

SPECIAL ISSUE ON TRANSHUMANCE

**INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL NUMBER ON
TRANSHUMANCE**

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This special number of *Review of Historical Geography and Toponomastics* is largely dedicated to the issue of *Transhumance - an old human activity in Italy*. The call launched in January 2015 saw the participation of several researchers interested in the subject, exclusively of Italian researchers, showing that it is now at the center of many projects and studies. The accepted papers provide a proper interpretation of the phenomenon in two Italian regions, but they offer analysis models to be disseminated in other geographical areas. From the methodological point of view, although each paper suggests specific feelings and experiences, they have a common line: to provide a systemic reading of the phenomenon. Indeed, the transhumance is an important phenomenon both on a broad scale because it fosters the interests both of States and of the emergent merchant classes but also it is important on a local scale due to the dynamics that it produced. Each territory benefited by such a presence.

Thus the transhumance has become a sign of territorial identity. In this context the fundamental step for researchers is to use the historical cartography on which any reconstruction of the cattle-track network has to be based. The cartographical heritage of the cattle tracks is fairly substantial. This production has several assets: it testifies to the landscapes of transhumance, it is a repository of spatial information even with regard to the place names, and it imposes itself as a reference point for current digital maps. In short, these few items explain because we wanted to dedicate a special number of review to transhumance that is a complex and layered process, which involved many communities and must be decoded in different terms: socio-economic, cultural, settlement. Moreover, it has left an important heritage: the cattle tracks network that was the basic infrastructure of the system of transhumance and whose restored, where possible, is now an unavoidable issue. But what we can say is that transhumance is an unavoidable economic issue of European civilization.



