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PASTORAL IDENTITY IN THE CHANGING
CULTURAL LANDSCAPE OF
HIGHLAND SARDINIA

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

In the inner highlands of Sardinia, shepherds were isolated for centuries from invasions by outsiders and were able to live with some autonomy until the twentieth century. Access to communal lands in the highlands of Sardinia allowed shepherds to practice traditional methods of land use. Customary land use and production by highland Sardinian shepherds entails seasonal movement of herds and hand manufacturing of milk and cheese. My research objective is to attempt to understand why Sardinian shepherds cling to traditional methods instead of converting to modern ranching techniques.

In contemporary Sardinia, pastoral land use combines inherited elements with new opportunities in a market economy. Many highland communities continue to provide communal lands at low cost to shepherds. With increased mobility Sardinian shepherds pasture domestic animals and hand produce milk products while adding new activities to their workday. Shepherds are facilitated by subsidies from the European Economic Community that give price advantages to Sardinians in international markets.

The landscape of highland Sardinia has been depicted by visitors as a rugged wilderness. In my thesis I describe how highland Sardinian shepherds view local territories as their domain based on notions of land as "productive" space rather than a "wild" place. There is increasing interest by ecologists and the media in portraying Sardinia as an ultimate paradise that needs to be saved. This has led recently to a proposal for a national recreational park in the pastoral highlands of the Gennargentu mountains.

Drawing on participant-observation among the pastoralists of the Ogliastra region, I examine the cultural constructs of pastoral identity in order to identify why pastoralists portray themselves as custodians of nature in a fight to continue current land use practices. I argue that Sardinian shepherds have a historical conception of their role in nature that needs to be examined in order to understand shepherds' resistance to a national park within their territories.

INTRODUCTION

"More than just means of making a living, pastoral systems are ways of life" (Galaty and Johnson 1990, 5).

This thesis is a case study of highland Sardinian shepherds whose customary land use patterns are threatened by loss of access to communal lands. In the Mediterranean region, sheep and goat pastoralism has been an efficient use of marginal lands in hilly and mountainous areas for thousands of years (Boyazoglu and Flamant 1990, 372). Studies of pastoralists have shown that in cases of traditional animal husbandry, pressures for change have led to diversification,¹ rather than commercial ranching, as a strategy for surviving (Galaty and Johnson 1990, 29). The question of change for pastoralists often has been related to problems of access to lands (Bassett 1988, 453). The custom of communal land use in Sardinia persists in many highland communities and is integral to the survival of traditional pastoralism. Land use and production by Sardinian shepherds incorporates many habitual aspects, such as seasonal movement of herds and hand manufacturing of milk and cheese, while also adapting to a market economy. Isolation amidst the Sardinian highland

¹ Here diversification signifies adding other occupations for economic survival to already existing practices of traditional animal husbandry, as opposed to a complete switch to commercial ranching.

mountains has been a major element in the formation of pastoral identity, and has stimulated academic interest in the study of customs and traditions (King 1990, 119).

In this thesis particular emphasis will be placed on adaptation and environmental perception. Adaptation, as discussed by Denevan (1983, 402), is viewed here as the Sardinian shepherd's concern with the minimization of risk in an uncertain environment. I am interested in environmental images of nature and people and how these images are related to behavior (English 1968, 204). Mikesell defines one of the tasks of cultural ecology as the establishing of links between land use behavior and social behavior (Mikesell 1967, 629). My research focuses on how images are created and used by shepherds and others to uphold the customary rights to current pastoral land use practices. This may lead to a more complex understanding in future studies of land use options. The approach of my research borrows from humanistic geography, with an emphasis on attitudes and beliefs (Tuan 1976, 273).

The Study

In contemporary Sardinia the media, politicians, ecologists, and academics currently are examining traditional methods of pastoral land use within contexts of the environmental movement, park projects, modernization, and revised views of animal husbandry. These issues in the

economic and cultural life of Sardinian shepherds are important in evaluating the future of customary land use.

In my study area in highland Sardinia, conflicts exist between locals and outsiders, such as government administrators and ecologists, over the future of communal land use. Questions of communal rights are decided by local jurisdiction; therefore I have chosen to focus my research on local views about land, as well as on perceptions about the role of shepherds. Perceptions of the pastoralists' relationship with nature, as discussed by scholars (Angioni 1982, 105; Corrigan 1990, 9), the press, and by Sardinians, have given rise to several images. Previous images of a solitary shepherd at war with nature and the outside world (Corrigan 1990, 9; Pigliaru 1975) are being replaced by images such as the "economic" shepherd who strives to survive within the modern marketplace (Corrigan 1990, 10).

In this thesis, I present Sardinian shepherds' views,² fed by the current boom of ecological concern in Europe, which portray themselves as custodians of nature. Data for this presentation of an "ecological shepherd" were gathered during ten weeks in the summer of 1992 while I was living in Villanova Strisaili (see figure 1), a highland Sardinian village. I use local records gathered from the community

² Views that I heard from shepherds in the region of Ogliastra as well as in Villanova.

archives of Villagrande and Villanova to describe the geography of the field site. I gathered information about the proposed recreational Gennargentu park (see figure 2) during community meetings and from informal discussions by locals. Field data are supplemented with press reports from the two Sardinian newspapers (*L'unione Sarda*, *La Nuova Sardegna*) about the events surrounding the proposed recreational Gennargentu Park project. I argue that shepherds have been influenced by media depictions of the park controversy over questions of nature preservation and the role of shepherds therein, and that this is reflected in their use of ecological language to justify traditional land use patterns and to keep control of communal lands.

Although Sardinian shepherds use an ecological language to justify continued land use practices, they do not view nature as do ecologists. Sardinia has been treated by the media, visitors, and writers as a "mystical earth", an ultimate paradise that needs to be saved, protected, and loved (Caltagirone 1989, 21). This is due in part to fears about possible damage from overgrazing, deforestation, and fires. My research objective is to attempt to understand why shepherds cling to traditional patterns rather than adopt modern techniques. My argument is that these shepherds have a historical conception of their role in nature that needs to be examined in order to understand present attitudes. Because

highland Sardinian shepherds see nature as a "productive" space rather than as a "natural" one (Caltagirone 1989, 46), the environment is essential to their productive capabilities, and it defines a component of their own identity. Customary access to lands has allowed shepherds the freedom to hunt, herd, make fires, gather plants and wood, and even steal other people's sheep. Shepherds view a national park project with distrust as it redefines nature for them as a controlled environment in which they would no longer be able to act freely; they would be visitors just like anyone else. Shepherds argue that their culture is just as important for preservation as wildlife. The park also has met with local resistance because it offers no economic guarantees for natives.³

By moving to and dominating the inner mountain zones, Sardinian pastoralists have survived over thousands of years despite invasions and government interference (King 1973a, 127). Land has been one of the few securities in the shepherds' existence because they have always been able to get some benefit from it. Therefore, access to pastoral lands has come to symbolize a kind of strategy for survival.

I will look at Sardinian pastoralism from a historical perspective in order to understand how past images have played a role in creating a Sardinian shepherd culture, and in order

³ See newspaper citations in Chapter 4.

to reconstruct attitudes about territoriality in the shepherds' own view of nature. I will link the "ecological shepherd" as one of many contemporary portrayals of shepherds with older images of pastoralists who had extensive knowledge about their natural surroundings (Angioni 1982, 104).

Previous Images

Historically, the cultural landscape of Sardinia has been predominantly rural, with pastoralism as the primary form of land use. The Sardinian economy has been described as underdeveloped and its culture as "backward" (King 1973a, 127). This so-called underdevelopment is often attributed to Sardinia's resistance to outside forces of change, and its preference for local technologies, language, and customs. Contemporary impressions of Sardinian backwardness took root during the period of post-World War II land reforms, which placed intensive agriculture at the forefront of the Italian government's agenda. Sardinian pastoralism has undergone only minor technological transformations and retains much of its historic character (Angioni 1982, 97). Italian scholars have argued that the pastoralist is resilient, and that this resilience comes from a continued sense of identity within nature and the social community (Angioni 1982; Da Re 1982; Manconi 1982). The pastoralist has a sense of belonging within his environment that is due in part to his flexibility. He has a history of mobility which has been facilitated by the

advent of the automobile. The pastoral way of organizing space is in terms of moveable and negotiable livestock (Galaty and Johnson 1990, 3; Jackson 1968, 73).

Previous images depicting the Sardinian shepherd come from a history of resistance to outside invasions. During the last two thousand years colonization led to the isolation of shepherds within the rugged mountain zones of Sardinia. Historically, the pastoralist had to struggle against the elements of nature to eke out a living. He had to sleep on the ground, follow sheep during bitter cold, and milk endlessly. In highland Sardinia pastoralists customarily practiced transhumance, the seasonal movement of herds from the lowlands to the highlands, which took the men away from the villages for as long as six months of the year. In the rough and open landscape of Sardinia, the pastoralist presided as a "king of nature" (Corriga 1990, 9).

The pastoral lifestyle has influenced the development of a Sardinian highland culture which has been described by scholars as possessing values of strength, courage, independence, secrecy, and distrust of outside authorities (Buttau 1988, 10; King 1973a, 127). Loyalties are bound to the family (which is the production unit), with ties to the local community (Meloni 1984, 27). Groups within the community are usually interconnected through kinship. Values based on family loyalty, with shepherds acting as free agents

in the realm of nature, all combine to clash with the ideals of encroaching ecologists, tourists, and other outsiders, resulting in a struggle over land management (national vs. local). Such a clash has been stimulated by the proposed Gennargentu park, which would emphasize national government rule, place restrictions on use of land and resources, and would designate park personnel as the custodians of the environment.

