

GOULASH, WIENER SCHNITZEL AND ŞİŞ KEBAP: **PREMIER RECORD**

How it began

One of the records in my predominantly Greek and Turkish 78rpm record collection which had always intrigued me was a **Turkish Premier Record**. It really stood out among the many other labels which I had come across over the years. A beautiful, colourful label, depicting a violin-playing village girl. In the background a thatched cottage and one of those draw-wells, which are so typical of the Hungarian countryside. [see Fig. 1]



Fig 1: Premier Record 10978 by Karakaş Efendi

Over the years I had come across only a handful of copies in other collections, so these **Turkish** Premier records had to be pretty rare. Even rarer is a Turkish Premier Record which I spotted years ago at the General Egyptian Book Organization in Cairo, Egypt. [see Fig. 2]



Fig 2: Premier Record 11066 by Agopos Efendi

Instead of the 'romantic' colourful village girl label, we have a black label with a stylized image in gold of a theatre stage, with curtains at both sides, in Jugendstil fashion.¹ Which obscure record company had produced these Turkish Premier Records?

Fact finding

At the time trade journals such as the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* and *Die Sprechmaschine* were still relatively unknown sources of information, no doubt due to the fact that only a few major institutions owned complete collections. But I knew about the existence of these periodicals as they were referred to in several publications. Besides, in the nineteen eighties a Dutch fellow-researcher had already ordered bound volumes of these hundred year old trade journals from the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin through the blessed system of *Fernverleih*².

So I followed in his steps and had the procedure repeated. Soon the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* and *Die Sprechmaschine* began to arrive in regular shipments and I started steadily working my way through the lot. I found a wealth of information on all aspects of the German music industry and made numerous photocopies. Among all those interesting items I also came across a number of references to **Premier Record** and **Elsö Magyar Hanglemezgyar** (*Erste ungarische Schallplatten-Fabrik* or *First Hungarian Record Factory*), the company which produced these records.

Company history

The earliest mention of the *Elsö Magyar Hanglemezgyar* (*Erste ungarische Schallplatten-Fabrik* or *First Hungarian Record Factory*) I found dated from early 1908. The last from late 1912. Not a word about recordings made in Turkey though...

The **Magyar Hanglemezgyar Pete Csongor** was officially founded on 20 March 1908 by **Pete Csongor**, resident of Budapest, record manufacturer and also the owner of the company.

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of late January or early February 1908 it was announced that recording engineer Max Winter (formerly with *Lyrophon*) had joined the *Erste ungarische Schallplatten-Fabrik*.

A week later *Lyrophon* responded with a special announcement that Max Winter had left their service as per 1 January 1908 and that *Lyrophonwerke Adolf Lieban & Co.* was in no way involved in the founding of the *Elsö Magyar Hanglemezgyar* (First Hungarian Record Factory).

In the summer of 1908 it is announced that another recording expert of *Lyrophon*, **Karl Sandahl** had also joined the new Hungarian company.

In January 1909 the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* reported that recording expert **Max Winter** had left the *First Hungarian Record Factory* and joined the *Polyphon Musikwerke Aktien-Gesellschaft* in Leipzig³.

In August 1908 the *Erste ungarische Schallplatten-Fabrik* in Budapest opened a branch in Vienna. This outlet, called '**Premier-Record**', was led by Ludwig L. Leitner and held the '*General-Repräsentans*' for Austria.⁴

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of September 1908 we read that the new company – apart from its obvious activities in Austria and Hungaria - at the time still known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire - will be directing its attention towards the **east**, in particular to *Russia* and *the Balkans*. In other words to countries like Russia, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania and European Turkey. As general representative for Bulgaria, Serbia and European Turkey⁵ is chosen the firm of **George S. Ghineff** in Sofia.

The **Handelshaus A. Kustin** in Warsaw acted as the general representative for Russia.⁶

Around the same time another trade journal, *Die Sprechmaschine*, published a peculiar story, which had first appeared in the Viennese newspaper *Neuen freien Presse*. It clearly showed that things did not always go smoothly at the *First Hungarian Record Factory*... The article, with the heading '**Der verschwundene Herr Direktor**', related how a certain **Karl Linner**, the managing director of the *First Hungarian Record Factory* in Budapest, after having married a well-to-do lady, with the passage of time had begun to devote his passions more and more to a frivolous and no doubt costly lifestyle, rather than to the interests of the new company. And when Linner had spent his wife's capital, he had begun to misappropriate company funds, allegedly to the tune of several thousand *Kronen*. After his desparate wife had committed suicide, the '*Lustige Witwer*' (lusty widower) made off with her 17-year old sister. As rumour had it, with destination Berlin.⁷

On 19 May 1909 the *Első Magyar Hanglemezygar* becomes an **Aktien-Gesellschaft** (limited liability company or joint stock company): the *Első Magyar Hanglemezygar Reszvénytársaság*.⁸ Csongor Pete is on the Board of Directors as managing director.

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of late January 1910 detailed information is given about the man who finances it all, multimillionaire **Csongor Pete**.

We read that he is the only private person in Europe who can afford having a workshop or machine shop and a record pressing plant as a personal hobby. Not unlike some rich tycoon who owns a racing stable or a private aeroplane.

The author of the article also writes that around this time the company was considering a change in label design. He clearly has his objections and thinks the beautiful violin-playing village girl design cannot be improved upon and protests strongly against the proposed change. Why change a winning horse?

