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The Gypsy Music and Gypsy Musicians' Market in Bulgaria

Lozanka Peycheva & Ventsislav Dimov

The problem of music and musicians' market has been a very important aspect of the functioning of Gypsy music in Bulgaria. It concerns both the folk and popular music that is performed by Gypsy professionals to serve the needs of different types of communities rural and urban, having versatile ethno-confessional profile (Bulgarians, Gypsies, Turks, Bulgarian Muslims, foreigners). The music played by professional Gypsy musicians has been a part of the rituality, festivity and entertainment of large audiences.

Doubtless, the professional life of Gypsy musicians does bear the characteristic features of nomadism owing to migration around the music as well as to migration to the customer. This is a migration from the musicians' home places to other regions and settlements demanding their services; from their homes in the Gypsy neighbourhoods to the house, square or restaurant whereat their audience is feasting; from the podium at the public house to the table of the customer whom they treat with a "personalized" piece so that they could get an extra tip called *parsa*. Hence, it can be stated, that unlike the performers of art music Gypsy musicians have no constant house that is frequented by a chosen audience. Their "house" and "stage" are the roads, the migration to different audiences. Created and developed on those roads, the music performed by the Gypsy musicians also has nomadic character – it is mobile (having a flexible repertoire always sensitive to the environment), adaptive (being oriented to the current demands) and vendible (it is offered to well-to-do customers who can afford the entertainment). The gypsy music is to a great extent freed from the conservative norms of the established musical traditions.

1. *The Gypsy Music*

Regardless to the territories they inhabit, the names they are called, the stereotypes applied to them by the host ethnic communities, the Gypsies have always been associated with music and the music gift. The music performed by professional Gypsy musicians can be called Gypsy as far as Gypsies produce it. In fact, this is hybrid music whose style, genre and repertoire are hard to define uniformly.

Starting from the 1850s one can paint several characteristic portraits of Bulgarian Gypsy music and Gypsy musicians.

In the 19th century, the Gypsies were professional musicians called *kemendjii* (kemanci< Turk. ‘violinist’) who played the rebeck or violin, *calgadji* (calgici< Turk. ‘player, musician’) who played in small orchestras combining local, Oriental and Western instruments and repertoire – very popular in the Balkan towns. As members of military bands, they used to play the zurnas and cattle drums during the Ottoman age. Later they started playing the brass instruments. Those 19th century musicians used to play Bulgarian folk music, Turkish, Balkan towns music, West-European light and military music. In contrast to population of other Gypsy groups they are usually described as well off, smart people, as travelling, inter-city musicians.

In the 20th century there were certain types of bands set up by Gypsy instrumentalists: *zurnaci* bands (comprising two/three zurnas and a *tapan* – drum); *calgaci* (comprising several different instruments: a violin, clarinet, *lauta* – a kind of cither, *tambura* – a mandolin, cymbal, *tapan*, and later accordion); brass bands; wedding orchestras. The latter occurred in the 1960s as a combination of acoustic and amplified instruments (clarinet, saxophone, accordion, electric guitar, synthesizer, percussion section).

The professional Gypsy musicians are nomads in their thinking as well – bearers of ancient and local folk traditions, all the while being open to the European music practice in the form of note literacy, music repertoire and functioning of the music itself. The melodies played by the professional Gypsy musicians are various in their origins and addresses: Bulgarian, Turkish, Greek, Albanian, Armenian, Serbian, Rumanian, Russian, West-European, part of the traditional Bulgarian, Balkan, Oriental, or later on the newer author, Western music, etc. In the second half of 20th century Gypsy musicians are authors and performers of the most popular and best-sold music in Bulgaria – the music of the wedding

orchestras, and in the 1990s defined as *ethnopop* music, called *calga* [Peycheva, 1999:21–22; Dimov, 2001:101, 116].

2. *The Community of Gypsy Musicians*

Traditionally the Gypsy musicians are typical service nomads but nowadays those in Bulgaria are characterized by a sedentary way of life. Their families inhabit houses larger and nicer than the other homes in the Gypsy neighbourhoods. It is worth stressing that despite classifying them to the groups leading sedentary way of life, the fact that their trade involves travelling should be always kept in mind. The Gypsies play and sing visiting their customers. Offering their music as a commodity or a service is a kind of a service nomadism: namely when viewing the migration to the customer as well as serving the customers as a process.

