

## Turón

There is an old habit of carol singers walking from village to village during the twelve days of Christmas (from the Christmas Day, 25th December to the Epiphany, 6th January). The usual name for these boys is "Kolednicy" (carol singers) from the name "koleda" for carols. Sometimes the boys are dressed in masks representing figures from the times of Jesus, one is usually dressed as King Herod and they do carry a star. Therefore they are called "Herody". But there is a Polish accent there also. The oldest form of carol singers is called "chodzenie z turoniem" (in Polish, "Walking with a Tur"). Boys carry a symbol or a mask of a Polish extinct bison called "tur". Usually two people are necessary to make up one tur. This creature was extinct not very long time ago. The last tur lived in Poland in XVII century and was fully protected by Royal decree in that time (too late unfortunately). Tur is known also by a name of auroch or ur. is a fascinating history of auroch (ur) in Poland. So, tur as an animal is long extinct but it survived in the folk tradition.

The other form of Christmas caroling was *Herody*. This was a live production done by a group of individuals, usually older boys and young adults, about the last days of King Herod. The oldest form of Christmas caroling in Poland was with the *Turón*. To go caroling with *Turón* required that at least one of the participants be dressed in some type of animal costume and mask. The custom of *Turón* is named after the wild ox or tur, the largest and foremost of the animals that were prolific at one time throughout Europe and caused great damage to the villages.

Turón is a mask on a stick representing the head of the wild bull (Polish 'tur'), embodying the dark forces of nature. In the first weeks of year boys in funny disguises roam the neighborhood with it, romping and bantering.