

Before that the games went to the sound of drums and seldom of bagpipes. Nowadays they prefer the *zurnaci* from the region of Petrich, but they hire local players from the nearby village of Krupnik, too [K., p.3].

The carnival of old men (*starchev*) in Razlog is held on *Surva*. Its preparation starts about three months earlier. The preparation includes finding the skins, sewing the costumes, and renting big bells and *tjumbeleks*⁹. There used to be six neighbourhoods in Mehomia¹⁰ and each of them presented its own masked set at the town carnival. The participants wear sheep and goat skins, with bells hanging round the waist, having high hoods *chuchulki* on their heads. These personages are called *babugeri*. The groups of masks gather at the neighbourhood and in a certain order march to the town square. Each set is led by the *zurnas* and *tapans*, then come the watchmen and guardians. The main group is led by a chief, followed by three commanders, six *chaushes*. At the end come the clowns, the dancers, the *bear tamers* with *bears*, *fortunetellers*, *nomad gypsies*, *tinmen*, etc. The set stops at the town square. They dance *horos* to the sound of *zurnaci* music [Радущин, 1981:44].

We have observed that the New year masquerade games in Razlog are a still living tradition and the *zurnaci* formations are part of it. Various innovations can be outlined in the ritual structure: inclusion of the traditional carnival rituality into different manifestations of folklorism (festivals at home and abroad, amateur performances, folklore fairs, presentations in the media); participation of women in this traditionally male ritual; active participation of the Roma from the neighbourhood by an organized separate masked set.

The *starchev* carnival in Razlog is still among the most significant town feasts. The local people consider *zurnaci* music to be the inevitable part of this New Year ritual. It is stated that there is a non-written rule to begin the preparation for the feast as early as possible and as noisier as possible – with *zurnas*, *tapans* and bells. Several days before New Year the participants in the carnival begin “to rehearse” in their neighbourhoods, showing their costumes and dancing *horos* in the streets and at the square of the neighbourhood [C.B., p.36-37]. The true ritual is held on the morning of January 1. In the early hours of the New Year the *old men* put on the washed and combed animal skins and early in the morning gather in the middle of the neighbourhood. Lead by the *zurnas* and *tapans* they go to the house of the first *chaush* (This is the leader of the masked set. He is chosen by the other members of the group for having met the following requirements so that neighbourhood could be represented in the best way: active participation in the ritual during the recent years; age over 15-16; tall; healthy; possessing the best skins and bells). The *chaush* has the obligation to welcome the set in his home and give them food. He is also responsible for the musicians’ payment. After the masked set finishes with the festive breakfast, it marches to the town square to join the sets of all other neighbourhoods. According to the local organizers of cultural events the preparation, the processions and the town feast are spontaneous, they are not inspired and controlled by government or by non-government organizations. The town’s *chitalishte* restricts its help to scheduling the appearance of the sets at the town square, contacting the police and, when necessary, providing garments for the costumes.

The games of the different masked sets are presented at the town square. According to our informants the leading men in the contemporary masquerade are the *chaushi* – boys or young men who have not served the army yet, dressed in goatskins with *chuchulki* on their heads. They make a circle without music. The first *chaush* enters the circle with the