

SIBIU COUNTY COUNCIL
„ASTRA” NATIONAL MUSEUM COMPLEX SIBIU
„ASTRA” MUSEUM OF
TRADITIONAL FOLK CIVILIZATION SIBIU

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**„ASTRA”
MUSEUM OF
TRADITIONAL
FOLK CIVILIZATION
(Dumbrava Sibiului)
Catalogue**



Publishing House „ASTRA MUSEUM”
Sibiu, 2008

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The sector of *traditional* transportation offers a detailed synthesis of the most different technical systems and auxiliary equipment from all over Romania that exhibit the most diverse ways of circulating raw materials, tools and finished products within and between homesteads, villages (and towns), farm lands, exploited areas, and lastly between specialized production centers, markets and even provinces.

In their own way, means of transportation constitutes the „vascular system” of work process, playing an important role in the history of mankind's civilization since the Neolithic period until the present day while also serving as objective and relevant pinpoints of technical and scientific progress.

In every historical epoch the means of transportation reflect quantity, value and specificity of production, levels of consumption and market development, interchangeable relationships, with each and every community (regional or zonal) open to exchange, both receiving and giving.

We will not make a list of means of individual transportation (which will be exposed in the pavilion section) but will describe all traditional means of transportation, the rolling (the most important), sliding, and floating ones.

1. *The rolling means of transportation* represented, in post-Neolithic society, a revolution in the circulation of the products of work. The invention of the wheel was „a brilliant success of prehistoric carpentry” (V. Gordon Childe).

The wheel cart appeared on Romanian territory during the Bronze Age, as revealed by the discoveries of Cuculata (1800 BC). It offered a higher stability to the human communities and allowed for the exploitation of larger plots of land that could be covered on a day trip by cart.

There are two fundamental types: the *pole carts* for horned animals and *shaft wagons* for horses and donkeys. The rolling means of transportation then diversified into various types and structures depending on general and particular factors such as natural (geographical) and cultural (economic) factors.

There are three distinct types according to the forms of relief: *field carts*, usually the biggest as the flat terrain did not require special towing, allowing for the maximum distance between the diameter of the front wheels and the diameter of the hind wheels, in order to gain speed; *hill carts*, mid-sized and the most diverse due to the great diversity of terrain and differing types of work required; and the *mountain carts*, smaller but sturdier as the towing effort is the greatest, resulting in carts with equal diameters of the front and hind wheels due to the steep slopes traversed.

During the Middle Ages numerous villages, located near borders, mountain passes and mountain valleys, specialized in the transportation of raw materials or finished products, which helped these towns develop economically and stimulated merchandize exchange between the three Romanian states, which had complementary economies. The rolling means of transportations pulled by animals adapted to both the serving *working needs* as well as *transported materials*.

One type of transport vehicle, according to this criterion, was the *low-wheeled, high-brimmed cart* used for carrying agricultural products (grains, fruit, vegetables), natural fertilizers, construction materials and crafts materials. The *cart, with a high brim* and a grid made from sticks, was used for transporting vegetables with high volumes and low weight (grain sheaves, straws, hay, hemp, reef etc.).

Transporting timber or firewood usually required a cart adapted by removing the walls (brims) and installing a long „heart” instead of a short "heart" in order to balance the weight on the two sets of wheels.

Another interesting case of *adapting the construction of the cart to fit big barrels* to transport wine or water vessels (the case of water carts in Dobrogea) was the unexpected discovery of a 18th century cart of this type, which is exhibited at the Wood Museum from Câmpulung Moldovenesc.

Another special cart type, from Southern Transylvania, is the cart with only hind wheels. A plow would be attached to the cart and would play the role of the front wheels until they reached the field where the plow would be disconnected and used for plowing.

There are other types of *two-wheeled carts* such as „teleaga” and „saca”. A particular case, mentioned in medieval documents, is the *cart with a double profap*, used in hilly and mountainous areas, that prevents the cart from changing direction quickly, thus avoiding danger (for example retreating from an invading enemy), as required by strategic considerations.