It looks as if in the end this label change was postponed or even cancelled.⁹

Was the journalist of the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* perhaps referring to the – as far as I know obscure - black label version of Premier Record? [see Fig. 2]

He was definitely **not** referring to the two different versions of the village-girl label: one with the legend **ELSŐ MAGYAR HANGLEMEZ-GYAR** round the top edge of the label, the other with **PREMIER-RECORD** round the edge. This distinction already existed long before the abovementioned label change was being considered. I suppose the *Első Magyar Hanglemezygar* label was used for the Hungarian market, whereas the *Premier Record* label was reserved for releases *outside* Hungary as a kind of export label with a logo which non-Hungarians could actually read and understand.

According to an article in the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 5 May 1910 the *Erste ungarische Schallplattenfabrik A.-G.*, Budapest is in financial difficulties as a result of millionaire Csongor Pete's – until then the main financial backer of the *Első Magyar Hanglemezygar* – refusal to further invest money in the company. Suddenly the company faced a serious cash problem. Consequently the *Erste ungarische Schallplattenfabrik A.-G.*, Budapest was sold at a ridiculously low price to three Budapest lawyers.

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 4 August 1910 it is announced that the Board of Directors has taken measures to guarantee a successful relaunch of the First Hungarian Record Factory. Although the company was on the verge of bankruptcy, plans of liquidation were rejected and a way was found to carry on the business.

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 11 August 1910 we read that Ludwig Leitner has given up ownership of the Vienna shop in the Mariahilfer Str. 76 (previously at Mariahilfer Str. 35) and that the *Erste ungarische Schallplattenfabrik A.-G.* has become the new owner.¹⁰

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 16 September 1910 it is announced that the financial problems of the company have been overcome and that a fresh start will be made.

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 27 October 1910 it is reported that Emil Drucker,

director of the already existing Premier Record shop in Vienna, has opened a second shop: *Grammophonhaus Musika*, on the corner of Gumpendorferstrasse and Kasernenstrasse.

In February 1911 the Harmonia-Aktiengesellschaft opened a modern spacious gramophone shop on the Vaczi-utcza 20 in Budapest, where all products of the *Első Magyar Hanglemezgyar* were being sold. Easy access and a high level of customer service were the main assets of the shop: here one could listen to any *Első Magyar Hanglemezgyar* record or have its machines demonstrated. According to the report they were doing a great business.¹¹

In an advertisement in the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 1 February 1912¹² the *Erste ungarische Schallplattenfabrik A.G.* announces the release of new recordings on both the **Premier-Record** and **Spezial-Record** label in as many as **fifteen** (predominantly central and eastern european) languages. Among these recordings **Turkish** and **Armenian** repertoire. [\[see Fig. 3\]](#)

*Epochale Neuheit
Massenartikel*

*Latest novelty
Wholesale article*

*Nouveauté excellente
Fabriqué en grandes
quantités*

„Autograffon“

**Aufnahme- und Wieder-
gabevorrichtung.**

Patente in allen Staaten.

Von jedem Laien ohne Vorkenntnisse handhabbar.

Auf jede Sprechmaschine passend.

Aufnahmen zu Hause.

Absolut sichere Handhabung.

Wiedergabe laut und deutlich.

Billig

Zur Messe in Leipzig.

Näheres im Messanzeiger.

Prospekte gratis und franko.

**Recording and reproducing
contrivance.**

Patents in all countries.

Can be used by any person without special knowledge.

Fits any talking machine.

Records made at home.

No failures.

Reproduction clear and loud.

Low price.

Will be shown at the
Leipzig fair.

Catalogue on demand.

**Appareil pour enregistrer
et reproduire.**

Brevets dans tous les pays.

Tout le monde peut enregistrer chez soi avec
une machine parlante ordinaire.

Simple et sure.

Reproduction claire et haute.

Prix modéré.

Exposé à la foire de Leipzig.

Catalogue sur demande.

Premier-Record und Spezial-Record

25 cm doppelseitige Schallplatten

Neueste Aufnahmen in ungarischer, deutscher (österreichischer),
serbischer, rumänischer, slowenischer, slowakischer, böhmischer,
kroatischer, türkischer, armenischer, russischer, polnischer,
tatarischer Sprache. Jüdische Jargon- u. hebräische Aufnahmen

Erste ungarische Schallplattenfabrik A.G.
Budapest

Fig 3: First advertisement of Turkish and Armenian Premier Records in Phonographische Zeitschrift

In that same advertisement we come across the latest novelty of the *First Hungarian Record*

Factory, the **Autograffon**. A kind of homerecorder which was able to both record and reproduce sound. *Has anybody ever seen an Autograffon in real life?*

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 5 December 1912 it is announced the firm *Premier Record Ludwig L. Leitner* has gone into liquidation on account of *Gewerbezurücklegung*, in other words, a slump in sales.¹³

At this point my collection of photocopies from trade journals the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* and *Die Sprechmaschine* ends. There may have been more information on Premier Record in later issues.

And then there was light...

In 2009 I attended the *Diskografentag* at Hildesheim Germany. Until then this yearly conference - a three-day event organized by the **Gesellschaft für Historische Tonträger** (GHT) – had always been held in the south of Germany near the Swiss border.

But in 2009 the organization had switched to a new location: Hildesheim, a city south of Hanover.

At the conference I demonstrated the workings of my new website www.recordingpioneers.com and at the same time had the opportunity to meet a number of old acquaintances. Of course, it also led to a number of interesting new contacts.

Thus I met two researchers from Hungary, Klára Bajnai and Géza Gábor Simon, who, as it turned out, both had published books on Hungarian discography.

Klára Bajnai - together with her late husband Gyula Marton – had compiled a discography of the Premier-Record label, *Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár: Premier Record*.

Géza Gábor Simon had written a general history of the gramophone industry in Hungary entitled *Magyar hanglemeztörténet*.

