**VALORISATION OF THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ITINERARY "THE PATHS OF TRANSHUMANCE”**

Despite the socio-cultural estrangement from which the pastoral world suffers, recollections and traditions which testify to the role and value of TRANSHUMANCE in the evolution of local culture still survive today. For centuries a slow tenacious seasonal movement of men and sheep has created a link between the mountains and the sea, Casentino and Maremma. Words, recipes, products, customs and traditions, workers and tools, knowledge and affection have traveled along with the herds. In a word, a "civilization" has been defined, that of transhumance, the fruit of exchange and cross-contamination between territories. Some brief excerpts and insights are presented on the panels displayed here in an attempt to reconstruct a picture of this millenary culture.

**THE ROUTES**

The paths of transhumance underwent variations over time as political and administrative conditions changed. In the Etruscan-Roman period and in part of the medieval period, the itineraries of the transhumant flocks followed routes that were mainly dictated by the morphological characteristics of the landscape. Thus paths traced parallel to watercourses were favored. Regarding Maremma, in the second half of the 16th century, when the new statutes of the Dogana dei Paschi instituted by the Medici government introduced customs checkpoints and the counting of sheep, some variations in the ancient routes took place. For example, on the outward journey, the shepherds of upper Casentino were obliged to make a first count and relative payment at the Calla (checkpoint) of Rignano sull'Arno, to which was added a further payment (to be paid at the end of the season) once they reached the Calla (checkpoint) of Paganico. Once customs were abolished, at the end of the 18th century, the paths multiplied to provide more convenient routes, ideally avoiding inhabited centers.

**CETICA (CASTEL SAN NICCOLO’)**

**SEASONAL TRADES**

In mountainous areas in particular, the practice of seasonal migration was widespread up until the mid-twentieth century. This was practiced as an attempt to integrate the low income which was insufficient to sustain all the members of the family. Migration was mainly motivated, as suggested by the ‘Calendario Casentinese’ for the year 1839, by "[...] the particular conditions of the provinces, which due to the hostility of the climate or the poorness of the soil do not produce enough to feed their inhabitants ". Besides the transhumant shepherds, migration from Casentino also involved other trade categories such as wood cutters, coach drivers and charcoal makers, pinottolai (collectors of pine nuts) and tosini (sheep shearers). The latter, particularly numerous in the localities of Garliano (Castel San Niccolò) and Pontenano (Talla), performed itinerant services moving from flock to flock and, during the spring season, travelling as far as Maremma.

You can learn more about this subject at the "ECOMUSEO DEL CARBONAIO DI CETICA" (Eco-museum of the charcoal maker in Cetica).

**RAGGIOLO (ORTIGNANO RAGGIOLO)**

**THE TOWN OF THE CORSICAN TRANSHUMANTS**

Transhumant sheep farming in Raggiolo has very ancient origins, linked to the cult of St. Michael. In a document dated 1316, Count Guido Novello Guidi, Lord of the town, leases the herbage of the mountain pastures of Raggiolo to some shepherds from Garliano, for sixty lire of small florins, under the same conditions with which he previously granted them to other shepherds. The importance of wool in the local economy is attested by the coat of arms of the Wool Guild of Florence on the façade of the church, once the Count's palace. The periodic presence in Maremma of the Raggiolatti (people from Raggiolo) is also at the origin of the progressive presence of Corsican immigrants in the Casentino village. The latter, hired to tend flocks in the pastures of the Grosseto area, then came up during the mountain phase of transhumance. The shepherds in the mid-sixteenth century definitely prevailed over the blacksmiths for what regarded the use of local forest resources. In the upper part of the town, closer to the pastures, along the Borgo di Masone the "Casa l'Vergaio" (The shepherds House) can still be found. You can continue to explore this topic in the "ECOMUSEO DELLA CASTAGNE E DELLA TRANSUMANZA DI RAGGIOLO"(Eco museum of the Chestnut and Transhumance in Raggiolo)

**TALLA**

**THE FIGURE OF THE SHEPHERD**

Silent, solitary, meditative, connoisseur of natural phenomena, expert in the use of herbs to cure animals. These are the stock phrases and adjectives typically used to describe the figure of the shepherd. The long hours spent in the pastures watching over the flock certainly shaped their character and conditioned their social relations. Custodians of secular knowledge passed from father to son, they also possessed notions of astronomy and meteorology: they were familiar with some constellations, they knew how to orient themselves according to the position of the sun and the moon, they could forecast wind, rain and snow. For example, they called the planet Venus "gallinella” (little hen) and, according to its position in the sky, they could tell the time at night and when to start milking (see M. Massaini, Trasumanza, 2005). To pass the time they used to make, with the skilful use of knives, various types of artifacts including sticks, essential tools for guiding the flock, whistles and rudimentary flutes. Some of these, made in collaboration with some elderly people from the town of Carda, can be viewed inside the "BIRTHPLACE OF GUIDO MONACO IN TALLA", the ancient monk to whom the invention of musical staff notation is attributed.

