

Semantics of the instrument

The musical instrument has an ambivalent object-sound nature and a related symbolism which in traditional culture is revealed in the semantics of the instrument as an item and a sound [Захариева, 1998:143-144].

The *zurna* as an item is a symbol of living spiritualized creation in the speech of the *zurnacies*. The anthropomorphization of the instrument finds expression in calling some *zurnas* names or nicknames (the *zurna* of an old musician from Kavrakirovo is called Stamboliyka); naming parts of the instruments by parts of the human body. According to the terminology the instrument has *a head, a body, a little tongue*, it is kissed and loved by the player, its voice is like the human voice, it *plays* and *speaks* and *cries*.

The traditional symbolism of the *zurna* as an item includes beliefs about the magic meaning of the instruments. Some parts have a protective meaning – *chapراسي*, *narida* – containing a blue bead against the Evil Eye. The musicians explain the presence of the *chapراسي* both with their aesthetic and utilitarian function and with their magic-protective function to protect the player from the Evil Eye. The blue bead is put on a thin chain that goes through the *shator* of the *zurna* used to hang the instrument on it.

The symbolism of **the *zurna* as a sound** is very rich. It includes beliefs about the magic power of the *zurna*'s sound which allows contact with yonder powers and attracting and taming animals.

The song from the collection of the Miladinovi brothers [No 2] mentioned three hundred *samovilas* (forest fairies) dancing a *horos* but, having no *mefter* to play, send Gyurgya *samovila* to fetch one from Bitolja where she had heard him playing. This text is a variant of the motif “a shepherd puts a spell on a fairy with his playing and she becomes his wife”. In this case the player is not a shepherd *kavalci* but a *mefter* (a *zurnaci*). Singing and playing music is in traditional Slavic beliefs among the stable acoustic stereotypes characteristic of the behaviour of extraterrestrial forces [Виноградова, 1999:91]. The sound symbol of *samodivas* in Bulgarian demonological folklore is music and playing all night [Мицева, 1994:43, 44]. Having command of the *samodiva*'s music, the *zurnaci* becomes a part of the sound symbolic world of *samodivas* and with his magic pipe becomes a mediator between the human worlds and the hereafter.

The sound of the *zurna* is used to charm *samodivas* but it also has an influence on the living creatures of this world – animals and people. Many of the biographic stories of the *zurnacies* comprise episodes of taming snakes and birds.

The story about something that really happened to old Kurta goes on in the clan of the *zurnaci* Esref Kurtov from Kavrakirovo. Once while trying a new *piska* for his old big *zurna* he attracted a small bird that perched on the instrument [И., p.22]. Describing the skill of his father, Ibcho Dzhamalov says: “A nightingale perched on his *piska* while he was playing” [А.Д., p.2]. Attracting and hypnotizing a bird with the sound of *zurna* is transferred from the past. Legends from the clan's myths enter present day reality. A young *zurnaci* from Kavrakirovo tells that indeed a sparrow perched on his *zurna* and spent several seconds there while he was playing [С.К., 10/2001, p.29].

Zurnacies tell memories of how they have tamed snakes, reptiles and others with their instrument. According to our informants, these are not legends but things that have really happened to them. Usually the stories occur in the biographies and are connected with the presentation of their skill, virtuoso playing, power and the place of music in their lives. In the interview given by a *zurnaci* from Kavrakirovo he mentioned the following