Struggles between Sardinian shepherds and outsiders are longstanding, and shepherds are commonly viewed as dangerous due to practices (by some) of theft and kidnapping. Many studies have treated livestock theft, kidnapping, and other illegal activities as a unifying principle with which to contrast highland pastoral shepherds with the rest of Sardinians (Moss 1990, 33). Most recently:

"the representation of shepherds as bandits has gained terrain in academic discussions and as a premise for social and economic policy" (Ayora-Diaz 1990, 12).

Abigeato (animal theft) has been practiced by some shepherds, especially since 19th century land enclosure acts. A study by Benedetto Caltagirone (1989) argues that animals signify a social and symbolic link to other communities. He claims that animal theft is a form of social exchange because shepherds go in search of "lost" animals in neighboring territories (Caltagirone 1989, 84). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there has been a focus on the phenomenon

of theft, with both negative and positive representations of Sardinian shepherd bandits (Ayora-Diaz 1992, 17). In the central mountain areas of Barbagia, banditry and vendetta developed into a code of behavior commonly called the *codice barbaricino*. A man of honor had to respect the rules of the code (Pigliaru 1975, 114), which covered the environment, animals, and the social community. For example, animal theft and trespassing by an enemy were considered worthy of vendetta (Pigliaru 1975, 127). Yet within the social community animal theft was also a source of pride and proof of prowess; as the saying goes: "Chi non ruba non e' uomo" (He who doesn't steal is not a man) (Caltagirone 1989, 82).

My study will not focus on illegal activities, although they are important to keep in mind when discussing the often negative depiction of shepherds. Giulio Angioni, a prominent contemporary Sardinian anthropologist, has written about the overemphasis of research on Sardinian theft and vendetta, at the expense of leaving unexplored the continued traditional relations of shepherds to their work and to their environment (Angioni 1989, 15).

Thesis outline

In Chapter 2 I will describe the study area with an introduction to Sardinian geography in general as well as the specific area of my case study - Villanova Strisaili. This is

followed by a discussion of land use. Chapter 3 provides background on history, traditional land use patterns, and land reforms. In Chapter 3 I discuss transformations that have helped to shape current land use patterns and mold the identity of the Sardinian shepherd. In Chapter 4 I will describe the current conflict over the proposed Gennargentu Park project and communal land use. This chapter will present local responses as well as media depictions in the Sardinian press generated by the park controversy. A discussion based on local sources on the nature of "nature" will be presented in Chapter 4, with ideological views on whether pastoralism should be incorporated into the park. In Chapter 5 I will summarize how adaptations to change have taken place in highland Sardinia while shepherds retain traditional methods of land use in order to minimize risk. I will discuss how the Gennargentu Park project is viewed by shepherds with mistrust and why communal lands are an important part of Sardinian pastoralism. I will re-examine depictions of the shepherds' role in shaping the natural environment with some remarks about how positive and negative images about shepherds' behavior are constructed.

Chapter 2 - THE STUDY AREA

"It is clear that the habitat is revalued or reinterpreted with every change in habit (Sauer 1941, 7).

THE SARDINIAN LANDSCAPE

The imprint of people on the Sardinian landscape is highly visible. Since Neolithic times, the land has suffered from a steady destruction of its forests as well as soil erosion. It is difficult to separate human impacts from other causes of environmental change in the Mediterranean, due to the violent nature of human history and fragility of semi-arid lands (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, 123). While there is still some question as to the relative roles of people and natural change in Mediterranean pre-history (Blaikie and Brookfield 1987, 141), there is little doubt that in Sardinia deforestation and accelerated erosion are old processes. Sardinia has been described as one of the most barren areas in the Mediterranean (Bethmont and Pelletier 1983; King 1973; Manconi 1982). Nevertheless, the Gennargentu mountain region of Sardinia is under consideration by locals and outsiders for the creation of a national tourist park, due to its supposed natural beauty.

In discussing the natural Sardinian landscape, multiple notions exist as to what it should look like. Views by politicians, environmentalists, the press, and Sardinian

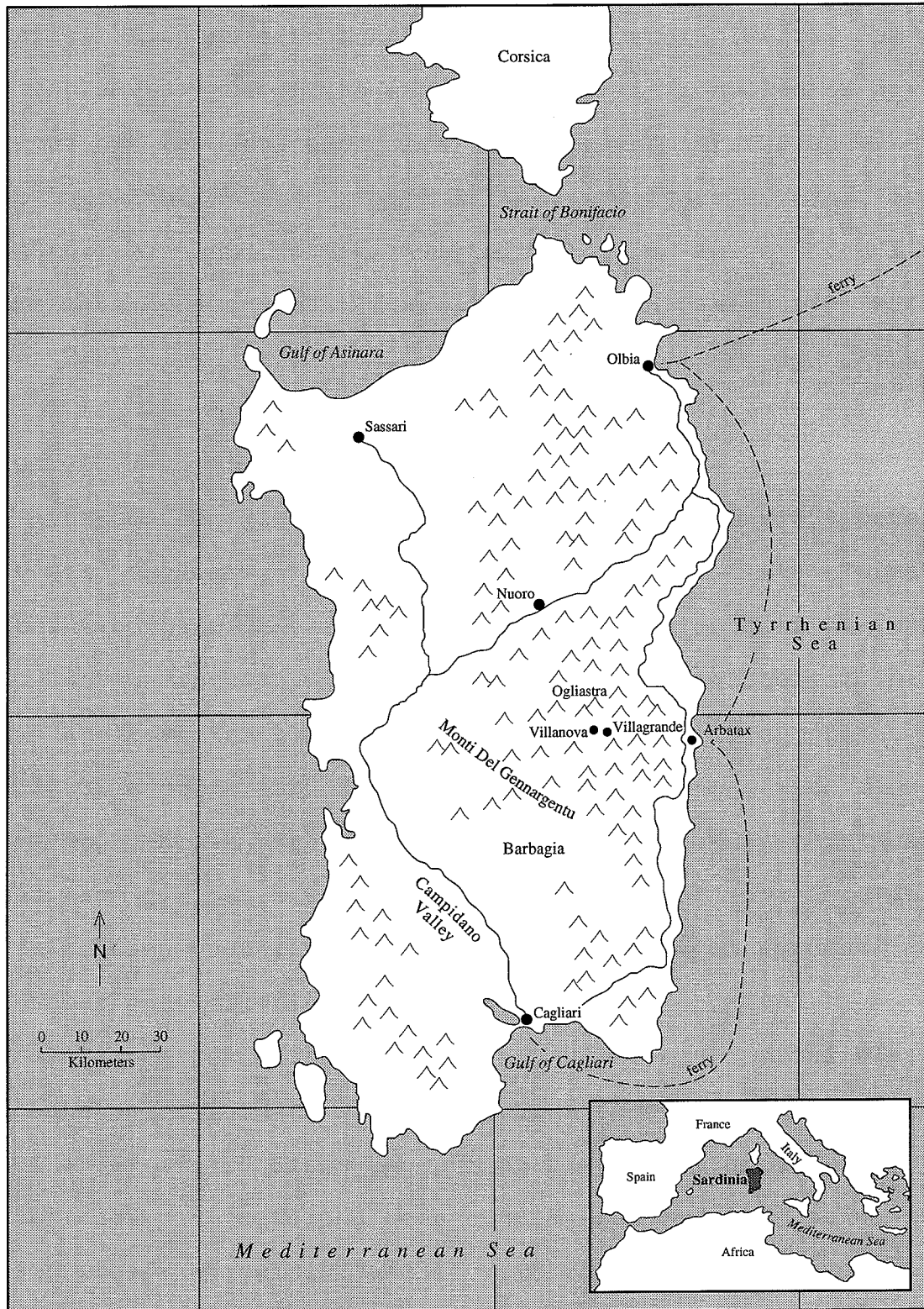
locals vary. These contrasting opinions will be discussed in Chapter 3, but one theme that runs through most arguments, whether in support of or against a park, is that land degradation has occurred.

Human impacts are often evaluated in terms of what existed previously, or what was perceived as existing (Vale 1982, 64). Despite claims that pastoralism has contributed to deforestation and high levels of erosion, the Gennargentu region is noted for its "wild" beauty which appears less modified than other Italian landscapes (Angioni 1989, 61-62). The openness and seeming emptiness of the Sardinian countryside is prized by visitors for its primordial beauty (Angioni 1989, 61), yet the current landscape has been shaped by centuries of human use.

SARDINIAN GEOGRAPHY

Sardinia has a total land area of 24,089 square kilometers and is the second largest island in the Mediterranean (Berger 1986, 47). It lies off the west coast of Italy and just south of Corsica (see figure 1). Sardinia's physical geography is dominated by crystalline rocks that form three ancient massifs. The north-west corner, called La Nurra, is rocky, arid, and windy. In the south-west of the island is situated the Campidano valley, rich in alluvial soils used for agriculture. Towards the south-east are the

Figure 1. Map of Sardinia



mountains of the Gennargentu, the largest of the three massifs, which rise to a height of 1834 meters (Walker 1958, 223). The surface of the eastern massif is composed of areas of open oak forest and *macchia*, a thick and scrubby underbrush that is characteristic of the island, and is used mostly for pastoralism. Land formation is divided into three categories: hills make up about 68%, mountains 14%, and plains 18% (Walker 1958, 228).

Vegetation

The contemporary Sardinian landscape is about 75% covered with wild vegetation (Mori 1966, 155). This includes forest, *macchia* and *garrighe* (a sparse brush vegetation growing less than two meters high with discontinuous open patches of soil), while the rest is cultivated. The vegetation is comprised mostly of *macchia* around the lower coastal zones, with *macchia* and evergreen oak higher inland, and some chestnut, cork oak, pines, and juniper. Estimates of forest cover vary according to definition, usually between five and thirteen percent (Bethmont and Pelletier 1983, 198).