I realized these two books no doubt might contain detailed information on the activities and products of the *Erste Ungarische Schallplatten-Fabrik* and, although my knowledge of Hungarian was absolutely zero, I bought a copy of each.

Back in Holland I asked Ferko Öry if he could translate certain relevant sections from Géza Gábor Simon's book *Magyar hanglemeztörténet* into Dutch. Especially the chapter headed '*1908-1920 – Az Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár és a többi lemezlabel kölcsönviszonyai*' looked very promising. I was not to be disappointed.

Of course there were the familiar names of former Lyrophon recording engineers **Max Winter** and **Carl Sandahl**. I also came across another familiar name: that of **Ivor R. Holmes**. As it turned out Holmes had been involved in making recordings for the *First Hungarian Record Factory* in Hungary.¹⁴

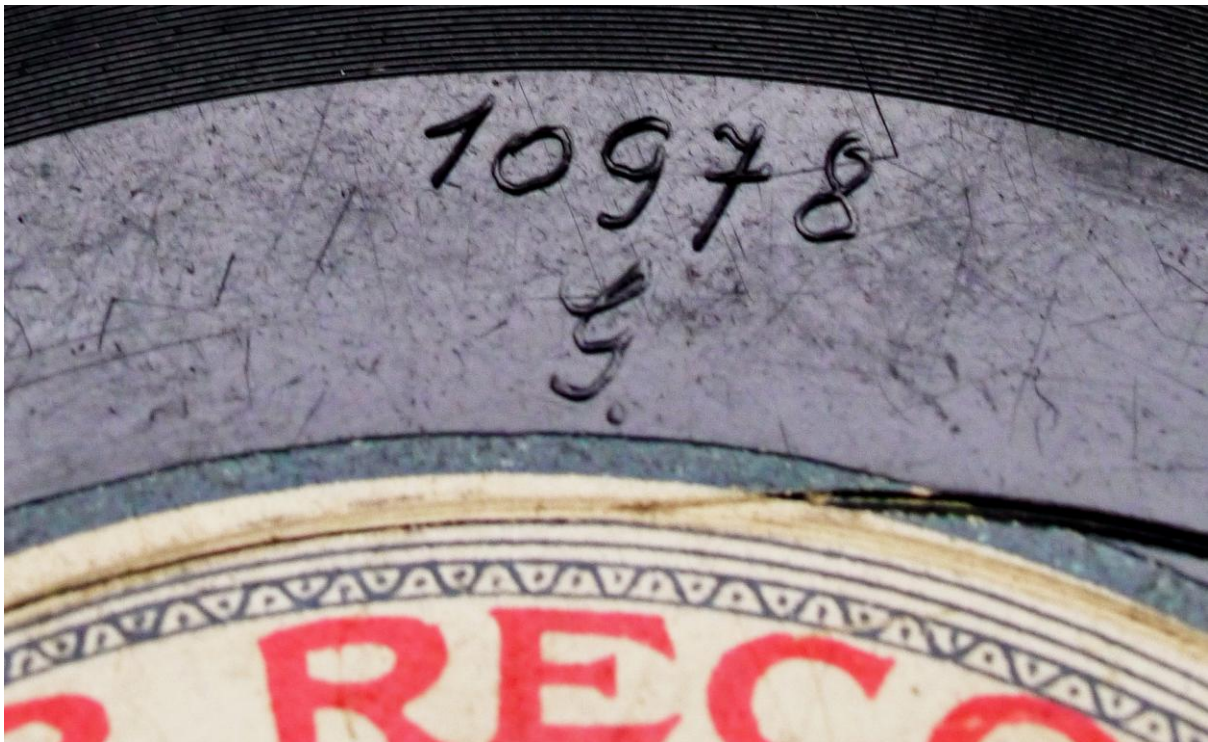
I was also able to add two new names to the existing list of recording pioneers on my website: those of **Antal Greiner** and **Hoffmann** (first name unknown), who both worked for the *First Hungarian Record Factory*.

In the January 1st, 1912 issue of the Hungarian music journal *Zenekereskedelmi Közlöny* we read:

Terjeszkedés. Az Első Hanglemezgyár mindenáron dicsőséget akar szerezni a magyar

iparnak a külföldön. Most arról értesítenek bennünket, hogy a gyár legutóbb, Greiner Antal közreműködésével 120 török felvételt csinált, sőt mi több: el is adott belőlük 100.000 darab lemezt.

According to my Hungarian *dragoman* it says that Antal Greiner has made 120 Turkish recordings for the *First Hungarian Record Factory* and that some 100.000 copies were pressed¹⁵. As we will see later, Antal Greiner made in fact **122** Turkish recordings. Having learned that Antal Greiner was the recording engineer, it can be safely assumed that the 'G.' in the wax of recording 10978 stands for 'Greiner'. (see Fig. 4)



Figuur 4: Detail of Premier Record 10978 showing Antal Greiner's initial

At the time Géza Gábor Simon and Klára Bajnai had apparently never seen actual copies of these Turkish Premier Records. Not at all surprising, considering the fact that copies of these records are very far and few between.¹⁶

On page 33 of his book *Magyar hanglemeztörténet* Géza Gábor Simon comments:

We have never traced any [Turkish] copies. Perhaps the enterprise never got beyond the planning phase.