**CASTEL FOCOGNANO**

**SHEEP FARMING**

At the end of the eighteenth century, the Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo in his Reports on the government of Tuscany states that: "the mountains that surround Casentino are full of excellent pastures where sheep and other herds graze, who then go to Maremma in the winter together with some of the inhabitants ". In fact, for many centuries, one of the most important sources of subsistence for the population of the valley was pastoralism which, despite a low forage production, was able to develop with the practice of grazing in the "sodi" (uncultivated land) and in the local woods, and by resorting to transhumance. The type of farming practiced was wild or semi-wild: the flocks of sheep grazed in the mountains from May to September, while in October they were mostly led to winter in Maremma. According to Attilio Zuccagni Orlandini, the numbers of local livestock in the early 1930s amounted to 70,000 sheep and 4,000 goats. In the 1881 census the sheep amounted to 44,736 and goats to 2,663. In that of 1930 the numbers had decreased to 54,609 sheep and 1,083 goats (Guido Pontecorvo*, Pratomagno e Appennino Casentinese*, 1932).

You can learn more about this subject in the "DOCUMENTATION CENTER ON RURAL CULTURE OF CASTEL FOCOGNANO" which is divided into the following three sections; agricultural work, sheep farming and transhumance and wool processing.

**BADIA SANTA TRINITA IN ALPE**

**MONKS AND SHEEP FARMING**

Santa Trinita in Alpe was the first Benedictine monastery in Casentino. Founded in the Ottonian age between 950 and 961 by two German hermits, Pietro and Eriprando, it achieved wide influence and authority in the 11th and 12th centuries. In 1425, by then in decline, it was entrusted to the monks from Vallombrosa and by the end of the 17th century it was already in ruins. Since 1968, various conservative restorations have been carried out on several occasions. The site chosen to found the abbey was near the the intersection of important communication routes of Roman origin between Casentino and Valdarno, also used for the transfer of transhumant flocks. Between 1000 and 1100 the abbey grew in notoriety and fame and received numerous donations increasing its patrimony and rights which allowed for the reconstruction of the church on the site of the original structure. At that time the abbey owned several monasteries, mills, fulling mills (for making felt) and hospices for pilgrims and certainly also had pastures and flocks, the latter documented by other religious foundations such as Vallombrosa (11th century) and Camaldoli (early 12th century).

**CASETTA DI BUITE (O BUITI)**

**THE SHEPHERD'S HOUSES**

During the summer, Pratomagno was invaded by a multitude of sheep, sheep whose grazing has, incidentally, ensured that the ridge meadows have been preserved over time. We know from interviews with elderly shepherds from the village of Raggiolo, that in the early 1950s "... there were more than 5,000 grazing on the mountain from Pratomagno down to the village. The families that had the largest flocks were the Donati and the Giovannuzzi, who had up to 1500. These were the oldest families of shepherds; then came the Caproni, the Cavallai, the Chiaroni, the Luddi, the Pieraccini and the Semplici. But in the village everyone had a few sheep for family use, at least six or seven. Usually each shepherd had his own pasture: the Donati family at Pian d'Imbardi and Pian del Cipollino, the Luddi at Le Candelesi, the Giovannuzzi at Pian di Masino, Pian della Vacca, Struggineti and Le Piagge. (See A. Nocentini, Raggiolo: profilo linguistico di una communità Casentinese, 1998 ‘linguistic profile of a Casentino community’). Those who watched over the sheep were also obliged to build makeshift shelters, of which some examples still remain on both sides of the mountain. "*The transhumant shepherds have small drywall huts covered with slabs for temporary shelter and for cheese-making, located immediately below the ridge, rudimentary and blackened by fire, where they take shelter when they are caught out by storms*" (G. Pontecorvo 1932).

**FONTE DEL DUCA**

**PLACE NAMES**

Toponymy has always been a very valuable aid for the interpretation and reading of the landscape backwards in time. Place names often survive for a long time and tell us about past functions and activities. This also applies to transhumance. Just think, by way of example, of the place names that have derived from the term "calla". In the Roman period, Calles were the routes used by shepherds for seasonal travel between the mountains and the plains. Later the term came to indicate the place where the counting of the heads was usually carried out. The operation was carried out by special officers who made the sheep pass through a narrow forced passage. The count was carried out using a stick with bark on which a notch was made using a knife (Cfr. M. Massaini, Transumanza, 2005). In Pratomagno there are several localities that still bear names linked to this operation: Calle (Montemignaio); Callagnolo (Cetica, Castel San Niccolò); Calimara (Pagliericcio, Castel San Niccolò); Calleta (Castel Focognano), Calle al Prato (Raggiolo).