Throughout history the rolling means of transportation improved by *consolidating* the wooden wheels with metal and later locking the wheels and carts.

In certain foothill ethnographic regions, which were more conservative, people still have still preserved, until the present day, the memory of such carts and even continue to mend such carts made only of wood, with massive ash tree or oak wheels with no metal enforcement, with a more rapid „uzura”, and less comfortable ride.

The introducing of metal reinforcement to the wheels began by adding a metal band to the exterior of the wheel with hobnails, mainly covering the less resistant parts where wooden boards were joined together and later applying metal around the entire wheel.

A special chapter of the rolling means of transportation is represented by the wagons with wooden wheels on wooden tracks that transported gold ore underground and at the entrances of the mines, and which were used in traditional mining until the end of the 1950's.

This highly efficient system, compared to the basket and sack transportation (used until the primitive rail's invention in Transylvania in 16th century) was exhibited in the Transportation Museum of Berlin and represented a first for Romania in Europe.

2. *The sliding means of transportation*, far less important, pulled by animals (mostly as *sledges*), were, and still are, used in winter for all the necessities of a household and have been adapted through the use of a basket to transport materials and people or by using only the runners to carry timber. For long and heavy timber they used a set of runners in the front and another set in the back, set far apart in order to fasten the load at both ends. This system is called „*cocarla*”.

3. The category of *floating means of transportation* has been long used by the inhabitants of these realms. The most frequent execution technique for boats was the carving out of the inside of one solid tree trunk (Arrian talks about these boats when narrating the story of crossing the Danube in Alexander the Great's military campaign in 335 BC). This technique is still used in certain areas.

Building boats on a curved wooden skeleton („*crivace*”), on which boards were placed and then the entire boat sealed with hemp and tar to bring impermeability, allowed for the building of bigger and better floating vehicles.

Similar techniques were used for building *floating bridges*, named „*broduri*” or „*bacuri*” in documents, that allowed for the crossing of big rivers in the interior of the country (on the Mureş River such bridges appeared in the 10th century and such structures also appeared on the Olt, Prut and Danube Rivers).

There are two types of bridges: bridges over rivers were constructed using hemp cable suspension („*hurduzau*”) or, more recently, using metal cables. Over the Danube the bridges with blades were employed (a wheel, activated by manually by rotating a curved rod inside the boat, then activated the wheel so as to go upstream until reaching the middle of the river from where the ferry was maneuvered using oars and the currents towards the shore, in a straight line from the departing point).

There are categories, types, and subtypes of original monuments such as floating bridges and solid tree trunk boats presented to the public together with tools that are exhibited in a thematic pavilion (including 22 pieces). There are a total of 109 exhibits in museum and in storage, giving the visitor a broad view of transportation civilization of the Romanian people.



74 C Pavilion for the Exhibition of Traditional Means of Transportation

Traditional transportation eased occupational, trading, and commercial activities and moved resources, agricultural products, merchandize and people, all essential components of folk civilization.

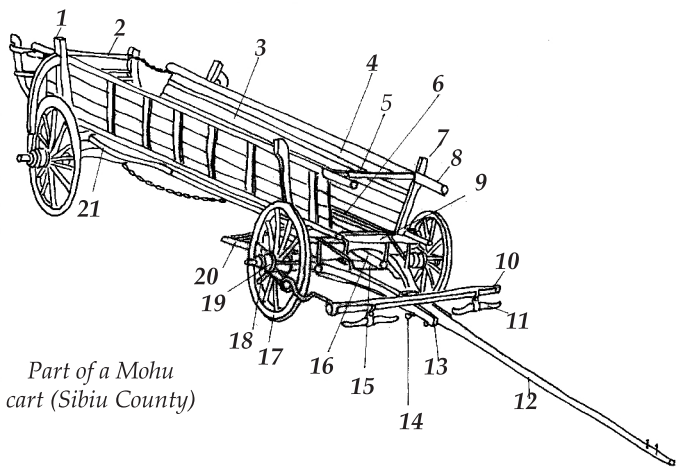
There were many types of means of transportation from ground transportation to both running and static water vehicles. All of them are presented in one sector of the museum.