The demand and the high remuneration of the professional Gypsy musicians reveal the importance of service they do in society. Despite being of high importance, the musicians have a low status in the local society [Merriam, 1964:136–137]. Underestimated and ignored as a social and ethnic group, as a rule the Gypsy musicians dwell in neighbourhoods, separated from the rest population, although they are acknowledged as a persistent element of the most important feasts of the non-Gypsy communities. Similar dualism: a group of low place in the social hierarchy having a high demand and importance in the life of higher social circles is observed for the professional musicians and nomadic actors both on the Balkans and in Asia: *barbiere* in Afghanistan, the low caste of *kusles* and *damai* in Nepal [Hoerbuerger, 1976:28].

Some traditional cultures are known to have social grouping of musicians in professional guilds. They are characteristic of their own subordination, inner segregation according to particular features, specific language and rituals [Merriam, 1964:140–143]. There is no information about such formal organization (musicians' guild, craftsmanship) of the Gypsy musicians in Bulgaria. It can be assumed that they do have some (though informal) unions of their own. The members of this community differ in their trade, which is highly praised and well paid. The maestros know each other, have talks over the commissioning of their groups, train apprentices and assistants, whom promote later as maestros. The historic sources show that in the 19th century the *zurnaci* formations used to be among the best-paid and most prestigious groups commissioned by wealthy people to

serve the feasts of their commons, families or guilds. It is known that they used to celebrate their professional (guild) holiday on January 17, the Day of St. Anthony [Tsepenev, 1972:18–26]. Their descendants are still keeping the guild consciousness. The Gypsy *zurnacies* are professionals, craftsmen who make their living playing music, offering the product of their work to territories conquered by their music. The famous groups have divided the markets in the region of their business. The *zurnacies* from the town of Gotse Delchev say: “The Checha (a region in the high parts of the Pirin and the Western Rhodopes mountains) is our own market. It is the Checha that’s feeding us” [Peycheva & Dimov, 2002:64–67].

The informality of the community of Gypsy musicians in Bulgaria continues in the social situating in the state. They sell their specific well-paid labour beyond any state regulations like social security, taxes or fares. Therefore, it could be said that the music profession of a greater part of the Gypsies is a kind of grey economy. Quite often, not only the authorities but the musicians as well are unaware of their own income. Those playing in the wedding orchestras – very fashionable and highly paid groups in the 1980s say: “Then I used not to know my money”. There is information that during the socialist period (1944–1989) the Gypsy musicians were prosecuted by the militia (socialist times police) for not having a socially useful job. The *zurnaci* A. M. from Gotse Delchev remembers: “The people used to work for 60 levs. Muti and I used to go to there on Saturday and get 150. Even 300 levs. Even the MVR (Abbreviation of the Ministry of Home Affairs – n. a.) used to prosecute us to go to work. And we escaped from the MVR. Why will I go to work for 60 levs? Them did not count this being a musician to be a profession.” As seen in the 1960s and 1970s the Gypsy *zurnacies* used to earn a lot more than the average monthly salary in the country. The authorities accused them of not working (at that time it was obligatory to be employed – n. a.) but the musicians used to have the self-consciousness of professionals being a part of the traditional craftsmen’s guilds in the town (those of the show-makers, smiths, bell-makers, cattle-dealers, etc.).

Professionalism is one of the trademarks of Bulgarian Gypsy musicians and their music. It is valid at the same extent for *calgacies* travelling all over the country in the past, for the members of the military bands in the Ottoman Empire and later of the military bands of the restored Bulgarian state as well as for the contemporary virtuosos from the wedding orchestras and

stars of Bulgarian music industry. Those are the Gypsy professionals having universal repertoire and ethnically conglomerate audience, musicians flattered by high demand and payment.

According to Tax Registers during the times of the Ottoman Empire (15th–19th century), the musician's craft used to be the most practiced by Gypsies from Bulgarian territories [Marushiakova, Popov, 2000:48–49].

