

vals. Till the 1970s those *horos* used to be still danced at the local fairs, weddings, feasts at the Day of Saint of the local church. Ilia Vretenarov mentioned by the *zurnaci* used be one of the masters of the “heavy *horos*”. He and Kosta Petrov, Petar Chakrakchiev, Kostadin Kudov, etc. were founders and the major figures in the dance ensembles of Petrich. The first ensemble was founded in 1944 and their documented history shows by photographs that two *zurnaci* and *tapanci* were present inevitably in any dance ensemble [Илѣтков, 2000:209-224].

In the past, *Rusalia* games used to have mystical and magical functions, being ecstatic rituals of transition, they are connected with initiation. Some authors claim they are a custom not of people being consecrated, but of people already consecrated. Later they were considered rituals of expelling the evil spirits with curing elements and organized by a new type of consecrated people (*Komiti* – members of IMRO). They lead the *Rusalia* in actions for raising funds needed to build churches, schools, fountains and bridges. Thus after the Balkan Wars and World War I they were transmitted from the south and southwest by the refugees to Petrich and Gorna Dzhumaia. The *Rusalia* used to be performed up to the 1930s. Presently dominating is their entertaining aspect, which is very untypical of the music and dances of the *Rusalia* games. The show and the theatrical aspect prevail not only in the stage presentations of the ritual by professional and amateur ensembles, but also in its spontaneous celebrations of the town folks of Petrich. *Frangalia* and *stanchinari* gather in a single set. Despite of the parody and carnival core of the *Surva* procession, the serious “statute” and discipline, inherited from the *Rusalia*, dominate. Not by chance all the participants in the ritual group and in the very feast obey the axe man. The spirit of the traditional *Rusalia* rituals lives in the “protocol” repertoire of the *zurnaci* music, in the stylish and festive *Rusalia* melodies and dances.

Masquerade games at New Year

The first day of the New Year, called *Vasiliovden* (the Day of St. Basil) or *Surva*, is celebrated by masquerade games in many settlements on the banks of the river Struma and Mesta (Petrich, Brezhani, Kadijtsa, Krupnik, Polena, Simitli, Razlog). The ritual personages (men in the tradition), members of the masquerade sets are denominated differently: *stanchinari*, *babgeri*, *chaushi*, etc. In the recent years this ritual practice has been activated and turned into one of the typical performance contexts for *zurnaci* music.

According to the tradition *babugeri* games are organized on *Surva* in the town of Simitli and some villages from the region (Oranovo neighbourhood, the villages of Polena, Krupnik, Brezhani, etc.). The masked men to the music of *zurnaci* groups. The feast is celebrated everywhere on January 1, except in the village of Kadijtsa where it is on January 14, according to the Old Orthodox calendar. Each of the four neighbourhoods in Simitli has a group that forms on the spot and, lead by the *zurnaci*, goes to the town square (several times the feast has been held on the town stadium). The two *babugeri* groups from Oranovo also join the common feast. In the past only men were members of the masked group, now women also may participate in the event. All of them but the musicians are masked: *babugeri* (wearing goat or ship skins), *devils* (in black garments), *old women* and *men*, *lasses* and *lads*, *gypsies* and *bears* (with bear skins). According to the local men who participate in the feast, the *zurnaci* have recently established themselves as an accompanying music. It has been so for the last 10-15 years.