

MYTHOLOGICAL TYPOLOGY OF SHEEP

VĂLUȘESCU DANIELA¹, SAUER MARIA¹, ARMAȘ ANA GINA¹,
VĂDUVA LOREDANA², PETROMAN IOAN^{1*}

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

²*University of Life Sciences “King Mihai I” from Timisoara,
Faculty of Management and Rural Tourism, Timisoara*

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

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

Key words: *mythological typology, sheep, symbol, archetype.*

INTRODUCTION

A mythological typology is a classification framework allowing the organisation of mythological elements (animals, gods, heroes, rituals) into types based on shared symbolic functions, narrative structures, or roles; a tool for comparative mythology allowing the tracing of universal patterns across diverse traditions; and a way to translate cultural memory into symbolic language bridging anthropology, folklore, and psychology [1,12,15].

Mythological typology includes [5,10,14]:

- Archetypes, i.e., universal figures like the Hero, the Mother, the Sacrifice, the Trickster, etc.;
- Narrative functions, i.e. roles such as guardian, guide, rebel, redeemer, etc.; [6]
- Ritual or seasonal alignment, i.e., mapping types to festivals, life stages, or transhumance [9,13];
- Symbolic domains, elements like Earth, Fire, Moon, Threshold, or Water.

Mythological typology matters because [2,7]: it allows for creative expansion letting one invent new archetypes or remix existing ones, [8,11] it supports interdisciplinary synthesis connecting cultural identity, folklore, and zootechnics [16,17] and it transforms empirical data into symbolic insight for breed mapping, educational storytelling, and visual atlases [3,4].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study is based on interdisciplinary bibliographic materials, including scientific articles, monographs, and ethnographic sources, focusing on the Țurcană sheep breed and its cultural representations. The research methodology is qualitative and comparative, employing typological analysis to examine the relationship between sheep morphology, symbolic archetypes, and seasonal cycles. Morphological variants of the Țurcană breed were comparatively analyzed in relation to their physical traits and associated symbolic meanings. Additionally, seasonal symbolism was interpreted through agrarian rituals and transhumance practices, allowing for an integrated understanding of sheep as mediators between human ritual and natural cycles.

RESEARCH RESULTS

According to sheep mythological typology, the symbolic roles of sheep are organised across cultures into archetypes (e.g., the Guardian, the Matron, the Sacrifice, the Trickster, the Wanderer) reflecting cultural, seasonal, and spiritual functions (Table 1 and Figure 1).

Table 1.

Main Archetypes in the Mythological Typology of Sheep

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

Source: own creation



Figure 1. Main Archetypes in the Mythological Typology of Sheep

Source: own creation

This mythological typology can be aligned with Romanian seasonal festivals and transhumance rituals, reflecting the symbolic role of sheep in cultural rhythms, ecological cycles, and spiritual transitions (Table 2).

Table 2.
Mythological typology of sheep aligned with Romanian seasonal festivals and transhumance rituals

Archetype	Seasonal role	Festival / ritual alignment	Cultural / regional context
Sacrifice (<i>Țurcană Albă</i>)	Spring awakening	<i>Junii Brașovului</i> (group of young horsemen) <i>parade, where riders herald nature's rebirth</i> – ancestral rites, purity, rebirth	Șcheii Brașovului (Brașov County)
Guardian (<i>Țurcană Bucălăi</i>)	Summer ascent	<i>Transhumance rituals where shepherds migrate with flocks to Alpine pastures</i> – mountain migration	Carpathians Banat Mountains
Wanderer (<i>Țurcană Oacheșe</i>)	Autumn ascent	<i>Cheese and plum brandy festival celebrating the return from mountains and the mystery of seasonal change</i> – liminal harvest	Rășinari (Sibiu County)
Matron (<i>Țurcană Albă</i>)	Spring fertility	<i>Sâmbra oilor</i> (engl. <i>sheep owner association</i>) <i>rustic celebration where flocks are ritually blessed</i> – fertility, flock blessing	Țara (engl. <i>land</i>) Oașului (Maramureș County)
Trickster (<i>Țurcană Brează</i>)	Seasonal threshold	<i>Paparuda</i> (engl. <i>old local divinity of fertilising rain</i>) <i>dance and ritual where ambiguity and transformation are invoked through dance and symbolic disguise</i> – ambiguity, rain invocation	Muntenia Region Oltenia Region
Elder (<i>Țurcană Mărcușe</i>)	Winter grounding	<i>Datinile de iarnă</i> (engl. <i>winter traditions</i>) <i>festival where ancestral animal symbolism, masks, and songs preserve memory and identity</i> – ancestral memory	Bucovina Region Moldova Region

Source: own creation

- This alignment allows:
- Build seasonal wheels linking breed archetypes to ritual calendars (Figure 2);
 - Create visual grammars where fleece colour, morphology, and mythic role reflect cultural timing;
 - Integrate transhumance routes with symbolic traditions (e.g., Țurcana Albă rises in spring, Țurcana Oacheșe descends in autumn).



Figure 2. Ritual calendar of mythological sheep archetypes

Source: own creation

Different cultural and mythical contexts mean different sheep symbolism:

- In astrology and zodiac, Aries (the ram) is a bold, fiery, impulsive, and sacrificial initiator;
- In Christianity, the lamb symbolizes Christ's sacrifice, divine redemption, and innocence;
- In folklore, black sheep symbolize outsiders / seers, and white sheep symbolize communal harmony;
- In Greek mythology, the Golden Fleece represents divine favour, kingship, and quest;
- In Norse paganism, sheep were considered boundary animals mediating between worlds.