After the liberation of Bulgaria from the Ottoman rule in 1878, the professional Gypsy musicians became members of the newly founded military and hall bands. However, their chief realization is connected with travelling and offering their musicians services to the feasts and the entertainment in villages and towns. The data of the English Gypsyologist Petulengro who described the Gypsies from Northeast Bulgaria in the early 20th century show two groups of Gypsies defined as musicians. A part of the larger group belongs to those leading sedentary way of life. The first are called *davulci* and *mehter* (probably descendants of the Ottoman military musicians – *zurnacies* and *tapancies* met nowadays in South-West Bulgaria). The other ones are denoted as *calgacies* or musicians popular as *drandars*. Their centre is the town of Kotel but they live in other places (Dobrich, Varna, Shumen, Sliven). Noteworthy is the fact that musicians are classified as sedentary remarking “that as a rule they play at all fairs” [Marushiakova, Popov, 1993:130]. Nevertheless, having in mind that playing at fairs imposes migrating life style one could doubt that the musicians are 100% sedentary.

3. Market forms of music nomadism practiced by Bulgarian Gypsies

Regardless of the tendencies to established sedentary way of life the professional Gypsy musicians were still practicing different forms of service nomadism in the 20th century. Travelling to the markets of their musicians labour, they expand the territories spatially (as roads, places, states) and musically (music instruments, formations, style, genre, repertoires). The most customary forms of Gypsy music nomadism are: performing at circus shows, at fairs, shows with tame animals, playing at public houses, season performances as tourist attractions, street performances, music *gurbet* (Gastarbeit) abroad.

The professional musicians belonging to the Ljaskovets and Kotel Gypsy groups are descendants of the *drandars* mentioned by Petulengro.

Currently most of them are members of groups playing at weddings and in restaurants, more rarely in brass bands. But their grandfathers used to roam around the country and play with the circus and military bands. They used to play at the fairs as well.

Playing at the circus shows is one of the typical forms of seasonal service nomadism practiced by Gypsy musicians. In the past those musicians were insulted for being nomads and travelling with their whole families: „They are mocking them because their wives accompany their men. And they sleep there in the circus. Even when pregnant, the women accompany their husbands. And when a child is born they have no diapers and wrap the infant in placard sheets. The whole families are on the road“ [H. Ch.]. Musicians from Ljaskovets, Kotel, Zlataritsa, Sliven, and Popovo used to play at the circus shows. There used to be competitions between travelling circuses and between circus music groups. The clarinet player M. T., a descendant of a music clan from Ljaskovets, retells the story of his grandfather: „Every August seven circus companies used to gather in Stara Zagora. It used to be a music competition of that time musicians... They used to advertise their circus. The people would say: “That’s the best music we’ll see the show of this circus! They used to judge according to the music. All the time before the show of the company they used to play in front of the tent. My granddad says, other musician used to come to deteriorate our performance, different tricks to make, so that they could earn something too. Everybody used to want money! Different tricks – they used to eat lemons... It used to be in 1936. My granddad belonged to the group of Asen Aivazov, the bandmaster of the Ljaskovets Circus. The circus of Kotel used to be managed by the Bilnikovs, by the Malakovs.“

We have copies of the membership cards issued to the Gypsy musicians by the Union of Circus Actors in Bulgaria. The cards and the oral stories recorded from contemporary musicians evidence that between the 1920s and 1940s there used to be many Gypsy musicians members of the numerous circus companies in Bulgaria. The bands used to be chiefly of brass instruments and had several functions in the shows: signalling the arrival of the circus, advertising of the forthcoming spectacles, gathering the audience with music, accompanying to the tricks of the circus actors, filling the pauses between each two tricks. The Gypsy musicians and their families used to spend the warmer half of the year with the circus on the road.

Playing at fairs is another form of seasonal service nomadism practiced by the Gypsy musicians in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian fairs – *panairi* (M. Greek *panegyris* – gathering of a large mob) are held annually on special dates usually in the summer half of the year. Besides the markets they are famous with the specific entertainment. They used to have the function of important events in the economic and cultural life of the local and supra local communities – regional (including several villages), district ones including a certain area of the country (Thrace, Dobrudzha, Strandzha). At fair time (lasting up to ten days) the music band is among the major entertainers: it accompanies the *boro* (traditional group dance); it performs at table in the temporary pavillions wherein one is being served not only food but music and dances as well; it performs at the fair circus shows; accompanies the shows of the tamed bears or monkeys; as well as the wrestling competitions.

During the first half of the 20th century professional Gypsy musicians used to play at the district fairs. The proprietors of the fair pubs (temporary restaurants in large tents) used to choose popular maestros whose music could attract the customers. According to the information we have, there used to be several ways to choose and commission the musicians. The proprietors used to choose musicians well known to the public – famous local names, gramophone record stars (like the Gypsy clarinettist Ramadan Lolov). Some of the owners of fair pubs used to travel around other fairs and commission the musicians they have already heard and liked. Often the active side of the music bargain used to be the musicians who went around the fair pubs and offered their services.

