

The region of Petrich

The centres of *zurnaci* tradition in this region are the village of Kavrakirovo and the town of Petrich wherefrom the most famous *svirkari* have emerged. Kavrakirovo may serve as an example: at present it has seven or eight active *zurnaci* bands. The bands are composed of two *zurnacies* and a *tapanci*, and as rule bear the names of the leading maestri, i.e. Selim's band, that of his son, Demcho's (the band of Demcho Kurtov), Esfer's, Sabrin's, Samir's, Jashar's, The well known *zurnaci* clans in Petrich are the Bayrovs, Limanovs, Kurtovs and Demirovs.

In the past the most esteemed maestro used to be Kurta Demo (Kurta Limanov), who was born in 1860-s in Greece or Albania as the clan annals say. "He was the very *bash-zurnaci* about Petrich" who was the ancestor of a large musicians' clan. His successors now live in Kavrakirovo and Petrich. Kurta Limanov had six children – three sons and three daughters. The best musical successors among them were his sons Liman and Ismail.

Ismail Kurtov has been called "the most famous *zurnaci*-maestro in the region" in the 1950s and 1960s. His photographs have been published in several publications about the *zurna* in Bulgaria. He was awarded a gold medal at the Folklore Festival in Koprivstitsa, he was one to provide the musical information about the *zurna* in the region of Petrich, kept at the Archives of the Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The *zurnacilik* was inherited by his sons Assen, Vasko and Nasko. Assen at the beginning was his father's *glashnik* and later on became a maestro. Musicians are also the three sons of Assen – Miho, Vasko and Ivan.

Liman Kurtov has five 5 sons – all of them *zurnacies*. Maestri are Shein, Demcho and Mechik (Mecho) while Osman and Kurta are *glashnici*. The most famous of them is Shein Kurtov from Petrich who has played 6 years for the Pirin Folk Ensemble of Blagoevgrad. He has been recorded at the Bulgarian National Radio and Balkanton⁸. Shein has not been playing in the recent years. An active *zurnaci* is his brother Demcho, living in Kavrakirovo, who is a maestro with his own band and has recorded an album with *zurnaci* music from the region. Demcho has taught his two sons Samir and Selim who are also maestri. Samir (Krassimir) Kurtov is a phenomenon as a virtuoso well known all over Southwest Bulgaria. He also has his band and has recorded an album. The other son of Liman Kurtov – Osman – has a son Liman who is a *zurnaci*-maestro. His uncle Kurta is among the few maestri in Southwest Bulgaria who make *zurnas*.

The daughter of Kurta Limanov, Biba, has a son who is a *zurnaci*-maestro as well. His name is Yashar Chelikov and his band has an album with the *Sestri Biserovi*⁹.

Another daughter of Kurta Limanov, Pakize, is mother of another prominent musician from Kavrakirovo – Selim Demirov. Selim is among the best connoisseurs of Bulgarian traditional music. He has participated in folklore festivals at home and abroad, toured abroad and has a published album of three parts. He has had a good number of pupils. His sons Demcho and Georgy (Gringo) also play the *zurna* and *tapan*.

From his father's side Selim Demirov is a descendant of another *zurnacies*' clan. His grandfather Ilyo Demirov (Demo) used to play the *zurna* while his brother Nuri – the *tapan*. Selim states that he had learnt the "old *Rusalia* music from his grandfather Kurta who used to play to the *komiti* a 100 years ago. In those days the Kurtas were the most famous among all the *zurnacies*' clans. Ilyo Demirov – Beliyo Demir (the white Demir) used to be the most outstanding among them. He was the father of the above mentioned Selim Demirov.