Forest fires affect vegetation. They are responsible for the burning of 1000 to 15,000 hectares of woods each year (Mori 1966, 156). Fires tend to escalate during the summer months and there has long been controversy over the origin of these fires (Angioni 1989, 231). It is commonly known that

both shepherds and farmers have used fire as a method for clearing land and for stimulating growth of new vegetation. However, shepherds have been accused of setting fires for reasons of vendetta, and out of delinquency, an accusation which has been rejected on ideological grounds by some Sardinian scholars (Angioni 1989, 234).

Scholars have argued about whether Mediterranean *macchia* represents a climax vegetation or is a degenerate stage from an original forest (Hughes 1975, 13; Tomaselli 1977, 40). However, it is obvious that a "natural" vegetation is no longer at issue. Sardinia has been significantly transformed by centuries of use which include deforestation, pastoralism, and agriculture. Since classical times, trees have been cut for shipbuilding, construction, and fuel. However, some of the worst devastation of Sardinian forest was during the eighteenth century when wood was cut for charcoal by industrialists (Sion 1934, 372). During the nineteenth century, continental companies continued to exploit the island for wood, thus contributing to the present day open landscape (Houston 1967, 627). Given the history of Sardinian deforestation, it seems probable that shepherds have not been the single major force in land degradation.

Climate

The climate of Sardinia is semi-arid with mild

temperatures and considerable weather variation from year to year. The most distinguishing factors in this Mediterranean climate are long summer drought, which can last from one to six months, torrential rainfall during the winter seasons, and extreme annual fluctuations (Hughes 1975, 9; King 1973, 158; Le Lannou 1941, 46; Quezel 1977, 15; Semple 1931, 262; Thirgood 1981, 19). The median precipitation for 1985-1989 in Sardinia is 418,4 millimeters (ISTAT 1991, p.26). Summer drought leads to irregular water flow in most rivers except the two largest, the Flumendosa and the Tirsa, which are controlled with dams and reservoirs to provide irrigation. The elevation of approximately half of the island is greater than 500 meters. Although this altitude brings frost and snow, the mountains are not high enough to store water as ice, and the ground is not permeable enough to store water underground. More than half of the island consists of impermeable crystalline and granitic rock which leads to runoff (Berger 1986, 49).

The winds of Sardinia, famous for their ferocity, intensify drought. The *Scirocco* wind from the south-west is hot and dusty, while the *Maestrale* from the north-east leaves trees bent and emphasizes their low stature.

The dryness and irregularity of rainfall, combined with the rocky mountainous landscape, make agriculture difficult in Sardinia. Due to cultural preferences for agricultural land

use, links have been made (by determinists) between the rugged physical structure of the island and cultural backwardness (Caltagirone 1989, 45). For example, the Italian geographer Vinelli wrote in 1943:

"Position, climate, relief, hydrography, and geology have all combined to retard the island's progress."
(Vinelli 1943, 264).

The failure of intensive agriculture in the highlands of Sardinia has been described as a lack of progress by planners (King 1973), and has helped to perpetuate the image of a backward shepherd culture.

Population

As of the 1981 national census, there were 1,594,000 people living in Sardinia, which equals 2.8% of the total Italian population (ISTAT 1991, 30). However, the population estimates had been lower until recently. In 1831 there were 524,000 people, and in 1936 there were 1,034,000, following a steady rise in population since the turn of the century (Le Lannou 1941, 327). Emigration has also contributed to population decrease. Since World War II many Sardinian shepherds have moved to mainland Italy into the regions of Tuscany and Lazio in search of richer pastures. In general, human population levels in Sardinia have been low, and this has helped keep lands open for extensive pastoral land use. The visual impact from this kind of land use is that the

landscape appears empty, and this draws tourism.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF VILLANOVA STRISAILI⁴

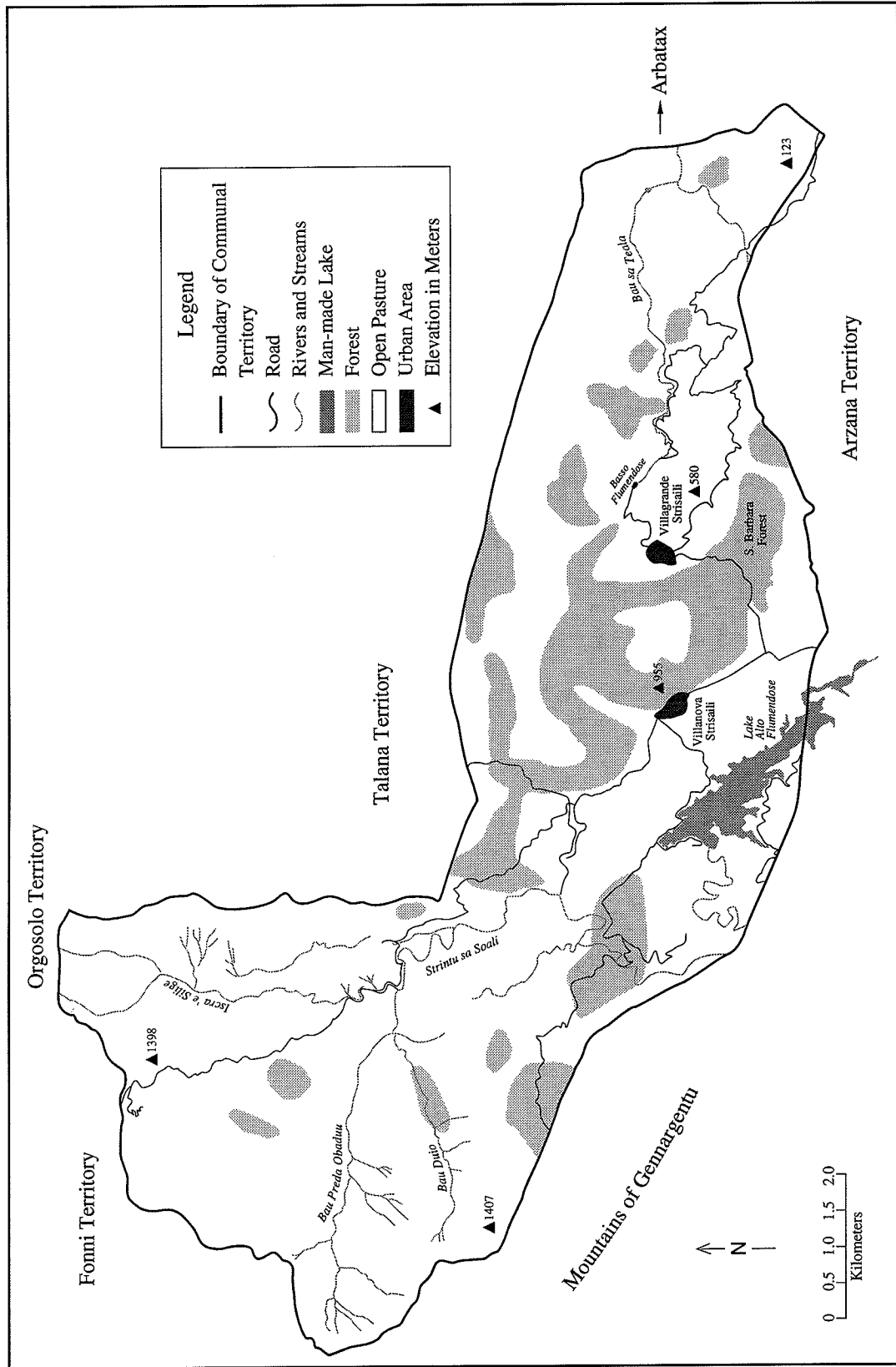
The village of Villanova Strisaili is situated in the region of Ogliastra⁵ located in the eastern central mountain zone of Sardinia (see Figure 1). Villanova is called a *frazione*⁶ of Villagrande Strisaili, which is 5 kilometers away. The territory of Villanova is made up of land from the community comprised of both Villagrande and Villanova. Communal lands total 21,080 hectares (see Figure 2) (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 7), and are located in the province of Nuoro. Together, they constitute part of the *Comunita' Montana* (Mountain Community) no.11. These lands are surrounded by the community lands of Orgosolo and Talana to the north; Lotzorai, Tortoli, and Girasole to the east; Arzana to the south; and Desulo and Fonni to the west. Much of the vegetation is *macchia*, and the land surface is used mostly for pastoral activities (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 8). The total population of the community is just over 4,000 people with approximately 800 residing in Villanova, with the

⁴ Data for Villanova Strisaili was gathered from the community archives and from local informants and administrators.

⁵ The name Ogliastra comes from Olivastro (the Mediterranean olive), a tree that is resistant to strong winds.

⁶ A *frazione* is like an unincorporated suburb. It shares one administration but is geographically separate from the central village.

Figure 2. Communal Land for Villanova and Villagande Strisaili



majority in Villagrande (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 8-10). Population density is 19 per square kilometer, a low average compared to the regional average of approximately 61 (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 9).

The agro-pastoral sector constitutes a quarter of the communities' labor force, and more than 60% of these are shepherds (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1978, 9). Pastoral land use includes sheep, cow, goat, and pig herding. Pastoral activities occur most frequently on communal territories, which for some shepherds is the only type of land available (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 20). The most recent Law (no.57 of May 22, 1955) which describes the structure for communal land use outlines the activities for which lands are available as: herding, agriculture, water resources, acorn gathering, and wood gathering for fuel (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 25). However, actual land available for collective use only amounts to 14,292 hectares (see Table 1). Communal lands are also used by the military, by individual families for gardens, for communal wood management and reforestation, urbanism, tourism, industry, and cooperatives (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 27). Inexpensive fees are collected by the community for the use of communal territories.