And in article entitled 'Links between the First Hungarian Record Factory and the Lindström Co.' on Klára Bajnai's website www.gramophone-anno.eu we read:

The largest number of copies is found in the Austrian, Romanian, Polish and Czech catalogues. Numerous recordings are also noted in the 1912 Turkish catalogue too, thus supporting the article about First Hungarian Record Factory's plans for the new

year that was published in the January 1912 issue of the music journal *Zenekerkeskedelmi Közlöny*. According to the article Antal Greiner made 120 Turkish recordings that became an impressive 100 000 copies. **It is interesting to note that to this day we have not come across one Turkish release on Premier Record in either private or public collections. Thus the question arises as to how accurately the adverts and the news appearing in newspapers and catalogues prove the actual number of records made and released. Did these simply remain among the publishers' plans?**¹⁷

Bingo!

But the ultimate surprise awaited me on page 279 of Marton-Bajnai's book, *Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár: Premier Record*. There was a picture of the front cover of a **Turkish Premier Record Record catalogue** from 1912! Here then was the missing piece I had been waiting for all along: the *complete* Turkish Premier Record output. Alas, on *paper*, not in *shellac*. At my request Mrs. Bajnai sent me scans of the 1912 Turkish Premier Record catalogue. In turn I sent her scans of the labels of the few Turkish Premier Records I had come across over the years. [see Fig. 5]



Fig 5: Front and back cover of 1912 Turkish Premier Record catalogue

The seven-page catalogue contains a total of **122** titles. The majority of them are **Turkish** (114 titles). The remainder consists of 4 **Armenian** (*Ermenice*) titles, 2 **Greek** (*Rumca*) titles and, judging from the titles, probably 2 **Judeo-Spanish** or **Sefardic** or **Ladino** (here called *Yahudice* = **Jewish**) recordings. The side numbers form an uninterrupted sequence running from 10971 to 11092.

On the right-hand pages is a list of titles and artists in ottoman Turkish (in 1912 still written with Arabic characters), preceded by catalogue numbers written with Arabic numerals.

On the left-hand pages we find transliterations of the original Turkish text in a kind of unofficial westernized spelling, based on how these Turkish words would be spelled in French: *ouzoun, gueunul, bakichin, tchavouche, kantossou, seuyle, Caracache*.¹⁸

Nowadays the abovementioned words are written as: *uzun, gönül, bakışın, çavuş, kantosu, söyle, Karakaş*. [see Fig. 6]

7	Disques "Premier-Record,,	(برنجی رقررد پلافلی)	۷
11051	Yahouidjé la roza—Caracache eff.	هودیجه لاروزمه—قره قاش افندی	۱۱۰۵۱
11065	Moranika—Agopos effendi	مورانیکا—آغوپوس افندی	۱۱۰۶۵
10996	Gulsun déyil péri—Caracache eff.	گلشن دکل پری—قره قاش افندی	۱۰۹۹۶
11067	Ah félék — Agopos effendi	ای فلک — آغوپوس افندی	۱۱۰۶۷
11056	Erménidjé Dalvorik	ارمنیجه دالوریک	۱۱۰۵۶
11057	Im şiréli	یم شیرلی	۱۱۰۵۷
11059	Ali pacha roudja	علی روججه	۱۱۰۵۹
11088	Kelefi—Salih eff.	قلهتی—صالح افندی	۱۱۰۸۸
11092	Miralay Né Chad beyin—Mouhtar bey	میرالای نشأت بیک نطقی—مختار بیک	۱۱۰۹۲
11089	Tatéosen hidj. kurdi pechrev Salih eff	طاطبوسک چجازکار پشروهو—صالح افندی	۱۱۰۸۹
11048	Vaz guetchmézmi—Caracache eff.	واز گچمزمی—قره قاش افندی	۱۱۰۴۸
11027	Sanada yapdirayim Nassib effendi	ساناده یادریم—نصیب افندی	۱۱۰۲۷
11090	Roudja panorama—Agopos effendi	روججه پاراناما—آغوپوس افندی	۱۱۰۹۰
11086	Zeybek havassi — Kemani Salih Kanoni Nassib, Oudi Sissak	زبیک هواسی—کمانی صالح قانونی نصیب اودی سساک	۱۱۰۸۶

Fig 6: 1912 Turkish Premier Record catalogue (page 7)

To see the **complete** 1912 Turkish Premier Record catalogue click [here](#)

Music in Ottoman Turkey

By 1912 the Ottoman Empire - which in its heyday spanned three continents - had lost most of its vast territory and had 'shrunk' to present-day Turkey, parts of the Balkan, Tripolitania, Lebanon and Syria.

However, the music scene in the Ottoman Empire of those days was as lively and varied as could be expected in a large country with such a chequered history. For the sake of convenience one could divide the musical landscape roughly into a *rural* (traditional-conservative) and *urban* (fashionable-international) component.

Cosmopolitan cities like Constantinople, Salonica and Smyrna were important centres of commerce, playing a crucial role as seaports in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea. Traditionally, the population of these cities not only consisted of **Turks**, but also of other ethnic groups, such as **Greeks** (called '*Rum*' when living on Turkish territory), **Sephardic** and **Askenazi Jews** (*Yahudi*), **Armenians** (*Ermeni*), **Kurds** (*Kürt*), **Gypsies** (*Çingene*), **Arabs** (*Arap*) and **Albanians** (*Arnavut*). On top of that there was a sizeable contingent of **Europeans**, made up of British, French, Germans and Italians.¹⁹

It is not surprising that this ethnic melting-pot resulted in a colourful mosaic of cultural activities. Each group had its own 'ethnic' background, but at the same time a lot of cross-fertilization had been going on among these groups.

Especially in Constantinople all kinds of musical entertainment were on offer: Turkish classical music, western classical music, opera, operetta, revue (vaudeville), theatre, musical shows and all kinds of music.