The fairs are the site whereas the musicians meet, exchange their ideas and repertoire, form new bands. It is not a rare phenomenon for a fair band to comprise celebrities and unknown musicians from different parts of Bulgaria: a clarinettist from Sliven, a violinist from Shumen, cymbalist from Plovdiv, etc. Many Gypsy bands meet at such fairs and compete in attracting customers for their pubs or circuses. The players from the fair bands have a universal repertoire so that the taste of any audiences could be pleased – village folks, towns folks, Bulgarians, Turks, etc.

The fair singers and fair songs are bound genetically and functionally to the fairs. The fair singers are travelling professional musicians, mostly Gypsies, who sing traditional songs and songs of their own composition. The songs sung to the accompaniment of a harmonium have usually melo-

dramatic, novelistic character. The Gypsy musician from Yambol, Marin Parushev (1860–1914), was the first to do business playing the harmonium and selling booklets with the songs he was singing. His son, Parush Parushev (1885–1936) continued his father's business and modernized it, recording fair songs. The Parushevs are the most popular Bulgarian musicians in the genre. Their family name became a synonym to a fair singer. Fair singers are typical travelling musicians who earn their living by performing outdoors. Usually an umbrella protects them and the harmonium from the rough weather. At certain intervals they offer the audience song-books containing the texts of songs performed. Contemporaries of the fair singers state that they used to be extremely popular, especially among women and old people. Often the listeners forgot to do their shopping which was in fact the reason to come to the market or the fair.

Playing for the tamed bear shows at the fairs is another form of musical nomadism. The music is performed by Gypsies *Ursars* (*Lingurs*) who tame animals (bears and monkeys) and give shows with them to a music accompaniment – playing and/ or singing. The typical instruments used for such shows are the tambourine, rebeck, nowadays even accordion. The repertoire is predominantly compounded of Bulgarian rustic folklore pieces. The musicians travel with their families during the summer half of the year. After the performance of the husband and the tame bear the wife and the kids go around with the hat. Though in a reduced scale, this practice is still vital. The greater part of Gypsies bear-tamers live in the village Yagoda, Stara Zagora region.

A new type of seasonal music nomadism – the tourist, emerged in the 1930s. It was connected with the tourist industry of modernizing Bulgaria. Professional musicians as a rule are among those who played pop music (light genre music). Thus it was easy to become tourist nomads going to work at ale-houses, night clubs and casinos on the Black Sea coast. Some of them were the popular Gypsy musicians like that time star violinist Atanas Sotirov – the Golden Gypsy Boy. In the second half of the 20th century the Gypsy music and Gypsy musicians were widely implemented for tourist attractions. Musicians, singers and dancers formed different groups, even ensembles. Special restaurants like *Tsiganski Tabor* (The Gypsy Camp) at the Golden Sands near Varna with Gypsy shows were opened. The musicians, playing at the shows in the resorts reside there during the summer season. They get a set salary but rely much more on

the tips from the customers – called *parsa, rasachka* (dropping). Playing at resorts is a part of the professional vitae of the most prominent Gypsy musicians in Bulgaria: Peyo Budakov, Hasan Chinchiru, Ventsislav Takev, Mokolu, and Chirpanovs.

In the past and nowadays one encounter the street Gypsy musicians who play in the underground passages, in parks, on the side walks, or in tram cars. Though this kind of job is not prestigious at all, the musicians have the confidence of professionals, performing class music. This self-confidence has been demonstrated by the cymbalist M. A. who used to play with his whole dignity in the streets of the Old Plovdiv and in the central underground passage in the city. Whenever a customer would drop a small coin he would reject it: “Take it, it is no a small change music.”

Until the 1950s the Gypsy musicians used to do their job usually travelling around the country – playing at fairs, weddings, village and town feasts, circus shows and resorts. In the second half of the 20th century the routes expanded to Europe and other parts of the world. Their music trips could be called trans-border nomadism. The transformation of the musicians’ routes is revealed by the number of biographic stories of famous musicians. The grandfather of the clarinettist M. T. used to travel all around Bulgaria with the Ljaskovets Circus. The grandson lives and plays in Sofia but seeks his realization abroad – he has been on tours in Greece and South France.