Water flow is irregular, with some sources dried out during summer, except for the Flumendosa River which runs for

Table 1

TERRITORY OF VILLAGRANDE AND VILLANOVA STRISAILI

<u>ADMINISTERED TERRITORIES</u>	21,080 Hectares
<u>DIVISION OF TERRITORIES</u>	
- Communal property*	14,292 hectares
- Private property	2,175 hectares
- Property of Fonni	3,522 hectares
- Property of Talana	316 hectares
- Property of ENEL	425 hectares
- Property of railways	9 hectares
- Territory occupied by roads and waterways	<u>341 hectares</u>
TOTAL	21,080 hectares

* Villanova pastoralists utilize rented lands from other communities nearby, such as Fonni and Arzana, as well as renting privately owned property.

(Source: Melis 1977, 2)

five kilometers through the territory. The Flumendosa is dammed for the production of electricity, energy, and for irrigation. Preceding my summer of fieldwork (1992) there had been a year of heavy rains, and water was plentiful in streams and natural springs.

Villagrande and Villanova territory soils are considered poor by recent studies. Overall, 75% of the soils have been classed as being too poor for continued use and completely unsuitable for agriculture (Azienda Speciale Relazione Geopedologica 1984, 5-12).

Pastures cover extensive parts of the territory, comprising 66.44%, while wooded areas of evergreen oak and pine constitute 27.29% (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 63).

The pastoral economy on these lands during the 1980s was made up of 532 owners of livestock (some individual owners, others owned by groups or families), which equalled 13.25% of the population (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 73). Sheep are the primary animals used by pastoralists in this area.

The calculation of the Azienda Speciale's report shows a 15.42% deficit in the ratio of available pasture or fodder needed for these animals, thus other nutrients such as hay, straw, and cereals must be grown or bought in the marketplace (Azienda Speciale Relazione 1984, 82).

THE VILLAGE OF VILLANOVA STRISAILI

Villanova is situated on a plateau at about 1000 meters. The micro climate in Villanova is colder than Villagrande and the agricultural products differ. In the house gardens planted on the plateau of Villanova the women grow potatoes, beans, onions, squash, and fruit trees such as apple and pear, but no citrus. People in Villanova like to explain to visitors that their agricultural products (potatoes for example) are better tasting than those from lower altitudes. They display pride in the productive capabilities of their lands.

The village of Villanova Strisaili in 1992 had four general stores, two butcher shops, two clothing stores, one post office, one church, one pizzeria, two hotels⁷ with restaurants, and three bars. Many necessary village establishments are missing such as a bank, a hospital, and a veterinary practice. Villagrande has a bank as well as the community town hall where all administrative documents are kept. However, the nearest hospital and high school are in the town of Lanusei (about a 20 minute drive on a twisting and narrow road).

⁷ *It is unusual to find hotels in these communities, and Villagrande does not have one. Villanova draws visitors because of its proximity to the Flumendosa lake. The hotels were occupied in the summer of 1992 by foreign workmen who were building a large greenhouse.*

Chapter 3 - THE SARDINIAN SHEPHERD

HUMAN HISTORY

Previous images of the Sardinian shepherd have their roots in a long history of Sardinian resistance to outside invasions. For centuries periodic conquest has led to the isolation of shepherds within the rugged mountain zones of Sardinia.

The earliest peoples of Sardinia are assumed to date back to the Paleolithic, although no theory for their arrival has been proven (Cacciola 1991, 5). These hunter-gatherers and fishing peoples turned to agriculture and herding during the Neolithic. In pre-Christian times, the island was invaded by the Phoenicians, followed by the Carthaginians in the 5th century A.D. These invasions provoked inland migration by the native Sardinians.

The Phoenicians and the Carthaginians exploited the island for timber and metals (Cacciola 1991, 10). However, a much longer domination was begun by the Romans during the 2nd century B.C., and lasted about 700 years. The Romans continued to extract timber and metals, established agricultural estates for the production of grains (wheat and barley), and built roads, bridges, and aqueducts. They introduced Latin and the worship of Roman gods, until the arrival of Christianity in the 2nd century A.D. The Romans

taxed local producers, and encouraged the development of large agricultural estates (called *latifundia*), which increased tensions between local shepherds and farmers (Meloni 1982, 19). Although Sardinia was annexed to Rome, it was exploited rather than developed (Walker 1958, 251).

Later invasions by the Byzantines and Goths continued the levying of heavy taxes which kept pushing Sardinians towards the interior. During the 8th and 9th centuries A.D., the Arabs invaded and continued to levy taxes. During the Arab invasions, Sardinia maintained political independence, and a geopolitical division was formed which created four provinces (called *Giudicati*), which were administered locally by a feudal lord. The republics of Pisa and Genoa helped the Sardinians in their fight against the Arabs, who were finally ousted by 1091. Pisa and Genoa struggled for domination of the island from 1150-1250. From the 14th to the 18th centuries, Sardinia was dominated by the Catalan kingdom of Aragon which imposed a feudal system on the island.

Several observations can be made here. Sardinians resisted attacks and created a more independent, as well as an isolated life in the central mountain zones. Centuries of invasions contributed towards deforestation, while heavy taxation established Sardinian hostility toward outside government forces.

HISTORY OF HUMAN LAND USE

In Sardinia, land customarily belonged to the village, with a system of communal land use that was established during the Medieval period. The division of these lands was based on a system called *vidazzone*. Private lands called *tancas* (enclosures) adjacent to the village were incorporated into *vidazzone*. The village formed a nucleated settlement which was surrounded by agricultural lands or pasture. Territory around the village was divided into sections for the cultivation of cereals and for pasture. Land that was left unsown was called *paberili*. In fertile areas such as the Campidano, *vidazzone* was divided into two parts. Grain was sown every year in one area with a rotation of pasture in the other. When the harvest was over, animals from the mountains could come down for grazing. In less agricultural areas, grain was grown every three of four years, and land was parcelled into smaller, more numerous plots for better rotation. Having a *paberile* near the village was important for villagers too poor to oversee pastures further away (Le Lannou 1941, 118).

During the Middle Ages a distinctive pattern of land use emerged. During the Roman era, shepherds from the highlands had pillaged the lowland farmers, especially in times of

drought. The French geographer Le Lannou, has argued⁸ that the practice of communal land use around villages was established as a survival tactic to keep shepherds from destroying farmlands (Le Lannou 1941, 125). The community allowed shepherds a share of communal lands, and shepherds in turn kept their animals from trampling agricultural areas. In 1395 a constitutional document called the *Carta de Logu*, written by the *Guidice*⁹ of Arborea, one of the four provinces, established laws and rights for communal land use which were upheld until the nineteenth century. The Middle Ages also experienced massive epidemics of the bubonic plague in 1348, 1376, and 1420. These episodes severely reduced local population levels, and many villages were abandoned.

The historical provision of pasture for shepherds helped prolong a system of coexistence between farmers and shepherds until the nineteenth century, despite conflicts between farmers and shepherds over animal trampling of fields. The sharing of highlands and lowlands allowed for the transhumant movement of herds. Access to land was especially important in autumn when aridity could cause catastrophes, as related by this Sardinian expression: *Autunno asciutto, bestiame affamato* (dry fall, hungry herds - Meloni 1982, 157).

⁸ Historical documents are sparse for the period from Roman times until medieval times, but this hypothesis seems to be generally accepted in the literature.

⁹ The *giudice* was the leader of a province.

It was not until the nineteenth century that a major change took place in land tenure that affected agro-pastoral land use (Angioni 1982, 97; Le Lannou 1941, 155). In 1820 a land enclosure act was passed which stated that all private lands not used as passage, watering holes, or current pasture could be enclosed by owners. Furthermore, communal lands could be enclosed, divided, or sold by the villages. However, no financial assistance was given for the enclosures; thus the rich profited rather than the shepherds and poorer farmers (Le Lannou 1941, 158). After 1820, because of the enclosure acts, the old system of mixed husbandry was partially destroyed, and a class of landless rural peasants and shepherds was created.

By 1870 results of the enclosure act were evident (Le Lannou 1941, 160), although patterns were different from zone to zone (Meloni 1984, 93). In the central mountain zones and plains of the south there were few enclosures, due possibly to an abundance of land and low population levels. In many mountain communities where pastoralism was dominant shepherds chose not to follow the enclosure laws. This was evident around my field site, in Villanova, where very few enclosed sites are visible, and the animals often wandered into the roads. In the plateaus of the north and west-central areas where agriculture was more prevalent, signs of enclosure were evident. In the mountainous regions pastoralists continued to follow routes of transhumance as a strategy to combat the

variability of climate (Meloni 1984, 133).

CONTEMPORARY SARDINIA AND LAND REFORMS

The current political structure for Sardinia originated in 1861, when the armies of Garibaldi united peninsular Italy with Sicily and Sardinia. Despite unification, Sardinia remained both economically and socially a world apart. Under Italian government, Sardinia was declared an autonomous region in 1948 with its own elected regional council. Sardinia had been targeted as one of several regions in southern Italy that needed agrarian reforms and aid. Beginning in the 1950s, the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*, the banking outlet funded in part by the Italian government and in part by the Marshall Plan, provided financial assistance for Sardinian land reforms.

