

local elder dressed in an old folklore costume from Razlog with a hooded cloak, a sheaf of wheat in hand. The *chaushi* jump, spin and ring the cow-bells hanging round their waists. Then come the *zurnaci* and the boys disguised like girls who dance *horos*. The *chaushi* go around the *horo* and guard it [K.X., p.41-43].

Masquerade games with *zurnaci* music have been organized in the Roma neighbourhood of Razlog since 1968. Before that Romas masked participants in the ritual and musicians had been members of the Bulgarian sets of Varosha, Cyril-and-Methodius, Gotse Delchev, etc. The preparation for the feast begins two or three days before New Year – the costumes are prepared and presented to the sound of *zurnaci* music. Unlike the Bulgarian ones, the Roma set visits the homes in the neighbourhood on the New year Eve in order to raise funds needed to pay the musicians. On December 31, at midnight is the Roma custom *Jadkata* – they go to ask for forgiveness from their parents and older relatives. After that the members of the masked set put on their costumes and gather at a certain place out of the neighbourhood, from where they start with the *zurnas* and *tapans* for the home of the first *chaush* and for that of the first *moma* (lass). They go around the neighbourhood and then march to the town centre for the unique competition between the masked sets of the neighbourhoods.

The *zurnaci* Mancho Kamburov tells that he was the first to establish an organized old men masquerade in the neighbourhood. The tradition began with a human *kurban* (sacrifice): “At those times Bulgariots made it (the masquerade) in every neighbour’ood. Gypsiots hadn’t it. Who had the guts, feeling himself a serious guy and ran to makes it in the neighbourhood. Me was to organize this thing – the neighburood to have it just the Gypsiots, to get out the quarter with *chaushi*, *babugeri*. And they took *kurban*. An old woman put a spell on the kiddo. I’d made oxen. And, it’d got out of me mind to put on them faces. When the bears gotta out and them oxen gotta frighten’. I’d made the cart like *kochija* (a wagon) – as if a bride there’s hidden in the wagon, as to resemble a Turkish wedding. Got them oxen frighten’, gonna and assassinated the kiddo. It’s in baby sling. And the old people said, “It’s a sacrifice, ‘cause it’s bein’ the first time”. And thus it’s gone... Regularly it’s and is still done. I created it. I’s both playing and I’d a program made for them. American Indian women I’d made...” [M.K., p.31].

A local Roma leader shares his experience as an organizer of the event in the peculiarities of the preparation and realization of the ritual. They rehearse the procession and the games, each participant – *chaush*, *moma*, *ergen* has his feature in the program. After the set has gathered he simultaneously films the games and directs the participants, each of whom has their own number. The *zurnaci* also follow his directions. The masquerade games held on January 1 in the Roma neighbourhood follow the pattern of those taking place in the Bulgarian neighbourhoods of Razlog: “such is the tradition and we ourselves follow it this way”. But the Roma from Razlog have the confidence of presenting something different: “here is the most colourfull neighbourhood with *babudgere* and *chaushi*”. The celebration of the Roma New Year *Vasilica* is celebrated according to Razlog custom with masquerade games. “Usually we go to the town centre. While on 14th we go out to the neighbourhood centre. We dance, enjoy ourselves, there are bears. For us the bears are a symbol of the expelling of the evil ghost. We use the bear skin. It is skinned and dried, and we put it over the man. But we use the gestures of the bear – me bow, wrestle with the people. The *zurnas* play constantly. Mainly *horos*, mainly Macedonian music. The *chaushi* dance separately. They rotate around the *horo*, as the tradition requires. And