The already mentioned forms of service nomadism – local, inter-city, supraregional and trans-border are one of the core characteristics of Gypsy music and Gypsy musicians in Bulgaria during the second half of the 20th century. They are illustrated by the fates of professional Gypsy musicians, who are still playing in different bands.

The zurnacies D. K. and S. K., a father and son, though living in the village of Kavrakirovo, Petrich region, travel all around South-West Bulgaria with their group playing at weddings, sabors and other local feasts.

The saxophone player Yu. Yu. from Haskovo began to play in the Gypsy neighbourhood but became a national celebrity with a couple of wedding orchestras. He went on West European tour with Ivo Papzov’s group. Now he lives in the USA and has his own group that makes tours around America, Australia and Europe.

The trumpet player A. T. is a descendant of the Gypsy clan of “blowers” from the Kotel region. He lives in Sliven but his brass band has played in large Bulgarian towns. Lately he and the Karandila band conducted by him have been on tours in Germany, Italy and other European countries.

More examples of the dynamics of music nomadism can be brought up. But we find that those referred to illustrate elaborately the motion from tradition to modernity as well as that from the local to global as far as the Bulgarian market of Gypsy music is concerned.

4. *The notion market of Gypsy musicians. Commissioning, fees and parsa.*

Most often the musicians relate the term “market” (BG *pazar*) with bargaining (*pazarene*) and contracting (*pazarlik*), namely with negotiating the fee for their performance.

Bargaining and negotiations on the payment of the musicians’ work go between the customers and the musicians. The clarinet player V. P. a leader of a wedding orchestra describes the process as follows: “There comes the man and says what we’re supposed to play and how long. He sets his terms, and I, if having the possibility, make amends. I say the most complicated, it’s the money bargain, the price.” If the bargain is successful the musicians receive a prepayment (*caparo*). Having kept the settled contract they get the rest of the sum.

There is no unified fee for the musicians’ services. The payment is different for the various places and regions. It depends on the occasion, on the type of band, on the popularity and skill of the musicians, etc. In 1980s and 1990s the best-paid bands used to be the wedding orchestras from Thrace. According to musicians playing for Gypsies they used to get highest remuneration from the Kardarashi (This Gypsy groups is also called Goldsmiths, Grastars. They are related to the Tinkers and Neamtors who used to be nomads until the late 1950s). Between the 1960s and 1980s the fees of the *zurnaci* bands in South-west Bulgaria when playing at the weddings and circumcision parties (*sünnets*) of Bulgarian Muslims used to be very high. The professional Gypsy musicians share the opinion that in the last years the music market has been narrowing. It is because of the progressing impoverishment of the population. There have been less wed-

dings and family feasts with live music. For example 20 or 30 years ago a *zurnaci* band used to be paid several times more than the average monthly salary in the country. Now the same service is worth an average monthly salary.

Usually the musicians are flexible and responsive to the terms of the payer in the bargains. They are willing to adapt to fees the customers could afford. In the recent years the fee that a player in a three member *zurnaci* formation quotes for playing at wedding, sabbors banquets varies between 20 and 50 leva per hour. The *zurnaci* from Razlog B. says about the bargains: "The bargain used to be quite harder in the past. Now it's weaker. And I'm telling this before all colleagues – I charge 30 leva per hour. If the customers are poorer, I discount. What if there came a poorer customer wanting a whole day wedding. What if I strip him bare with an hour fee? A wedding's not less eight or nine hours at least. Say them ten – that's three hundred leva. I would say two hundred, a hundred and eighty, a hundred and sixty, to seem affordable for him." Being real professionals, the *zurnaci* maestros from region have set a fee recommended for all the musicians. Bargain compromises are disapproved of as dumping the price devaluates the guild and skilfulness.

The *caparo* (prepayment), *parsa* and *rasachka* (tipping) are terms also related to the remuneration of the musicians.

Caparo (Italian *caparra* prepayment) is a certain sum negotiated between the musician and his customer. It is a guarantee that both parties have come to a contract. It most often occurs at the market of wedding music where the bands require usually 10% prepayment to confirm the commissioning. The prepayment of the customer and the oral promise of the musician are the seal of the deal. There have been few cases when the musicians did not keep the contracts. There is a telling about a Gypsy clarinet player called Kirish who did not keep his contract. Though having received a *caparo* to play at a Gypsy wedding, he went to play at another one. The band did not come, the wedding did not take place. So, the deceived parent, who had commissioned the clarinet player, found him in another village and shot him dead while playing in the presence of all guests of the wedding.