Post World War II land reforms disregarded physical and cultural variation, and there was a lack of planning for production potential in relation to local markets and transport facilities (King 1973, 235). Land reforms were rushed due to the political climate. The Christian Democrats, who were the ruling party of the newly formed Italian Republic in 1947, pushed through land reform legislation to appease angry peasants in order to assure their continued dominance within the government. But the reforms were lacking in coordination. Some farms that were created to function with irrigation had to wait up to 15 years for water to arrive

(King 1973, 228). The most dramatic success of land reform policies in Sardinia were the reclamation projects which eliminated malaria (King 1973, 161). Malaria had been a major factor in low Sardinian population levels. For example, in 1931 51 out of 100 people had malaria (Bayne 1956, 4). By the 1950s malaria was virtually eliminated with the use of modern pesticides funded by the Marshall Plan, and thousands of hectares of abandoned marsh land along the coasts were opened to tourism and agriculture.

Private land holdings in contemporary Sardinia are characterized by extreme fragmentation. For example, in the 1960s, 60% of all landholdings were between 1-5 hectares (Weingrod and Morin 1971, 304). One example of a small holding is illustrated by a case where one olive tree was shared by four different families (Vanzetti and Meissner 1953, 146). Several factors were responsible for this fragmentation. Traditional inheritance practices in Sardinia¹⁰ divided land equally among all heirs. The land reform structure was based on a model of small units of land for each family. These territories only amounted to approximately 5% of the island's surface area (King 1973, 193).

Except in a few cases, land reforms during the 1950s were

¹⁰In practice men tended to inherit lands suited for herding, while women usually inherited coastal lands or less desirable lands.

considered failures (Belotti 1960; D'Arragona 1954; King 1973; Klinger 1962; Nelson 1956; Parson 1976; Silverman 1971; Vocting 1956; Weingrod and Morin 1971). The model was rigidly applied to areas of great physical diversity, and often land of the poorest quality was allocated to peasant farmers and shepherds. A subsistence type of farming limited specialization of production and the use of mechanization. Mechanization was also limited by Sardinian topography because of the steepness of hills. The possibilities for improving the marketing structure were also limited, especially because of a lack of transport facilities (Klinger 1962, 6).

Agriculture failed to flourish with post World War II reforms and underwent a "crisis" (Angioni 1982, 97). In contrast, the pastoral economy was able to adapt to new technologies while keeping continuity with traditional methods of land use. While pastoralism has not been simply conserved, it has been able to expand thanks to market incentives and the abandonment of agriculture in highland areas (Meloni 1984, 38). By the twentieth century, some changes had taken place, but communal ownership of lands endured in many parts of highland Sardinia.

Sardinian villages are relatively small in size, containing between 1,000 to 5,000 inhabitants (Weingrod and Morin 1971, 303). Communal territories are organized around the village, with a limited number of private properties which

are small in size (Meloni 1984, 91). The nuclear family is the basic unit in Sardinian social structure. The family is ideally autonomous and self sufficient, united in its consumption and production (Angioni 1982, 118).

SARDINIAN PASTORALISM

Sardinia's pastoral society had dominated the rural economy for over 2,000 years. Pastoral activities in Sardinia center primarily around sheep and secondarily around goats and cows. Milk is the primary product. Sheep pastoralism supplies approximately 20% of the gross product of agriculture for Sardinia (Bandinu 1982, 127), and covers approximately one third of the island's land surface. Sardinian flocks vary in size from 100 to 500 (Weingrod and Morin 1971, 307). However, declarations of official herd size are often misreported to the authorities (Berger 1986, 46). The size of herds is often inflated by shepherds so that they can claim EEC emergency funds during years of scarcity or claim subsidies for low milk prices (Vargas-Cetina 1992, 12).

A single shepherd can attend as many as 150 sheep. The productive cycle of sheep lasts 7-9 years, at which time the sheep is butchered. The mating season begins in June and the birthing season begins in November and continues intensively until January, ending by April. On average one sheep produces 60 liters of milk, or 10 kilos of cheese each year (Day 1982,

31).

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, sheep became more economically important than cattle because of an increased demand for sheep cheese (Le Lannou 1941, 292). The nineteenth century saw the market price rise for pastoral products, which in turn encouraged local producers to produce above the subsistence level (Bodemann 1974, 149).

By the 1940s, there were more than two million sheep in Sardinia, with a sheep/cow ratio of 10:1 (Le Lannou 1941, 296). Prices for cheese or milk not sold locally were controlled by merchants in Naples and Rome (Bandinu 1982, 136). Prices tended to vary from year to year, as well as seasonally. Recently sheep milk prices have fallen. In 1984 prices for sheep milk reached a peak at 1,100 lire a liter (just under one dollar), and fell to around 900 lire a liter in 1992 (Coliccha and Ardito 1992, 63).

Cheeses for local markets had been made in a traditional way that mixed sheep, goat, and cow milk for a product called *cacio*. Cheese was cured with salt which was a natural product of Sardinia, and thus cheap and plentiful. In 1887, merchants in Naples produced a good quality Sardinian cheese for export to other markets, such as Barcelona, Nice, Genoa, and Livorno (Le Lannou 1941, 297). However, it was not until the twentieth century that Roman industries invested in *Pecorino Romano*, a salty cheese made only with Sardinian sheep milk.

The sale of *Pecorino* developed an important link to international markets for shepherds. During the 1970s, milk and cheese products were the major goods that Sardinia was able to export (Idda 1983-84, 75).

THE LIFE OF THE SHEPHERD

Traditional pastoralism in Sardinia has been defined by transhumance. There are several forms of transhumance practiced in contemporary Sardinia. In longer distance transhumance, the shepherd and his flocks travel from the mountain zones to lower warmer areas in winter (around Christmas), and remain there until around April (Meloni 1982, 157). A variation is called semi-transhumance, with shorter routes closer to the family village. Agro-pastoralism is not based on seasonal movement, but instead combines animal breeding with agriculture for fodder (Meloni 1982, 157). In the area of Villanova, agro-pastoralism and semi-transhumance prevail amongst shepherds. Until recently shepherds from Villanova and Villagrande made a long distance transhumance to communal lands they owned in southern Sardinia.

In the traditional system the pastoralists (all of whom were men) spent up to six months a year away from their wives and children during winter. In the mountain villages it was the women who oversaw all home operations, including home gardens (Angioni 1982, 158). This is still visible today,

with women managing the household and dividing their time between agricultural production for the family and other chores. Division of labor between men and women is pronounced. Shepherds who practice semi-transhumance have no interaction with agriculture, while those who practice long distance transhumance often grow crops in the mountains. I visited several mountain sites in the Gennargentu which contained evidence of abandoned gardens.

In the traditional long distance transhumance, the shepherd constructed an *ovile* during the summer in the highlands. The *ovile* was a cone or rectangular shaped building whose base was made of rock with a roof of branches and leaves (Le Lannou 1941, 177). Cheese was made directly inside the *ovile* by boiling the milk over heated stones in the center of the hut until it congealed and clotted. These clots were formed between wooden molds and then salted. When enough cheeses were ready, the shepherd would go to town to sell or exchange cheese for other supplies.

Transformation of the traditional picture of Sardinian pastoralism began in the 1960s (Bandinu 1982, 135). Due to monetary contributions of the regional Sardinian government and funds from the European Community (EEC), specific changes took place. Brick houses were built to replace traditional *ovili*. Shepherds began making cheese on gas stoves. Many shepherds acquired cars. With increased mobility, the

shepherds' sphere of territory was widened. Shepherds could return home more frequently and move herds by truck, or bring fodder from the lowlands to the highlands. The shepherd's social sphere changed, with more time spent in the village rather than in the pastures. Radio and television entered the households, formal education became more widespread, and consumerism took root. However, the common use of Sardo¹¹ by locals is one sign of continued ties to tradition. Another example of tradition is the making of shepherd's bread (*pistoccu*) by women in the home. Many shepherds were able to produce beyond household subsistence¹² and sold milk to industries for international markets, while others formed dairy cooperatives. Cooperatives have been promoted economically by the Italian government since the 1950s as an option for the modernization of pastoralism (Vargas-Cetina 1992, 3). Yet their success seems to depend on financial support from outside sources, and shepherds view their membership as an individual investment and keep control over production practices which are the same as for other shepherds

¹¹ Sardo is the native Sardinian Romance language spoken by Sardinians with differences in dialect from zone to zone.

¹² The Sardinian diet in the past was frugal. The dietary staple was wheat bread accompanied by cheese. Other foods consisted of vegetables, soups, and pasta, while meat consumption was rare until recently. Today, meat is often eaten in abundance and older shepherds sometimes complain that they are less healthy than before. This reveals a growing concern about health and fitness that is reflective of the infiltration of outside ideas.

(Vargas-Cetina 1992, 13-15).

Cooperation is important for Sardinian shepherds. Without the help of their families and friends they cannot handle the labor involved in pastoral activities. For example, when it is time to shear the flocks (by hand with large scissors) families and friends gather for a day of work and end with a feast provided by the herd owner. This is called a *tossatura* and is a festive occasion that allows for socializing and fun. Other production activities requiring cooperation include sheep branding, transhumance, animal slaughtering, and the lending of milk in times of scarcity (Caltagirone 1989, 36).

THE IMAGE OF THE SHEPHERD

The traditional pastoralist has been described as "a kind of athlete at war against nature..." (Angioni 1982, 105). In the rough and open landscape of Sardinia, the pastoralist presided as the king of nature. Nature was viewed by shepherds as an adversary, with life perceived as a form of resistance (Pigliaru 1975, p.xiii). Today shepherds do not have to struggle so hard. They use cars to go back and forth between the *ovile* and the village. They rely on subsidies to help them pay their way in a market economy. They continue to use the privileges of communal lands for herding, hunting, and gathering. The surrounding environment can be enjoyed more at

leisure and shepherds can reflect upon their place within it.