As for the Țurcană sheep breed, its varieties symbolise the following:

- Țurcana Albă → the Solar Matron, i.e., nurturing, purity, spring rites;
- Țurcana Brează → the Dual Trickster, i.e., ambiguity, fertility, seasonal thresholds;
- Țurcana Bucălăi → the Mountain Guardian, i.e., protection, resilience, summer strength;
- Țurcana Mărcușe → the Chthonic ("relating to or inhabiting the underworld" – Oxford Languages) Elder, i.e., grounding, memory, winter wisdom;
- Țurcana Oacheșe → the Lunar Wanderer, i.e., autumn transitions, liminality, mystery.

This typology helps:

- Build symbolic grammars linking morphology (body, colour, horns, weight) to myth;
- Create seasonal wheels and archetypal maps of breeds;
- Integrate educational layers into cultural identity, folklore, and zootechnics.

CONCLUSIONS

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

Sheep are mythical stabilisers because they ground cosmological cycles through fertility, memory, and sacrifice;

- Sheep breed morphology reinforces archetype: archaic traits = memory (Țurcană Mărcușe), patched fleece = ambiguity (Țurcană Brează), white fleece = purity (Țurcană Albă);

- Sheep have a seasonal typology, i.e., spring favours the Matron and the Sacrifice, autumn favours the Wanderer, and winter favours the Elder;

- Sheep serve as symbolic interfaces between human ritual and natural cycles especially in agrarian festivals and transhumance.

REFERENCES

- [1]. CALLAWAY L., 2022, Sheep: Symbolism, Meanings, and History.
- [2]. CSIZMADIA BIANCA, ISDRARIU I., HERMAN V., VADUVA LOREDANA, PETROMAN CORNELIA, PETROMAN I., 2023, Influence of foot diseases on welfare and economic balance in sheep, Revista Română de Medicină Veterinară, 33(3).
- [3]. CSIZMADIA ANDREA STEFANA, VADUVA LOREDANA, PETROMAN CORNELIA, 2023, Implementation of good nutritional practices to stimulate meat

production in sheep using same horticultural species, Scientific Papers-Series B-Horticulture, 67.

[4]. **FLORESCU O.**, 2014, Positive and Negative Influence of the Mass Media upon Education, Procedia-Social and Behavioural Science.

[5]. **GIBESCU D. R.**, 2013, Folclorul românilor din zona sârbească a Banatului, Revista Muzica, 4.

[6]. **ISDRARIU I.B.A., CSIZMADIA B., ARMAȘ A.G., SAUER M., PETROMAN I.**, 2023, Diversification of Țurcană Breed Sheep Production and Obtaining new Farm Products, Lucrări Științifice Management Agricol, 25(3).

[7]. **JUNG C.G.**, 1980, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, In Collected Works of C.G. Jung, 9.

[8]. **LOZICI A., PETROMAN C., CONSTANTIN E.C., MARIN D., SCHILL O.**, 2015, Traditions in Banat, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 197.

[9]. **NIKOLAJEVIC L.**, 2017, Folclorul românesc în zona Banatului Istoric, Quaestiones Romanicae, VI(1).

[10]. **PETROMAN CORNELIA, SAVA CIPRIANA, RISTEA I., MARIN DIANA, VADUVA LOREDANA, PETROMAN IOAN**, 2018, Methods of improving the demand and offer in the agrotourist farms, Quaestus, Multidisciplinary Research Journal, 13.

[11]. **PETROMAN CORNELIA, SAVA CIPRIANA, BOLD MARINELA LIDIA, MARIN DIANA, VĂDUVA LOREDANA, PETROMAN I.**, 2019, Considerations regarding the development of rural and farm tourism, Quaestus, Multidisciplinary Research Journal, 14.

[12]. **PETROMAN CORNELIA, VĂDUVA LOREDANA, SAVA CIPRIANA, PETROMAN I.**, 2022, Research regarding spending leisure time at the agrotourist farm, Quaestus Multidisciplinary Journal, 19.

[13]. **PETROMAN I.**, 2025, Pastoral Tour. In Integrating Masonic Tourism in Caraș-Severin County, Ed. Eurostampa Timișoara.

[14]. **VĂDUVA LOREDANA, ȚÎRLEA IOANA CRISTINA, NEAMȚU A., SUCIU A. M., PETROMAN CORNELIA**, 2023, Possibilities for improving the production and consumption of meat and meat preparations in Timiș county, Romania, SGEM Vienna.

[15]. **VĂDUVA LOREDANA, PETROMAN CORNELIA, ARMAȘ ANA GINA, CSIZMADIA BIANCA, PETROMAN I.**, 2025, Diversification of farm activities for the good use of finished production in sheep, Lucrări Științifice Management Agricol, 27(1).

[16]. **VĂDUVA LOREDANA, MARIN DIANA, MUNTEANU IULIA, VĂLUȘESCU DANIELA, PETROMAN I.**, 2025, Improving quality management in sheep farms and obtaining new farm brands, Lucrări Științifice Management Agricol, 27(1).