Commercially the urban market was of course the most attractive option for record companies, because that was where their potential customers were living. The music industry was only too keen to pander to the tastes of the growing number of people who could afford the luxury of phonographs and gramophones. Their customers were not only private persons but also people who had an interest from a professional point of view. Café-owners quickly realized they now could provide musical entertainment of all sorts - oriental and european to their customers: the gramophone as forerunner of the jukebox!

The overview

The overview below is based on the Turkish Premier Record catalogue of 1912 and a handful of actual record copies which have been traced sofar. There are **122** titles listed in the catalogue with numbers running from **10971** to **11092**.

The overview is divided up into five categories:

- (1) **NUMBER**
- (2) **TITLE**
- (3) **ARTIST(S)**
- (4) **MAKAM**
- (5) **GENRE**

NUMBER (*column 1*):

In general I prefer the term '*sidenumber*' or '*facenumber*' to the more ambiguous '*catalogue*

number, since a catalogue number often may refer to a special number allocated to a pair of recordings in a *paper* catalogue (a kind of *ordering number*), and may differ completely from the 'catalogue' number on the actual *record*.

In the case of Premier Record, the numbers in the printed catalogue (10971-11092) correspond to the numbers on the actual records which are printed on the *label* and scratched into the *wax*. Apart from these catalogue numbers no other numbers show up on the actual records. It looks as though the Elsö Magyar Hanglemezgyár either did not make use of *separate* matrix numbers, or, if they did, had the original matrix numbers removed at some point in the production stage.

TITLE (*column 2*):

In catalogues we are always presented with **abbreviated** versions of the complete title, no doubt due to lack of space. In most cases the first words of a song form a unique combination, enabling one to identify that specific song on the basis of just a few words. However, in a number of cases it is not clear to *which* song the truncated title in the catalogue exactly refers.

Ideally, listening to a copy of the actual recording would enable us to identify the correct song, but this option is ruled out when we do not have the records.

It is songs beginning with **identical** words which make matters complicated.

Let us take an English example. A song may appear in the catalogue as "*I'll never*", but who is to tell which of the following songs it is: "*I'll never **forget you***" or "*I'll never **love again***" or "*I'll never **smile again***"? A title like "*Where are you*" may stand for "*Where are you **going, beloved***" or "*Where are you **my darling***".

Things would not have been so bad, if the *Elsö Magyar Hanglemezgyár* had done what other record companies did as a rule in the case of Turkish repertoire: add the corresponding *makam* (the meaning and function of a *makam* is explained below) to each title. Often the *makam* serves as an extra song identifier, although certain songs were sung in more than one *makam*. Had the people of *Premier Record* done so, it would certainly have made things easier. Alas, they decided otherwise...

I therefore had to consult a great number of song anthologies. Fortunately, a vast amount of Turkish song texts in the form of original musical scores (sheet music) has been preserved and was later carefully compiled into elaborate handbooks, such as the *Güfteler Antolojisi* or *Güfteler Ansiklopedisi*.

I also checked the Premier Record repertoire against song titles found in catalogues issued in that same period by rivalling companies such as *The Gramophone Company*, *Odeon*, *Favorite*, *Beka*, *Lyrophon* and *Orfeon*.

In most cases I managed to establish with a high degree of certainty which song had been recorded. But since copies of *Turkish Premier Records* are so scarce, we lack the much-needed aural proof to identify each and every title with absolute certainty.

And until we find more Premier Record copies or – better still – somebody discovers a complete set of Turkish Premier Records (61 doublesided *taş plak*, to be precise) in some deserted warehouse opposite the Hungarian Embassy in Istanbul, we shall never be sure...

Whenever possible I give the *complete* first line of a song, by adding to the abbreviated songtitle the words which are missing in the catalogue or on the record label. I have put this

extra information between *square brackets*. When I was not sure I added a *questionmark*. When I found more than one option I included *all* options.

ARTIST(S) (*column 3*):

These Pre-World War I artists were very popular in their time. Male singers such as **Karakaş**, **Agopos**, **Hovrik**, **Nasip** (also doubling as *kanun*-player) and **Sisak** (also doubling as *ut*-player), female singers like **Safinaz**, **Pepron** and **Verjin** (or **Virjin** or **Virginie**), and instrumentalists like Kemani **Salih** Efendi, the aforementioned Kanuni **Nasip** and Udi **Sisak** had all recorded for the major record companies, *The Gramophone Company*, *Odeon*, *Favorite*, *Beka*, *Lyrophon* and *Orfeon*.

All artists are listed under their **first name**, followed by *Efendi* or *Bey* (*Mr. or Sir*) or *Hanım* (*Mrs. or Madam*). In 1912 the practice of using **surnames** had not yet been introduced in Turkey, so a person was known by his or her first name.²⁰

At the time many artists were of *Armenian*, *Rum* (Greek), *Gypsy* or *Jewish* origin. This was especially the case with *female* artists, as religious etiquette forbade muslim women to manifest themselves in the entertainment sector.

An artist's name was often preceded by a word indicating a musician's *expertise*.

For instance, the musicians on recording **11086** - an instrumental piece - are presented as **Kemani** Salih (Salih the *violin-player*), **Kanuni** Nasip (Nasip the *plucked zither-player*) and **Udi** Sisak (Sisak the *oud-player*). A very useful way of indicating *which musician* is being referred to. Suppose there were three musicians who were all called *Ahmet*, each musician playing a different instrument: one a *keman*, the other an *ut* and the third a *kanun*. By referring to these three Ahmets as either *Kemani* Ahmet or *Udi* Ahmet or *Kanuni* Ahmet respectively, ambiguity could be avoided! [see Fig. 7 – 9]

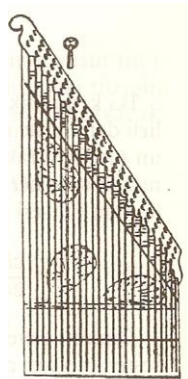


Fig 7: Kanun

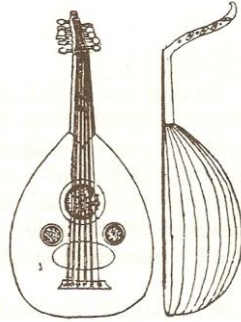


Fig 8: Ut, ud or oud



Fig 9: Instrumental ensemble with violin, oud and kanun (The artists are not Salih, Sisak and Nasip).