Outsider views often depicted Sardinian shepherds in negative terms. Shepherds have been described as backwards, primitive, violent, independent, individualistic, lazy, and resistant to change (King 1971, 207). The common custom of sheep rustling tagged shepherds as bandits to the authorities. For pastoralists, sheep stealing constituted culturally accepted forms of resistance to restrictions imposed by outsiders, as well as a vehicle for establishing social relationships with other shepherds (Caltagirone 1989, 84). Theft committed outside of the community was not considered an offense by locals, while theft committed within the village destroyed one of the few securities of village life (Meloni 1989, 273).

Shepherds are also described as hospitable, generous, and healthy (Ayora-Diaz 1992, 12). Shepherds are commonly known for inviting strangers into their homes to share meals. They provide abundant feasts for visitors and show them around their territories. Sardinian hospitality is indeed generous, but it also exhibits shepherds as being in charge. In Villanova some shepherds have taken visitors to look at "natural" sites in the Gennargentu. These places are difficult to get to and almost impossible to find. Shepherds take great pride in these natural splendors and consider them as their own. They are inviting visitors to visit "their"

homes and "their" territories. Highland Sardinian shepherds have long considered the earth as a ritual entity where the "rights of possession" rather than of property are upheld (Caltagirone 1989, 89).

Chapter 4 - THE CASE STUDY

"Once society had reached a certain level of artifice and complexity, people would begin to take note, and appreciate, the relative simplicities of nature" (Tuan 1974, 103).

In the 1980s a new world view began to emerge in Sardinia, due in part to the influence of the media, popular culture, and environmental movements. The newly created Italian Green party proposed the ideals of health and ecology. Food products from rural Sardinia began to be marketed as *artigianato*, which means handcrafted, in comparison to industrially produced items. In Italy leisure time spent in natural areas became the new fashion. In this context, Sardinian pastoralists took up the trend of environmentalism and were able to speak in new terms about their form of livelihood.

THE GENNARGENTU PARK PROPOSAL

In 1992, a park proposal (Law 394) was put forth by the Italian government for the mountain region of Gennargentu which would include 14 communities and encompass 60,000 hectares of land in central Sardinia (see Figure 3) (Casu 1992, 3). This legislation was based on a regional law from 1989 that designated the Gennargentu mountains as a conservation area. Thirty percent of Villagrande and Villanova communal lands, used mainly by shepherds, would be incorporated into the park territory (Caravano 1992, 2). This

Figure 3. Map of Proposed Gennargentu Park as Presented by World Wildlife Fund



(Source: Airone 1992, no.134, pp.58-59)

area of Sardinia is prized by visitors due to the perception that these mountain zones are the most "wild" and seemingly deserted on the island (Caltagirone 1989, 45). In the summer of 1992¹³, there was discussion between locals and regional politicians about the terms of Law 394. There was debate over the actual amount of funds committed by the national government, about the possible advantages to locals in the labor market, and rules and regulations governing use of the park. An important fact is that without the signatures of community mayors, local lands could not be incorporated into the park area. In this chapter I will examine responses, interpretations, and views about nature, as discussed by locals and reported by the media.

PREVIOUS RESPONSES TO A PARK

Previous proposals for a national park in this region had met with resistance and finally been disregarded. In 1968 a plan for a government funded national park in central Sardinia had been proposed. The European Economic Community (EEC) had been urging its members to construct national parks in low population, low tourist areas, based on the North American model. The plan in Sardinia indicated the territories of the

¹³ Summer is the time of year that shepherds have more leisure, as sheep give less milk and are not birthing. Thus shepherds were able to spend time organizing and going to meetings in adjacent communities.

Gennargentu mountains (Villanova/Villagrande included), with over 120,000 inhabitants living in an area approximately 50 kilometers long and 30 kilometers wide (Bodemann 1979, 34-35). According to the plan, this area "was to be returned to its natural state" of evergreen oak forested highlands (Bodemann 1979, 35). Communal land rights such as grazing, fishing, and collecting wood for firewood were to be restricted¹⁴. The park would guard against deforestation, such as the shepherds' annual burning of *macchia* in late summer for the growth of fresh roots in the following spring (called *narboni*) (Bodemann 1979, 35). Plans for the park met with outrage by locals. Demonstrations took place in the larger cities such as Nuoro and Cagliari, as well as in local villages. Resistance was based on ideas expressed by locals that the park was for tourists, and would not improve conditions for the inhabitants; in fact it would take away communal rights. Roads for pastoral, agricultural, or market purposes were not included in the plan. By February 1969 the plan was shelved due to local animosity, as illustrated in this quote by a Telemulesi shepherd:

"Just let them try. Let them put up a fence. Let them build outposts for the *forestali* (forest rangers). They build during the day, and we tear it down at night" (Bodemann 1979, 47).

¹⁴ The plan foresaw the elimination of pastoralism for the majority of the territories although some pastoral land use would be allowed (Bodemann 1979, 36).

RESPONSES TO PARK PLAN 394

Local reaction was not favorable to a park in the 1960s; however by the 1990s many changes had taken place in attitudes towards nature, with growing concern about environmental protection and wildlife preservation. The media viewed activities such as hunting, fishing, and gathering as "incompatible with a park" (Coliccha and Ardito 1992, 61). Sardinian species such as wild sheep, eagles, hawks and buzzards (to name a few), have been under pressure for preservation by the World Wildlife Fund. As one nature magazine put it:

"If you are not a good walker and bird watcher you might miss the emotional encounter with a wild ram or miss an eagle in flight. Some animals, however, you will definitely encounter: Sheep (Coliccha and Ardito 1992, 63).¹⁵

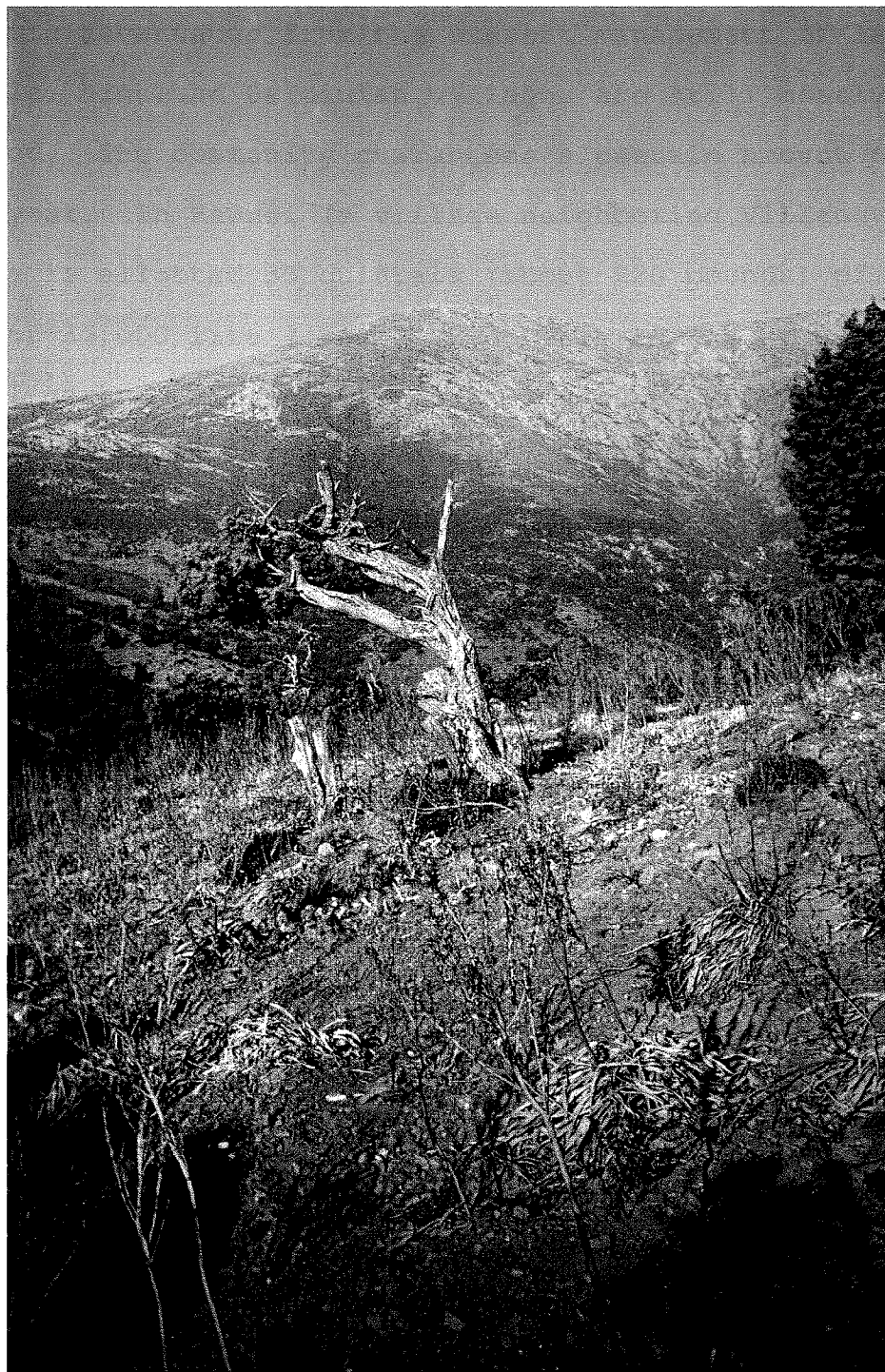
The presence of sheep in the Gennargentu mountains is long standing, yet fears about overgrazing and the visible signs of erosion (see Figure 4) make sheep and their shepherds the targets of criticism. But while ecologists are concerned about wildlife, shepherds view domestic animals as also having rights. As the mayor of one anti-park community said:

"If the land cannot be useful to man, then what value does it have, especially if it can only be looked at from far away or only the privileged few can pass by?" (Cugudda 1992, 23).

