

SYMBOLS AND ARCHETYPES OF THE ȚURCANĂ SHEEP BREED VARIETIES EXPLOITED IN THE BANAT MOUNTAINS

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Abstract: This paper investigates the symbols and archetypes of the Țurcană sheep breed varieties exploited in the Banat Mountains. The authors focus on the relevance of symbols and archetypes, in general, and on the relevance of symbols (main symbolic themes) and archetypes (domains) in relation to Țurcană sheep breed varieties, in particular. They also underline the relevance of both symbols and archetypes in sheep breed selection and cultural mapping.

Key words: symbol, archetype, Țurcană sheep breed variety, Banat Mountains.

INTRODUCTION

A. Symbols are relevant because they condense complex ideas, cultural meanings, and emotions into forms that can be recognizable, thus enabling communication, identity, and interpretation in time and space, and bridging between the visible and invisible and between literal and metaphorical [3,4,14].

Symbols matter because they:

- Communicate beyond words: they allow the nonverbal transmission of beliefs, instructions, and values; they convey layers of meaning instantly;

- Function in structures and systems: they are narrative devices in art and folklore, guiding archetypes and typologies; they are structural tools used to abstract, model, and simplify in mathematics, science, and semiotics (“the study of signs and symbols and their use or interpretation” – Oxford Languages);

- Have an interpretive flexibility: they are ideal for interdisciplinary synthesis, layered education, and mythological mapping; [1,9,10] they are polysemic, i.e. they can mean different things in different eras or to different people;

- Link cognitive and emotional resonance: they bypass rational filters; they evoke growth, lineage, sacrifice, or shelter;

- Promote cultural continuity and identity: [12,15,16] they express cultural worldviews; they preserve ancestral knowledge.

B. Archetypes are relevant universal patterns of behaviour, symbolism, and thought that help understand the world (including ourselves and others), shaping cultural meaning, identities, and stories in time and space [2,9,11].

Archetypes matter because they have:

- Cognitive and psychological relevance:

• They are part of the collective unconscious as primordial images such as Hero, Mother, sage, Trickster, which are recurrent in behaviour, dreams, and myths [7];

• They help navigate complex emotions and relationships, helping understand inner conflicts, motivations, and roles;

• They simplify perceptions, i.e., they are used to categorise people and situations, which reduces cognitive load;

- Cultural and narrative powers:

- They allow, in education and symbolic mapping, for layered synthesis of technical and mythic knowledge [5,6,8];
- They appear in art, folklore, literature, and religion as the Maiden, the Warrior, the Wise Man, transcending culture and time;
- They are the building blocks of storytelling, giving structure to narratives and emotional resonance to characters;
 - Practical applications:
 - They are used by companies, in branding, to shape emotional connection;
 - They help clients, in therapy, explore identity, transformation, and trauma;
 - They serve, in interdisciplinary models, as symbolic anchors for cultural atlases, typologies, and visual grammars [13].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The material used in this paper consists in articles and books (both Romanian and foreign) about symbols and archetypes, on one hand, and Țurcană sheep breed varieties, on the other hand. The research method used is bibliographical analysis.

RESEARCH RESULTS

A. Sheep have a powerful symbolic relevance that spans breed selection, folklore, mythology, and religion.

Thus, the main symbolic themes of sheep are:

- **Abundance and fertility:**
 - Sheep signify, in agrarian cultures, reproductive vitality, sustenance, and wealth;
 - Sheep flocks are metaphors for divine blessing and prosperity;
- **Community and obedience:**
 - Sheep are archetypes of docility and group cohesion, which helps explore conformity and spiritual guidance;
 - The shepherd – sheep motif reflects care, leadership, and moral direction;
- **Folkloric and mythic identity:**
 - Sheep are tied, in Balkan and Romanian folklore, to ancestral lineage, seasonal cycles, and transhumance;
 - Sheep breeds like the “Țurcană” have symbolic values: *Albă* as solar purity, *Mărcușe* as archaic grounding, and *Oacheșe* as lunar mystery;
- **Innocence and purity:**
 - The lamb symbolises, in Christianity, Jesus Christ as the “Lamb of God” embodying divine sacrifice and purity;
 - White sheep represent moral innocence in children’s stories and fairy tales;
- **Redemption and sacrifice:**
 - Sheep were sacrificial animals in Hebrew, Greek, and Dacian rituals, mediating between humans and gods;
 - Sheep’s symbolic death implies covenant, protection, and renewal.

Sheep breeds, regional folklore, and symbolic atlases are both decorative and functional epistemologies since they help:

- Encode breed traits into mythic archetypes;
- Connect morphological data (body, colour, horns, weight) to cultural narratives;

- Build typologies that resonate across disciplines.