On another recording (11020) *Kemani* Salih is referred to as '**Bülbül**' ('Nightingale') Salih, an 'honorary title' bestowed on both instrumentalists and singers all-over the Orient to indicate that their musical qualities surpassed by far those of the average musical talent, hence the comparison to that famous bird.

A singer's first name – male and female – may be preceded by the word *Hanende* (= singer), although this term is not used in the Premier Record catalogue.

In spite of the popularity of these artists, not much is known about them and detailed biographical material is hard to find. Photographs of the artists in question are even rarer. In Yılmaz Öztuna's *Büyük Türk Müsikîsi Ansiklopedisi* we read: '**Salih Efendi [Bülbüli Kemani]**. Violinist of gypsy origin. Famous instrumentalist at the end of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century. He was famous for his dexterity on the violin and was called 'Bülbüli' because he could imitate the song of a nightingale.' [see Fig. 10]



Fig 10: Kemani Bülbüli Salih Efendi

About **Ovrik** Efendi Öztuna writes: '**Ovrik** or (**Hovrik** = **Ovrestes Kazasyan**). Famous Armenian lavta-player [and singer - HS].' He further mentions that Ovrik Efendi sang musical pieces like *koşma*, *semai* and *divan*. He also credits him for the lyrics (and compositions?) of three songs. This information fits in perfectly with Ovrik Efendi's *Premier Record* recordings **11026**, **11026**, **10984**, **10985** and **10974**. [see Fig. 11]



Fig 11: Ovrik Efendi

About **Karakaş** Efendi we find: '**Avram Karakaş** Efendi. Famous fasıl singer of Jewish origin.' [see Fig. 12]



Fig 12: Fasil ensemble: (from left to right) Kanuni Şemsi Bey, Kemani Tatyos Efendi, Karakaş Efendi (in the middle with tambourine), Hanende Hakanik, Tanburi Ovakim

And about Kanuni **Nasip** Efendi: ‘*Turkish kanun-player.*’ That Nasip also doubled as a singer is not mentioned. Recording **11084** is credited to him, but also to Kemani Bülbülü Salih.²¹

Agopos (= **Hagop**) Efendi - like **Ovrik** Efendi - was also of Armenian origin.

About the singer Verjin or Virjin exists some confusion. In those days there happened to be two female singers called ‘Verjin’. To distinguish between these two, one was called ‘*Verjin*’ and the other ‘*Küçük* (= Little) *Verjin*’, but I doubt if people stuck to that subtle distinction in everyday life. It is not absolutely clear *which* Verjin is singing on these Premier Records.

There exists a rare picture of Naşit’s theatre troupe with both Verjins: Küçük Verjin (*third from left*) and the regular Verjin (*second from right*). [see Fig. 13]



Fig 13: Naşit's theatre company with Küçük Verjin (*third from left*) and Verjin (*second from right*)

About **Muhtar Bey**, the artist of recording **11092** (*Miralay Neşet Beyin [nutku]*), nothing is known. He probably was a comedian.²²

In an article entitled *Yüzyılımızın başlarından İstanbul'un Musiki Hayatı* Ruhi Kalender gives a very interesting survey of the music scene in Istanbul between 1895 and 1916. On the basis of announcements of musical events in Istanbul during that period in the Turkish daily newspaper '*İkdam*' Kalender compiled a kind of 'concert calendar' (no pun intended), complete with names of artists and the venues where they were to appear.

Among the names of the singers and musicians cited are quite a few Premier Record artists: *Hanende Karakaş, Ovrık, Agopos, Kemani Bülbülü Salih Efendi, Nasip* and *Sisak*.

MAKAM (column 4):

Turkish *sanat müziği* ('classical art music') is based on an intricate system of tonal scales. These tonal scales or modes are called *makams*. Melodies were and are built on and around these makams. A *makam* is a **fixed** combination of certain notes which dictates the basic tonal '*colour*' of a melody. The melody is composed along the 'principles' of a rising and descending series of notes and defines the 'mood' of a song. It should be adhered to at all times: playing or singing the wrong notes is felt as a serious breach of the musical traffic rules! In a way you could compare makams to Indian *ragas*.

As you can see in the overview, each makam has a separate name. Most record companies followed the standard practice of indicating the *makam* of a musical piece on the **record labels** and in their **catalogues**. However, for some reason or other Premier Record chose to leave out the *makams*.

I therefore have to caution the reader that the *makams* shown in this overview are **not** copied from an official *catalogue* or from *record labels*. They are in fact the author's *educated guesses*, after having consulted a fair amount of standard handbooks. However, I can assure the reader that in most cases the makams in the overview are correct.

When **no** makam is indicated, this is either because I have not been able to determine the corresponding makam or because the term *makam* did not apply to the musical piece in question.

If I could not identify a song beyond reasonable doubt or found more than one option, I offer the various possibilities, plus the corresponding makams.