Traditional vehicles originated from archaic means of transportation (some of them still present in the villages) such as dragging cargo on the ground. As humans could not move very far under such circumstances without great difficulties, transportation means have been improved through the addition of specific technical features: runners to slide on snow, ice or even ground, and above all, the wheel. Speed, distances and types of cargo would change throughout each level of the development of human communities.

The sledges and two-wheeled vehicles named „*caroi*” or „*telegi*”, „*cotigi*” etc. are the simplest forms of transportation. They were transformed into four-wheeled vehicles pulled by horses, becoming the most frequently used vehicles that are generically named *carts* (Lat. *Carrus*).



Image of the pavilion



Part of a Mohu cart (Sibiu County)

- 1 - side support plank/stave
- 2 - wagon tail
- 3 - wagon body/basket
- 4 - wagon ladder (sides)
- 5 - wagon body rib
- 6 - wagon bottom
- 7 - wagon body support pole
- 8 - wagon handle (bar)
- 9 - wooden piece suspended above the axle for wagon body support
- 10 - wagon tongue/tether
- 11 - cross collar
- 12 - shaft

- 13 - shaft harness / 14 - shaft clasp / 15 - axle / 16 - central axis shaft
- 17 - wheel rim / 18 - spoke / 19 - wheel hub / 20 - brake / 21 - wing

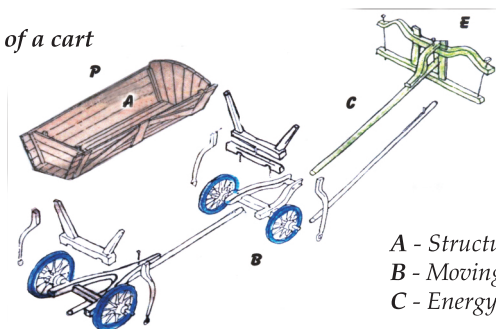
There are wide variety of types and subtypes of *wheeled vehicles*, each depending on its load: *natural resources, wood, hay, food, finished products and people*. Oxen (with yoke) would pull vehicles carrying a heavy load. Changing towing from oxen to horses led to an evolution in the means of transportation for merchandize as well as for people.

Many *wagons*, as well as the heavy wagons pulled by two horses (named after their place of origin: *Wagon of Săliște* for instance), are presented in the pavilion in the section of horse-pulled vehicles (*wagon „aispenar“*). Some of them have artistic value, the *painted wagons*, or serve a custom, such as the *wedding wagons*.

In the 19th century town-specific vehicles, *carriages* (used as local post coaches) or *hansoms* began appearing in villages. The *Rășinari post coach* carried mail, merchandize, and people while the *Vicșani* (Suceava County) took travelers to the train station.

The pavilion exhibition is completed with a set of ox shoes and horseshoes from Jina (Sibiu County), as well as yokes. There are also structures and elements of a cart: loading the burden, rolling structures and transmission and auxiliary structures.

Structure of a cart



Legend:

- A - Structures of annexing the load
- B - Moving structures: wheels, runners
- C - Energy and transmission structures



*„Teleaga”,
Viștea de Jos, Brașov County*



*Painted wagon,
Ludoș, Sibiu County*



*Oxen cart,
Costești, Vâlcea County*



*„Ogașe” cart,
Drăguș, Brașov County*



*Hay Cart,
Feneș, județul Alba*



*Postal Cart,
Rășinari, județul Sibiu*



*„Caroaiă”,
Mohu, Sibiu County*



*Hansom,
Vicșani, Suceava County*

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