

utilized in festive and ritual situations – to accompany *horos*, wedding rituals and processions. The *tapan* is a must in some calendar rituals – for the plays of the *kukers* (mummers)⁷ and *nestinars*⁸. The *tapan* produces two rhythms, sometimes polymetrical – a rhythmic fundament of long and strong values, obtained with the stroke of the *kiyak* over the right membrane; and a rhythmic superstructure of shorter and weaker values produced by the stick over the left membrane. The literature emphasizes on its accompanying function especially in the units with a *zurna*(s), much rarely with bagpipe, *kaval*, etc. [Джуджев, 1975:125-130, Тодоров, 1973:36-37].

Nowadays the large *tapans* having a diameter of 800 or 900 are just a memory in the valleys of the Mesta and Strouma rivers. Those met are smaller and made of traditional materials according to the old technologies. Most often are used bass drums of synthetic materials with metal hoops and plastic membranes, having a diameter of 400 or 500 mm.

The round wooden frame (*obrach*, *cember*, *kasnak*) of the *tapans* from Southwest Bulgaria is made of hazel, walnut, beech, chestnut. In the past the wood used to be “bent over vapour” [АИФ, I, № 100, с. 11; Б., p.17].

The membranes (*kozhi*, *deri*) stretched at both sides of the hoop are sheep or lamb skins. They are tightened and fasten “to the *cember* with ropes” [АИФ, I, № 100, с. 10-11; Б., p.17]. Then the wooden hoops are attached to the corpus and fasten with ropes (*sizimki*).

The big stick (*tokmak*, *tapanarka*, *chukalka*, *krokulka*) is made of firm wood “thick and strong” – beech, pear, walnut, *acacia*” [АИФ, I, № 100, с. 11; Б., p.17; Ч., p.10; М.М., p.34]. Beech material is preferred as “being the lightest” [Д.К., 10/2001, p.51]. They “carve” the *tokmak* with a pocket knife and a piece of glass in order to get the desired shape: “I made it this way to be light and fine. ‘Cause when you strike the very stroke it goes exactly into the center. Even if you strike gently, it responds. Let me drop my hand like that, it responds exactly. That’s very important for the *tokmak*” [О.Ф., p.52].

The small stick (*prachka*, *chibuk*, *chubuk*) is made of kisil wood. The kisil tree stick is considered “better, yielding a better sound and stands longer”, “the kisil’s strong and straight” [АИФ, I, № 100, с. 11; Б., p.17; О.Ф., p.51]. Additional manipulations are needed to make the stick “thicker”, and “to respond”: “You put it into fire, it’s made, roasted, carved to become. Raw never. It shrinks, if it’s raw... When roasted it gets firmer. Much attention must be paid not to burn it. Just to have it dry” [Д.К., 10/2001, p.51].

During performances the *tapan* is slung over the shoulder or the neck of the *tapançi*. The sticks the big and the small are held in convenience: “Who’s right-handed hold the *tapanarka* in his right hand, who’s left handed with the left one. I hold the *tapanarka* in the right hand in the left – the stick” [Б., p.18].

In practice the membranes are put into motion by striking them with the big stick, the small one or with hands.

With regard to the performance the two sticks have different functions. The big one measures the “main strike”, i.e. it acts like a bass. The small stick “gives a hand”, “these are the lungs of the *tapans*, the *chibuk* drones the times”. The *tokmak* measures the strong metro-rhythmical time and marks the times while the *chibuk* ornaments the current rhythm: “The chief stroke, that is one, is with the *tapanarka*. And with the *prachka* is the ornamenting which must make the beauty of the *tapan*, the melody. How can I tell when does the chief stroke come... When the melody begins, and you begin at first with the *tapanarka* and then with *prachka*. It holds the tempo. And the *prachka* decorates the things” [Б., p.17].