In the overview some 20 *makams* are listed, but the total number of makams is much greater. In practice only a limited number of makams were and are being used regularly. Certain makams were more popular than others - with both artists and audience! - or fitted the mind-set and vocal abilities of a particular artist better. This might explain why a number of makams in the overview occur more often than others.

The makam *hicazkâr kürdi* is also called *kürdilihicazkâr* or *kürdili hicazkâr*.

GENRE (column 5):

Here is a list of the various musical terms used in the overview and a brief explanation. Generally speaking in catalogues and on record labels the **genre** is often indicated.

The *First Hungarian Record Factory* followed this practice too but left out terms like *şarkı* and *kanto*.

çiftetelli – belly dance

gazel - improvised non-rhythmic *vocal* solo in a certain *makam*
kanto – popular urban song (often performed in musical theatre shows. revue/vaudeville)
marş - march
ninni - lullaby, cradlesong
nutuk – speech. Without having heard the actual recording it is impossible to say if this is a serious reproduction of a historic speech by *Miralay Neşet Bey* (Colonel Neşet Bey) or – more likely - a so-called *monolok* (= monologue), a comic parody of a historical event, i.e. mild political satire.
peşref - instrumental composition
şarkı - secular song in Turkish *sanat müziği* ; nowadays the word *şarkı* has also become a general term for any kind of non-traditional song
taksim - improvised non-rhythmic *vocal* or *instrumental* solo in a certain *makam*, often serving as a kind of warm-up to a following song in that same *makam*
türkü - traditional folk song
zeybek – a martial folk dance performed by one or two dancers. In Greece the *zeybek* dance (ζεϊμπέκικο) developed into one of the mainstays of Greek *rebètika* music, an introvert individualistic expression of a dancer’s prowess. In spirit, the popular *sirtaki* of Zorba the Greek (Anthony Quinn) is vaguely reminiscent of the *zeïbekiko*.

Musical terms like **dağı**, **destan**, **fasıl**, **koşma**, **köçekçe**, **nakış beste** and **semai** are beyond the scope of this article and are therefore left unexplained.

[Fig. 14, 15 and 16: three-page overview in Modern Turkish]

CONTENTS OF THE 1912 TURKISH PREMIER RECORD CATALOGUE

NUMBER	TITLE	ARTIST(S)	MAKAM	GENRE
10971	<i>Yeni Kabak Kantosu</i>	Safinaz Hanım		kanto
10972	<i>Yeter oldu bana [ettiğin felek]</i>	Safinaz Hanım	[hüzzam]	şarkı
10973	<i>Suya gider su testisi [elinde]</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[hüzzam]	türkü
10974	<i>Bir bahr-i gama [daldı gene/yine fikri hayâlim]</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
10975	<i>Ermeni çavuş</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi		kanto
10976	<i>Hasretle ben şam[u] seher eylerim efgân]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
10977	<i>Bir nigâh et [yeniden çeşmine hayran olayım]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
10978	<i>Zerrece rahmetmedin [sen nâle-i feryâdim]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
10979	<i>Madame Gaspar</i>	Karakaş Efendi		
10980	<i>Ninni</i>	Safinaz Hanım		ninni
10981	<i>Gazel</i>	Safinaz Hanım		gazel
10982	<i>Pek biçâreyim [yoktur emsâlim]</i>	Safinaz Hanım	[hüzzam]	kanto
10983	<i>Yeni [yeni] bir sevdaya [düştüm]</i>	Safinaz Hanım		kanto
10984	<i>Divan</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi		dağı kanto
10985	<i>Açsam yüzümü(?) Açsam derdimi ey mâh, nafîle(?)</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[hicaz]	şarkı şarkı
10986	<i>Meclis bezendi [sun bâde saki]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[suzinak]	şarkı
10987	<i>Eksilmez artar [cevrin, a cânım]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[suzinak]	şarkı
10988	<i>Mehd içinde [eşk-i mihnetle açıldı gözlerim]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[suzinak]	şarkı
10989	<i>Hali dilimi [şerh edemem kimseye]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[suzinak]	şarkı
10990	<i>Aşkı tasvir[-ü hikâyet için ey nâzik-edâ]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicaz]	şarkı
10991	<i>Cevr-i hicrin [arttırır feryâdim]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicaz]	şarkı
10992	<i>Pek çaresizim [baht-ı siyahkârın elinden]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicaz]	şarkı
10993	<i>Asker oluyorum [ben = Hürriyet Marşı]</i>	Karakaş Efendi		marş
10994	<i>Bakıp ahvâlî perişanıma[, âr eyle gönül]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[segâh]	şarkı
10995	<i>Aşkın evzak-ı [visâlinde yoktur hiç emelim]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[segâh/hüzzam]	şarkı
10996	<i>Gelsin değil peri(?) Gülsün dilberi(?)</i>	Karakaş Efendi		
10997	<i>Ey felek [bağ-i cihan-ı?] Ey felek [bari bırak ki yanayım?] Ey/Ah felek [ne için koydun beni bu hale?] Ey felek [tesiri yok mu nale-ü efganımın?] Ey felek [yeter by cefa-i?] Ey/Ah felek [yıktın dil-i âbâdimi?]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicaz] [karcıgar] [saba] [hicaz] [saba] [hicaz]	çiftetelli gazel şarkı kanto şarkı kanto şarkı
10998	<i>Hem sevip[, hem yakadan attın beni]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[acemaşiran]	şarkı
10999	<i>Ey çeşm-i âhû [hicr ile tenhalara saldın beni?] Ey çeşm-i âhû [mehlika?]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicaz] [acemaşiran]	nakış beste şarkı
11000	<i>Bir âşık-i dil[hastayı dilşâd edecek yok]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[nihavent]	şarkı
11001	<i>Meftûnu gönül [oldu o mestâne nigâhın]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[nihavent]	şarkı
11002	<i>Nalekâr-ı hasretim[, bir bağı]</i>	Safinaz Hanım	[hüzzam]	kanto
11003	<i>Hiçe saydın ey felek [feryâd-ı istikbalimi?] Hiçe saydın ey felek [feryâd-ı istimdâdimi?]</i>	Safinaz Hanım	[saba] [tahirpuselik]	kanto/şarkı şarkı
11004	<i>Nihayet gelmiyor [feryâd-ü âhe]</i>	Safinaz Hanım	[hicaz/saba]	kanto/şarkı
11005	<i>Oğlan yaylı [kız yaylı]</i>	Pepron Hanım	[neva]	kanto
11006	<i>Fatoş[um]</i>	Pepron Hanım	[hicaz]	kanto
11007	<i>Kanarya</i>	Pepron Hanım	[hicaz]	kanto