B. Sheep have an archetypal depth due to the transformation of their biological traits into mythical roles (e.g., the Guardian, the Sacrifice, the Wanderer etc.).

Archetypes relate to sheep in the following domains:

- In breed typology and folklore, breed traits mirror archetypal roles such as (Figure 1):
 - **Țurcană Albă** = *Matron* – ancestral, luminous, nurturing;
 - **Țurcană Brează / Brezată** = *Dual Trickster* – ambiguous, fertile, transitional;
 - **Țurcană Bucălaie** = *Mountain Guardian* – protective, resilient, stoic;
 - **Țurcană Mărcușe** = *Earthbound Elder* – archaic, rooted, symbolic;
 - **Țurcană Oacheșe** = *Lunar Wanderer* – intuitive, liminal, mysterious;
- In **mythology and psychology** (Jung, 1980):
 - The **flock** = the *Citizen*, the *Everyman*, i.e., belonging, community, and obedience;
 - The **lamb** = the *Innocent*, the *Martyr*, i.e., purity, redemption, and surrender;

The **shepherd – sheep dynamic** = the *Leader*, the *Sage*, i.e., trust and vulnerability.

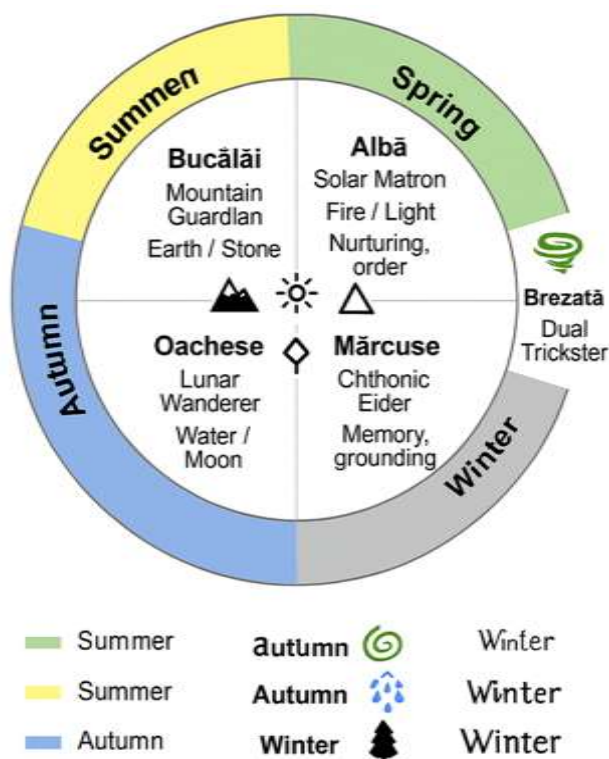


Figure 1. Symbolic and stereotypical wheel of Țurcană sheep breed varieties
 Source: own creation

CONCLUSIONS

Sheep has a modern duality consisting in comfort and charm (it evokes emotional comfort, softness, and warmth) and conformity vs. intelligence (it is an emotionally complex and intelligent animal); is a psychological archetype due to its being a symbol of the outsider or scapegoat, to its empathy and gentleness (it embodies emotional sensitivity,

intuition, and a yearning for peace), and to its naivety and vulnerability (it represents the fear of being excluded, manipulated, or weak); is interpreted artistically and spiritually as sacrifice and serenity (evoking spiritual contemplation, redemption, and the tension between vulnerability and strength) as well as spirit animals and totems (symbolizing fertility, the importance of living in harmony with others, and new beginnings); is represented in mythology (the Golden Fleece symbolizing authority, divine favour, and power) and literature (where it appears as a symbol of innocence and trust, used to explore themes of belonging, identity, and moral responsibility).

Symbolizes community and harmony (due to their strong social instincts that reflect collective effort, empathy, and unity), guidance and protection (due to the relationship between sheep and shepherd that represents divine or moral guidance, surrender, and trust), purity and innocence (due to their gentleness and harmlessness that symbolize childlike purity and vulnerability), and sacrifice and redemption (due to the fact that lambs are sacrificial symbols in Judaism and Christianity).

In breed selection and cultural mapping symbols help build visual grammars for educational atlases and typologies; connect colour varieties to seasonal or spiritual domains; encode morphological traits into mythic archetypes (e.g., spiral horns = solar vortex). Archetypes help build interdisciplinary typologies that bridge mythologies and zootechnics; create symbolic maps where sheep breeds embody narrative, seasonal, and spiritual roles; transform empirical data into cultural storytelling for conservation and education purposes.

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