Parsa (Turkish) is a synonym of giving a tip and giving money. It is the sum that musicians get from the audience before, after or in the course of their performance. The bank notes (rarely coins) are stuck to the forehead

of the player, handed, or put into the instrument (dropped into the resonator of the rebeck, put into the folds of the accordion's bellows, made into funnels and installed into the resonator holes of the zurnas, etc). After the performance the *parsa* is shared among the musicians. The good performance might be praised by a *parsa* overrating the remuneration that the musicians have been commissioned for. The rebeck player M. M. tells that he encountered such a thing when he played at a wedding in the village of Christo Milevo in Thrace.

Giving *parsa*, sticking even gold coins to the foreheads of the musicians is a long time practice. There are reports of it even in the 19th century. In the 1990s *zurnacies* mention large *parsa* got for their performances at weddings of rich Gypsies. "We got much money! Parsa! Five minutes – common this song, that song... They stuck here 200 levs" – tells the *zurnaci* L. F. According to S. K., a *zurnaci* from Petrich, another situation of getting a large *parsa* is playing to businessmen. His band was commissioned to play 6 hours for 250 levs. But he got much more as *parsa*. "But having begun to play, all of them were such businessmen, just putting money. It was money – a terrific thing... 620 was what only I got, you see, that what they stuck to me." According to a *zurnaci* from Razlog, B., the largest *parsa* is got when playing in a public house: "Better off people come to the tavern I go to play, about "Dedo Pene" in Bansko... I've caught even six or seven thousand German marks there."

Rasachka (probably coming from the Bulgarian word *russya* – spending money carelessly) is another term of the extra payment the professional musicians get. The musicians playing at restaurants, pubs, bars, etc. are those that get such kind of payment. At a certain moment the musicians leave their habitual stage and go about the tables stopping to play for a particular customer inviting him to give a tip. The violinist B. B. relates *rasachka* to *parsa*. The difference is that in this case the initiative for a tip comes from the musician. Some of the young musicians start their career at the pubs playing for *rasachka*, without commissioning. Some find this job humiliating and regard it as a kind of begging. Others think that *rasachka* is a good school and helps promotion and establishment.

5. The Market Place of the Musicians

The community of professional Gypsy musicians have a specific term "musicians' market place." It is used to denote a set situation of profes-

sional communication between musicians. On such occasions they exchange information about music demands, music instruments, meet customers and negotiate performances. According to the Gypsy musicians the musicians' markets are places for their professional contacts where sometimes they meet the customers as well. There are such places in the towns wherein the Gypsy musicians live.

Usually the musicians' market place is localized somewhere in the centre of the town. Usually it is a café, a restaurant, bar, ale-house, or the bar in a hotel lounge, which is significant for both musicians and the local people. The Gypsy men usually meet at some humble places in their neighbourhood or at such close to the town's bus terminal, railway station or market place. In contrast, the Gypsy musicians prefer the prestigious places in the town, which are admired and frequented by the higher town circles. The markets take place on certain days of the week at a set time. The musicians from Sofia gather at a café in the heart of the city opposite the St. Nedelja Church, known as 'The Priests' every workday about noon. The musicians' market in Plovdiv is held in a café close to the Maritsa chemist's in the city centre on Thursdays. Sunday is meeting day of the musicians from Stara Zagora at the snack bar "Golden Thrac". Those from Pleven open the market on Wednesdays in Orpheus Café next to the Osvobozhdenie cinema. Montana's musicians come to the Courage Café in the city centre every Monday. The musicians from Vidin prefer a place of the state-owned Balkantourist, which they call „The former Bononia". The players from Petrich know that they can meet each other every day at the bar of the state-owned Balkantourist hotel. Yet this information is about the meeting places in the mid 1990s [Peycheva, 1996:376–377]. Now some of these places are closed or have changed their owners and names. But the musicians are still there. Usually their meetings are after 10 A.M. mostly about noon.