**POGGIO MASSERECCI**

**THE MOUNTAIN SEASON**

*The return to the mountains did not always mean a return home, the various Casentino shepherds did not have in the immediate vicinity expanses of pastures large enough to feed several tens of thousands of sheep. Especially large firms, or firms made up of sortari (shepherds with a few head of sheep who joined forces), that stayed all together even when in the mountains, needed such extensive pastures that only the Casentino side of Pratomagno and the hills of the Tuscan-Romagnolo Apennines could suffice. Therefore the shepherds, returning after the Maremma season, could only fleetingly and occasionally hug their loved ones. In these hills (...) life was not too different from that in Maremma. The daily rhythms of pastoral life were the same as those in spring, which preceded the return to the mountains. Getting up in the morning, always early, having a frugal breakfast, milking, making the cheese, leading the flock to pasture until just before lunchtime when the sheep were led back at noon. (…) After lunch the shepherds rested for a few hours before milking the sheep for the second time and then taking them back to pasture until nightfall*. During the night the sheep were placed in wooden or net fences and guarded by faithful watchdogs, usually Maremma sheepdogs. (M. Massaini, Transhumance, 2005).

**CIMA BOTTIGLIANA**

**THE JOURNEY TO MAREMMA**

It took about ten days to get from upper Casentino to the Maremma grazing areas.

Following a very specific route, every day they could cover about 15 km and at the end of the day they would stop at a farmers homestead. From these people they received hospitality, food and lodging. The hospitality was rewarded on the return trip with cheese and ricotta, as the sheep were not milked on the outward journey, in fact most were almost due to lamb.

Having crossed the Orcia river, the following saying was used: *now that in Maremma we are all gathered each for himself and God for all*. "When you first got there, you set up your hut. We got up while it was still dark, the shepherds milked the sheep, while the youngest, who was the bescino, nudged them, that is, pushed them towards the gate, which was the narrowest point of the milking stall . Then all together we made cheese and ricotta. After that each one had his own work to do and in the evening it was once again the usual story, there was milk to be milked and then cheese to be made "(See A. Nocentini, Raggiolo: profilo linguistico di una communità Casentinese, 1998- linguistic profile of a Casentino community, 1998).

**CASINA TEONI**

**MILK PRODUCTS**

Near to the houses, during the summer sojourn, milk processing was also carried out using the large copper pots that were part of the essential equipment transported when travelling with the barroccio (cart). "The cheese is made in small forms (Kg. 0.350-0.550), with animal rennet or with the "flower”[obtained from the wild artichoke plant], and sold for fresh or semi-dry consumption (15-45 days), after a short period of salting, in the "caciaia". For the families own use “raveggiolo”, which is nothing more than fresh curd, is also produced. A small part of the ricotta is sold: but most of it is consumed by the mountain folk. The "scotta", that is the whey remaining after removing the ricotta, is given to the pigs, after being used to wash the dishes. When the production of fresh or semi-dry pecorino was in excess, and in order to have a food supply for the winter, dry ("matured") pecorino is also produced though to a lesser extent, with animal rennet, and in larger forms ( approx. 2 kg) »(G. Pontecorvo*, Pratomagno e Apennino Casentinese, 1932*).

**CASINA DEL CONFORTO**

**WOOL**

In addition to dairy, another product, once much sought after, was sheeps wool. During transhumance, the shearing, usually carried out in late May, took place at the vergheria, the shepherds' farm. Professional shearers were employed for this operation, who often also came from Casentino where there were villages that had specialized teams for this job (Garliano, Pontenano, Montemignaio). After a dip into the river for a quick wash, the sheep were stripped of their fleece with scissors, whose form has remained unchanged since antiquity, and more recently, with shearing machines.

The wool of the breeds present in Casentino (mostly the Apenninica breed), was rather poor and was intended for family use or for local wool mills. It was significantly improved in the first half of the nineteenth century thanks to the introduction of merino rams from which the so-called "mestizo" or "Tuscan merine" sheep were obtained, which gave a decisive boost to the wool processing sector.

**MONTE LORI**

**SHEPHERDS DIET**

“We must say that since the late 1700s, when agricultural rotation began to include maize and potato crops for food use, sweet flour was gradually replaced by yellow (maize) flour. The potato also played a fundamental role in the diet of transhumant shepherds. In the diet of transhumant shepherds we cannot forget the famous "acqua cotta" (onion soup with numerous variations). Furthermore, the transhumance workers did not eat meat except when a sheep accidentally died and on two other special occasions: the abbacchiatura (the slaughtering of a fair number of lambs to sell the meat), and shearing. The slaughtering was an occasion for a great celebration: an exquisite dish called coratella was cooked with the innards of the lambs. A truly sublime dish is the one made with the intestines of lambs cooked in stew like tripe. During shearing, the typical meat dish was the pezzata: sheep meat cooked on the grill or in a frying pan ”(M. Massaini, Transumanza, 2005). The shepherd's breakfast was typically scottino: stale bread soaked in whey and ricotta.