On behalf of the implementation team of the
Wallachian Culture Educational Trail

Peter Madigár, Project Coordinator

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