Shepherds are not the only locals who benefit from using

¹⁵ All quotes are translated from Italian into English by Maya Kennedy.

Figure 4. The Gennargentu and Erosion



(Source: Photo by M.K. 1992)

communal lands. All community members have rights and derive economic advantages from the present management of lands. For example, highland Sardinian villages are still mostly heated by wood. The community guarantees a certain amount of wood each year. In Baunei (a village neighboring Villanova), each family is allotted 35 quintals (about 220 pounds) of wood at a cost of 35,000 lire (around 25 dollars). The same wood at normal market prices would cost 800,000 to 900,000 lire (around 600 dollars) (Caravano 1992, 3). The park conflict does not just concern issues about nature, it also has economic aspects which affect a greater proportion of the local people:

"The park risks creating social tensions and doesn't provide either economic guarantees or democratic possibilities of management" (Cugudda 1992, 23).

In the summer of 1992, social tensions increased to the point where the mayor of Talana (a village neighboring Villanova), was threatened with violence if he agreed to sign for Talana's incorporation into the park (Bassu 1990, 17). All over the region of Ogliastra, denunciations against the park were visible in the form of graffiti on the sides of buildings (see Figure 5).

SIX COMMUNITIES OPPOSE PARK PROPOSAL 394

During the month of June 1992, shepherds and other locals, including politicians, met in their villages and

Figure 5. Anti-Park Graffiti in Orgosolo



(Source: Photo by M.K. 1992)

discussed the proposed park. Six of these communities (Villagrande and Villanova, Arzana, Baunei, Desulo, Orgosolo, and Urzulei) decided not to sign for the project (Law 394) in its present terms. At the meetings¹⁶ several worries were expressed repeatedly. Here is a summary of the chief concerns:

1. Ogliastro communities would lose more of their territories, as they had in the past. For example, for Villagrande and Villanova territories the Flumendosa dam took away lands, the Italian military took southern territories used for winter transhumance, and the national energy organization (ENEL) took lands. Locals felt that they did not benefit from these losses.
2. There was no guarantee that the park would create jobs for locals; indeed the idea of mainland Italians coming into the Gennargentu territories was most unwelcome.
3. A further loss of autonomy would result from a national park. This reflected an ongoing mistrust of state management.
4. Tourism created by a park would not benefit the area because there doesn't yet exist a base structure to accommodate visitors. There are few hotels or lodgings, the roads are still in bad shape, and there are few

¹⁶ I attended meetings in the middle of June 1992 at Villanova, Urzulei, Villagrande, Arzana, and Baunei.

restaurants. Overall, people were concerned that Ogliastra would become like the Costa Smeralda (the northern coast of Sardinia), where outside investors have made millions by building elaborate resort hotels and villages.

During the discussions there was confusion about the economic viability of the project, and it was unclear whether the Italian state was investing 80,000 million lire (around 57 million dollars) as quoted by local politicians or 600,000 million (around 428 million dollars) as reported by the press.

Besides the lack of guarantees, people opposed the park for philosophical reasons. Many people said that a park already existed, that they already had one, so why create a bureaucracy? Others felt that shepherds had contributed to the beauty of the land and therefore recognition was owed to them. At public meetings shepherds often took credit for the preservation of the Gennargentu area, as illustrated by this Villanovese shepherd:

"If there is something to save here, it is due to the presence of the shepherds, of the locals" (June 15, 1992 at Villanova).

Informants told me that transhumance allowed for the recovery of vegetation, and that the shepherds' presence in the countryside helped to protect lands since they were always keeping an eye on things. Similar opinions were expressed by the media. For example, domestic animals were presented as

contributors to the upkeep of nature:

"..less known is their (sheep and goats) ecological significance, that is, that with their presence they become the guardians of nature" (Roj 1991, 12).

Some responses were less extreme. For example, the mayor of Villagrande and Villanova said:

"Our territory has been safeguarded by the people who have lived in it. Yet some degradation of lands exists and must be mended so that people don't say that we don't know how to take care of our territory" (June 22, 1992 meeting in Villagrande).

During these meetings concern was often expressed by locals about outside opinions of Sardinian treatment of their territories.

At these meetings some people saw the issue at hand as not just about a park, but about cultural survival. In Urzulei, one citizen gave an emotional talk about the significance of local lands for his identity:

"I am the territory, not just the wild animals. These areas are our *inrangias*¹⁷ (June 20, 1992 meeting).

It is important to stress here that the local language (Sardo) was often used during these meetings and is a further sign of independence and cultural identity. The inclusion of people working inside their territories as a "part of nature" was a motif that many shepherds responded to, some with passion. As one shepherd cried: "Save the king of the mountain!" (meeting at Villagrande, June 22, 1992).

¹⁷ Translated from Sardo: The bones and meat.

Hostility was expressed by shepherds and other locals towards environmentalists. On June 20th, 1992, several representatives from World Wildlife Fund, who had been invited by the local administration to participate in the town meeting about the park, were driven out of town (in reverse) by an angry mob before they could even get out of their car. One shepherd declared that ecologists were superfluous for a healthy environment. He said: "In the zones where there are no greens, we have green" (Urzulei meeting on June 20th, 1992). In this pun this shepherd was implying that natural beauty is not due to the presence of ecologists; rather ecologists can be found in areas that have already been ruined by people.

ANIMAL PRODUCTS AND FOOD

Wildlife and domestic animals use of lands are not the only sources of debate. Shepherds and others argue that the products of traditional pastoralism deserve consideration. With free ranging animals fed from natural vegetation, the quality of cheese and meat is held in high esteem by locals. Sardinian shepherds and their families continually explain to visitors (such as myself) that "Everything we do is *genuino*", which means genuine or wholesome, and of the best quality. During social occasions such as *spuntini* (endless meals usually eaten out of doors with many guests and lots of food),

talk tends to center around the quality of the meat and cheese that shepherds have provided for the occasion. Eating is an important occasion for shepherds and only they cook and roast the meat; this has been viewed as a symbol of shepherd's power of animal ownership (Caltagirone 1989, 37). Shepherds claim that in contrast to the problems of modern industrialization which they view as squalid and "unnatural," they are organic in their production. The Sardinian shepherd raises sheep herds for milk production in a free ranging "natural" environment. He milks his sheep and goats by hand and is familiar with each animal. As one shepherd told me, he respects his animals and knows them individually. If a sheep is sick he can feel it with his hands, and knows not to use the milk. With this logic, shepherds have argued that they are in harmony with nature. For Sardinian shepherds, nature constitutes a place where they can roam freely, hunt and gather, herd, and enjoy *spuntini*. They take pride in their hunting abilities and enjoy looking for wildlife such as wild rams. Shepherds boast that they can spot wildlife better than visitors because they are attuned to their natural surroundings. Some shepherds in Villanova said that they were not opposed to a park, they were just opposed to this (Law 394) park. But a park regulated by the community (providing jobs for locals...), would not be a bad idea according to some.

REFLECTIONS ON NATURE IN VILLANOVA

During the summer of 1992, when Villanova shepherds were gathered together at the local bars or in the main piazza for social exchange, the discussion often centered around the environment. One Villanova shepherd told me that a recent plantation of pine trees as part of a reforestation project on the far side of the Flumendosa dam was a failure. When I asked him why he replied that the project had only created one job (caretaker) and that there was no possibility for forage. In fact many shepherds in Villanova criticized the planting of pines because they are not the native live oaks that grew previously, and because they are a fire hazard and do not allow other vegetation to grow underneath.

Another shepherd told of how he took a naturalist to photograph a special tree whose roots grew many meters above ground. The shepherd was promised a copy of the forthcoming book by the naturalist. When this promise was not kept, in a fit of anger the shepherd boasted that he would tear down the tree. However, the shepherd did not do so and has since taken others to view the site. In my opinion, he was declaring a sense of his "rights" over the environment as well as of his honor.

Shepherds often spoke about their knowledge of their territories. They conversed about the quality of water sources, grading different natural springs by how one was good

for the kidneys while another was only good for cleaning up after the slaughtering of animals. Shepherds' knowledge about "secret" water sources and other special places was a common topic of discussion. Each shepherd seemed to have some special natural place that he coveted within the local territory, besides the land around his *ovile*.

CHAPTER 5 - SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

SUMMARY

In contemporary Sardinia, shepherds in the community of Villanova and Villagrande continue to practice traditional techniques, and they are resisting the establishment of the Gennargentu park (Law 394) which would take away much of their communal territories. In nearby highland communities similar behavior is evident. In recent years, the mountain regions of Sardinia have been linked with the vogue of ecology by the media, environmentalists, Italian politicians, and locals (Caltagirone 1989, 21). The inner Sardinian mountains have been characterized by outsiders as "wild" and "desert" places which need to be preserved (Caltagirone 1989, 45). Sardinia's landscape can be compared with other places (e.g. East Africa), where outsiders have interpreted rural lands as areas of "wilderness", whereas in fact these "wild" areas are used by native inhabitants (Deihl 1985, 37). In Sardinia the views presented by locals and outsiders in debates about nature and about possible uses of communal lands are based on differing interpretations.

Sardinian shepherds' views about nature are grounded in a historical and cultural context. The inner mountain areas of Sardinia represented a place where shepherds were less restricted by centuries of invaders. The very fact of

isolation made it difficult for outside powers to exert strict controls and taxation over highland shepherd communities. Short and long distance transhumance allowed shepherds freedom of movement within and outside their communities. They were able to learn about their territories in intimate detail and considered themselves experts on all environmental aspects such as climate, vegetation, and topography (Buttau 1988, 27). Before the advent of a market economy Sardinian shepherds depended on the cycles of nature for economic subsistence. Highland shepherds relied on their physical strength and environmental knowledge to combat the often difficult circumstances of a pastoral livelihood (Buttau 1988, 10). Sardinian shepherds viewed themselves as knowledgeable, strong, hard working, independent, and able to adapt to environmental conditions. They called themselves kings of the mountains.

