

Contexts of performing zurnaci music at traditional family feasts

The family rituals *sünnet* and wedding, rich in ritual music and importance expanding over the frames of a single family and home, are lavishly celebrated by Bulgarian Muslims like it is all over the world of Islam. Both rituals have a good deal of common features in their denoting and procedure. For the Roma Muslims *sünnet* is *sünnet biaf* (*sünnet* wedding) [Fonseca, 1995:121]. Our informants from Gotse Delchev's region (Turks and Bulgarian Muslims) call the ritual under question *sünnet svatba*, or *sünet düeni* in contrast to *bulchinska svatba* or *gelin düeni* [M.M., p.16; A.M., p.22]. Both feasts had a common name "sur" in the Ottoman Empire. It used to denote feasts on the occasion of the Prince's circumcision as well as the wedding of the Princesses. In the past those feasts used to last from seven days to a fortnight, including pompous ceremonials in the Sultan's court – processions, dinners, shows like wrestling, races, fireworks, etc. [Мутафчиева, 1978:232-233]. It can be said that nowadays the Muslims from Southwest Bulgaria celebrate the *sünnet*s and weddings almost in the same manner, though not that luxuriously. At the *sünnet* the boys are dressed like princes and the girls are in princesses' outfits at their weddings. The modern feasts also have ritual processions – *alays*, festive dinners, wrestling competitions *gjuresh* and horse races *kushii*.

Sünnet

The *sünnet* is a ritual practice known by all Muslim communities in Bulgaria. There are few studies and publications dealing with this ritual in the folk culture of the Bulgarian Muslims and none about the music played at the celebrations. According to a brief description of a *sünnet* in the Rhodopes it is one of the greatest feasts for the families of Bulgarian Muslims. It may last even for a week in some places. The organizer of the feast is called *dülsajbija*. He invites the whole village, guests from the close settlements and commissions the musicians. During the second and the third day of the event the guests bring the presents – *banitsa* (pies), money, firewood – to his house. The circumcision begins very festively on the fourth day. There is a procession with a banner carrier ahead. It goes to the home of the *dülsajbija* where the children are circumcised by the *sünnetci*. At the same time *zurnas* and *tapans* play in the yard of the house and in the street. The same day the common village games and competitions – wrestling of *pehlivans* (wrestlers) and *kushii* take place [Цанева, 1994:139].

The *sünnet* is a practice, ritual and a feast only for Muslims from the Mesta river valley. Though the Roma from Petrich call themselves *Turkish Gypsies*, they do not have *sünnet*s: "Sünnet's are not held here. There are Turks only in Yavornitsa – a couple of houses. We hadn't undergone *sünnet* and we don't make it" [C.O., p.3]. On the other hand, the *zurnacies* from this region do know the repertoire for the ritual: "We play *sünnet*s about Gotse Delchev, Velingrad. The Turks make their *sünnet*s. Our folks aren't making them now... There is *alay* at the *sünnet*, the other kind, not the *Rusalia alay* [Д.К., p.2-3].

The results from our study have shown that the *sünnet* is a feast mainly for the community in the neighbourhood, the village, for the region, instead of the certain family. The informants from the Mesta river valley call *sünnet* both the act of the child's circumcision and the common feast on the occasion. Even when a certain family organizes the celebration of a *sünnet*, the guests from the neighbourhood, the village and even people from other settlements do take part in it. In the recent years the ritual feast is held