When discussing the Gypsy musicians' market one should bear in mind that this is not a pure Gypsy phenomenon as a notion and participants. Besides the Gypsy musicians the market places are visited by non-Gypsy musicians and customers – Bulgarians, Turks, Vlachs. Even musicians from the neighbouring Balkan countries (Serbia, Macedonia, Greece) do visit them. The musicians' guild coming to the market place belongs to the circles of the local players and singers, who play live traditional and pop music at weddings, various family rituals and feasts, professional and town

feasts. They also entertain the customers of different public houses – restaurants, taverns, and pubs. The musicians’ market places in the larger towns attract performers from the region and the district. Musicians from Lovetch, Vratsa, Montana, Teteven, Lukovit, and Vidin go regularly to the musicians market held in Pleven. The Thursday market in Plovdiv gathers musicians from Kardhzali, Haskovo, Pazardzhik, Stara Zagora, Sliven, and Yambol. Some years ago during our field research on zurnaci music we first met musicians from the villages around Petrich in the bar of the town’s hotel – that was their musicians’ market place.

Our personal observations about the conduct at these market places are that the musicians treat themselves with a cup of coffee, a glass of beer or some drink. Sometimes they listen to music. But they mostly talk. Usually the talk is about matters concerning the trade of their music: commissioning to play at wedding or other feast, the music instruments, news about musicians, hits, albums, etc. Their meetings are a kind of musicians’ exchange – they exchange information about the fees of trade (which region has more weddings, what’s the amount of *parsa*), they buy and sell music instruments and equipment, negotiate on changes in the bands’ staff, there the musicians are being commissioned to play by customers in demand. The musicians like talking about daily things too, gossiping about women, sharing their personal and family problems, commenting on town and political events. However, no matter how large the scope and contents of the information field of the musicians’ market is, it is focused upon the music and musicians’ trade.

The interviews taken from Gypsy musicians confirm the conclusions from the observations. The musician D. from Stara Zagora confesses: “We talk many things at the market place. Whatever is eating up this or that one. About music, about women. We speak about the rates of music exchange – how much is a bargain, how much this or that a band got, where we are going to play at... People come and bargain to commission a band for a wedding. They are familiar with our gathering here on Saturdays.” The market place in Montana is seen through the eyes of the bandleader K. D. as follows: “We exchange various information. Musical information about instruments, sales, purchases. We talk about the music, about shows – who has done what.”

The business tone of the atmosphere does not hamper the merrymaking and good moods reigning at the musicians’ market places. Jokes, funny

memories are told. There are many tricks and friendly mocking. We have witnessed how a confusing accident (a musician became a victim of drinkers' fight) was presented with a good sense of humour and heartily laughed at. There are great masters of story telling amongst the Gypsy musicians who are able to turn a trivial event into an attractive tale. Some of them are the keepers of the oral local music annals – they have a permanent repertoire of memories and stories full of humour. The festive spirit in the musicians' communication is sometimes expressed by a shared music making. We have witnessed spontaneous interruptions of the conversation by a bursts of singing or playing. As the mentioned above musician, K.D., says: „In the past the gatherings at the musicians' market in Montana used always to end with joint playing. We used to make jam sessions. It was very nice. We used to have a small café and there we had collected equipment, everything. And everybody would get on the stage and play.”

6. *Summary*

Selling their music as a service the professional Gypsy musicians follow the sources of their living. The trip (in its direct and figurative sense) to the customer is a form of semi-nomadic way of living. The music instruments, the repertoire, the skill of the Gypsy musicians are the specific tools of the nomadism they practice. Beyond the economic aspects these tools of the musicians' trade have ideological and symbolic aspects. Thus the music making can be treated not only as a trade but also as a sign of group identity.

When making research on the market of Gypsy music and musicians in Bulgaria, at least two different points of view must be kept in mind – an inner one, belonging to the musicians and outer one, belonging to others. In our case we pay more attention to the inner point of view – that of the musicians. According to it, the values of musicians' labour, of their profession and of their music are considerable. Our research on the market comes to prove this. From the traditional rituality to the contemporary festivity, the professional Gypsy musicians, as mediators are centres of the events, their music being a structuring part of these feasts and therefore Gypsies can be considered marginal only from a negative point of view.

There may be another interpretation of the service nomadism of the Gypsy musicians. They are nomads both in their practice and in their way

of musical thinking. The music they create is in the same time a challenge, a voyage, a surprise, and a thrill. Doubtlessly such music must be felt in order to be fully understood, for it cannot be completely described. Perhaps some forms of mental nomadism would be a suitable strategy to get oneself closer to the very heart of the Gypsy music. But this matter concerns other research.

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