In the twentieth century different views about Sardinian shepherds have been portrayed by the media, academics, politicians, and environmentalists. Shepherds have been labelled "backwards", as portrayed in the 1977 film "Padre Padrone"¹⁸ which has received international acclaim. Shepherds have been classified as criminals and labelled as

¹⁸ "Padre Padrone" was written in 1975 by an ex Sardinian shepherd called Gavino Ledda, who portrayed Sardinian pastoralists as illiterate and practicing bestiality. The film was produced by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani in 1977 and won the Gold Palm at Cannes in 1977.

bandits. Deterministic viewpoints in the literature have compared Sardinian highland pastoral communities to their rocky and barren landscape, as societies that are culturally and socially degraded (Caltagirone 1989, 45). On the other hand, shepherds have been studied by local and visiting anthropologists because of their prized traditional practices. Local and international merchants have marketed shepherds' products as handcrafted and "natural." Attitudes about shepherds have helped shape the debate over the options (a park is one alternative) for communal lands.

THE GENNARGENTU PARK PROJECT

The park proposal (Law 394) has met resistance from six communities in highland Sardinia and will probably be shelved if attitudes in these communities do not change.¹⁹ Local opposition has been based on a mistrust of outside authorities, a perceived lack of financial guarantees, a desire for continued autonomy in the direction of communal land management, and differing cultural interpretations of nature. Some shepherds have equated the park controversy with cultural survival. They have argued that shepherds require freedom of action in order to preserve tradition. As a last resort, access to communal lands offer a security for

¹⁹ Shepherds tended to dominate the organized resistance to the park project, but some locals (especially those in the service sector) were in favor of a park.

uneducated youths to make a living as a shepherd.

COMMUNAL LANDS

Communal land use has been practiced for centuries by highland Sardinian shepherds and has come to be accepted as a kind of right. Although communal lands have not provided all the territories necessary for shepherds' flocks, it has given them advantages in highland areas where agriculture has been less successful. With the abandonment of agricultural land use in highland areas in the 1960s, and due to competing markets and the failure of reforms, shepherds have gained control of abandoned lands as an additional resource and have been able to utilize these natural pastures without having to transform them (Meloni 1984, 27). Communal lands are an element that has contributed to the permanence of pastoralism as a low cost resource, and they minimize economic risk for Sardinian shepherds²⁰ (Meloni 1984, 138).

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have focused on shepherds' attitudes towards their physical environment. I have described how shepherds view local territories as "their domain" based on

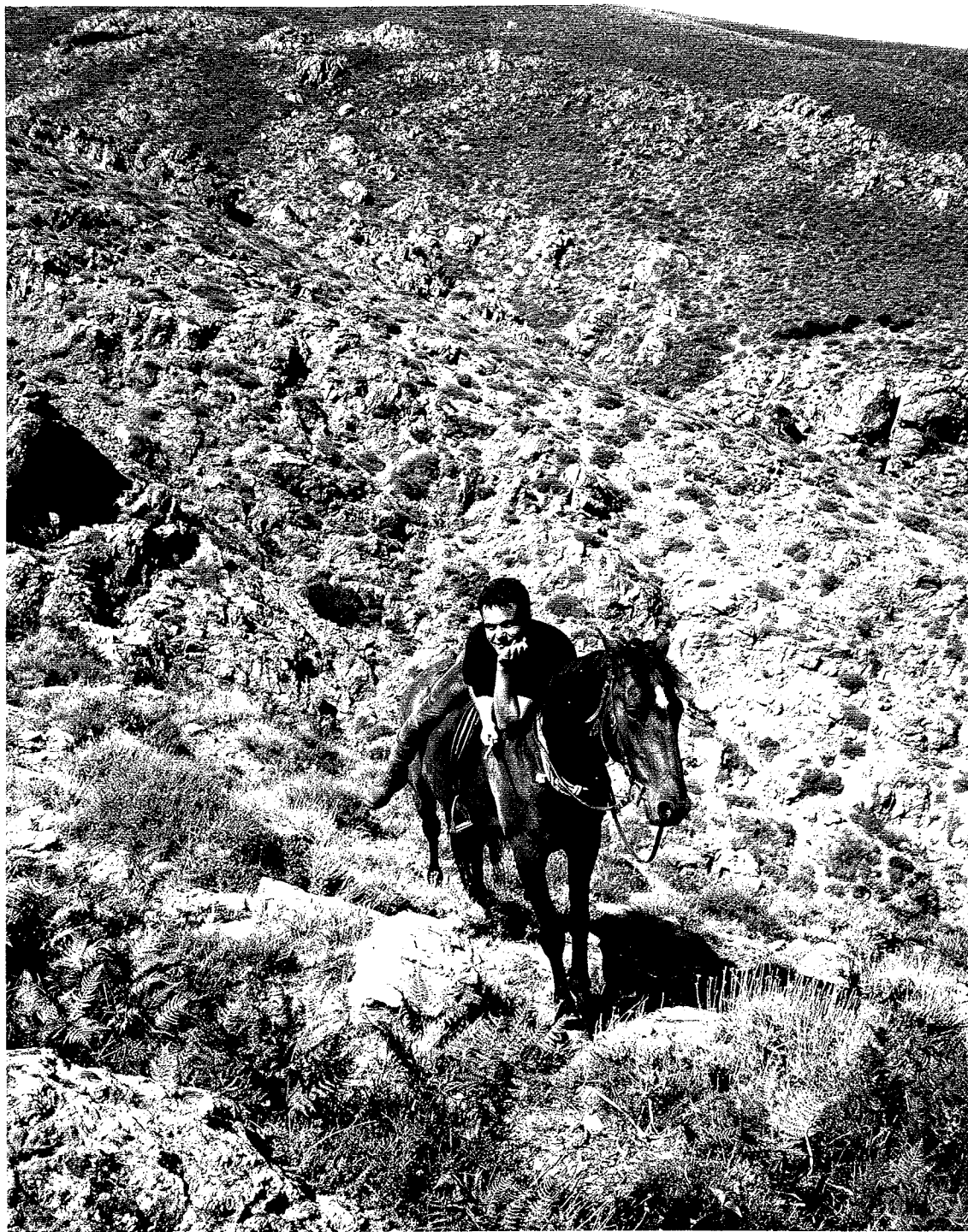
²⁰ While rents on private properties have fluctuated with market values, communal land costs have stayed low and stable, thus allowing shepherds a constant factor during times of economic change (Meloni 1984, 138).

notions of land as a "productive" space rather than a "wild" place. For highland Sardinian shepherds, wild places are non-existent because areas of natural vegetation are always used for pasture or hunting and gathering and comprise part of their local economy (Angioni 1982, 112).

The Gennargentu park controversy has created local discussions about shepherds use of lands. The debate over the future of communal lands has sharpened views about how the landscape has been treated up to the present, with both positive and negative representations of traditional pastoralism. I have shown that some Sardinian shepherds use ecological rhetoric in defence of their customary practices. I have described customary practices as the movement of herds, hand production of milk and cheese, and an annual work cycle based on traditional methods. The annual work cycle has not drastically changed for many highland shepherds; rather present day extensive pastoralism is a combination of inherited elements and new opportunities²¹ (Meloni 1984, 133). Young shepherds in highland communities continue to follow transhumance routes by foot or by horseback (see Figure 6), yet they are able to return home in the evening by car once the herds are settled in a new territory. With increased

²¹ New opportunities such as European Economic Community subsidies and temporary work to supplement income. Some shepherds in Villanova take supplemental jobs, e.g. as night watchman over new road building sites or as part-time forest rangers (hired by the community).

Figure 6. Young Shepherd During Short Distance Transhumance



(Source: Photo by M.K. 1992)

mobility Sardinian shepherds continue to pasture domestic animals while adding other activities to their workday (such as driving to administrators' offices to make subsidy requests). Since the 1960s shepherds have relied on subsidized market prices from the European Economic Community which has given price advantages to Sardinians for milk products (Meloni 1984, 37).

While Sardinian pastoralism has undergone changes, for shepherds it retains much of its historic character. Villanova shepherds highlight the "natural" modes of their production. They proclaim themselves protectors of nature and producers of organic foods. Yet problems of overgrazing and fire damage are visible to visitors such as myself. Sardinian shepherds do not own many lands and thus are not disposed to invest capital into the improvement of pastures (Caltagirone 1989, 54). Pastoral land use has contributed to the present condition of the environment around Villanova. Sardinian shepherds argue that it is owing to a long history of outside exploitation of Sardinia's natural resources that some lands are degraded.

The landscape of the Sardinian highlands appears empty to the casual observer. This is due in part to the lack of enclosures and to low population levels. Only the shepherd's modernized *ovile* is evident as a sign of human presence and adaptation. The *ovile* delineates a particular shepherd's work

territory and represents his symbolic dominance of the landscape.

Isolation and autonomy have been key factors in shaping Sardinian shepherds' identity. Shepherds have worked hard for centuries to make a living from a precarious environment and have not only survived but are considered wealthy by some people.²² Highland Sardinian shepherds are adjusting. They read the Sardinian newspapers, watch the national television news, and go to meetings and conferences when the topic is pastoralism. Sardinian shepherds in Villanova have learned to use ecological language, taken from the media and from outsiders, in their fight for continued land use practices as another form of adaptation.

²² Many shepherds in contemporary Sardinia own large houses and drive expensive cars.

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