11008	<i>Elvedâ [canım]? Elvedâ [dost deli gönül elvedâ?]</i>	Pepron Hanım	[nihavent] [evic]	kanto türkü
11009	<i>Boykot [Kantosu][= İştittiniz mi bana ne oldu]</i>	Pepron Hanım	[nihavent]	kanto
11010	<i>Nâle-i cangâh[î cânân duymuyor]</i>	Verjin Hanım	[bestenigâr] [neveser]	kanto kanto
11011	<i>Çâresaz[ım sensin ancak rahmet Allah aşkına]</i>	Verjin Hanım	[saba]	şarkı
11012	<i>Bir fındıkçı yâre [gönül verdim aman]</i>	Verjin Hanım	[hüzzam]	kanto
11013	<i>Mahmur bakışlı [meleğim/dilberim]</i>	Verjin Hanım	[saba]	kanto
11014	<i>Cefaya razıyım [ben yâr elinden]</i>	Verjin Hanım	[uşşak]	kanto
11015	<i>Yürek oldu [gamınla pâre pâre]</i>	Pepron Hanım	[dilkeşide]	kanto/şarkı
11016	<i>Şeyh Hasan</i>	Pepron Hanım		kanto
11017	<i>Kalbimi çalan [ilk sensin]</i>	Verjin Hanım	[hüzzam]	kanto
11018	<i>Bağa girdim [kamışa]</i>	Safinaz Hanım	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
11019	<i>Çiftetelli Gazel</i>	Safinaz Hanım		gazel
11020	<i>Keman taksimi</i>	'Bülbül(i)' Salih		instr. taksim
11021	<i>Destan</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi		destan
11022	<i>Deveci [= Çek deveci develeri yokuşa aman]</i>	Agopos Efendi		kanto
11023	<i>Semai</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi		semai
11024	<i>Ben bir fındıkçıyım</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[neva]	kanto
11025	<i>Esir-i dilberân</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	
11026	<i>Koşma</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi		koşma
11027	<i>Sana da yaptırayım [Naciye'm aman fil dişi tarak]</i>	Nasip Efendi	[hüzzam]	şarkı
11028	<i>Şarap içtim</i>	Nasip Efendi		
11029	<i>Uzun olur efelerin [biçağı]</i>	Nasip Efendi	[hüzzam]	türkü
11030	<i>Mahmur bakışın [âşık bin lütfa bedeldir]</i>	Nasip Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
11031	<i>Beyoğlu'nun erken yanar</i>	Nasip Efendi		
11032	<i>Bir acaip [hab-ı gaflete düştüm]</i>	Nasip Efendi	[rast]	şarkı
11033	<i>Kız pınar başında [desti doldurur]</i>	Nasip Efendi		kanto/türkü
11034	<i>Çergi başında</i>	Nasip Efendi		
11035	<i>Kaldı ateşler [içre yine sevdalı serim]</i>	Sisak Efendi	[uşşak]	şarkı
11036	<i>Gamla kıymettar[-i ömrün geldi geçti mevsimi]</i>	Sisak Efendi	[uşşak]	şarkı
11037	<i>Tatyos'un Hüseyini ... (probably a şarkı in makam Hüseyini by Tatyos; not his instrumental peşrev/saz semaisi)</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hüseyini]	şarkı?
11038	<i>Penbelikle [imtiyaç etmiş tenin]</i>	Sisak Efendi	[hicazkâr]	kanto/ şarkı
11039	<i>Meyle teskin [eyle sâki?] Neyle teskin [eylesem bilmem dil-i biçâreyi?]</i>	Sisak Efendi	[hicaz] [yegâh]	şarkı şarkı
11040	<i>Söyle Allah aşkına [gonca leb?] Söyle Allah aşkına [ey nevcivan?]</i>	Sisak Efendi	[suzinak] [hicazkâr]	şarkı şarkı
11041	<i>Aldım hayal-i perçemin [ey mâh dîdeme]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hüzzam]	şarkı
11042	<i>Meşreb-i âvâremi [sanma dönek]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[ısfahan/hicaz]	şarkı
11043	<i>İstedin de [gönlümü verdim sana]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[bestenigâr]	şarkı
11044	<i>Bir günah ettimse [cânâ, suzinak oldum yeter]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[suzinak]	şarkı
11045	<i>Nigâh-ı mestine [canlar dayanmaz]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[saba]	şarkı
11046	<i>Bağımız boşdur</i>	Karakaş Efendi		
11047	<i>Mahzun gönlüm/gönül [(heyhat) şad olacak mı sanıyorsun?]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hüzzam]	kanto
11048	<i>Vazgeçmez mi [sine âh-ü zârdan]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[ısfahan]	şarkı
11049	<i>Beni bigâne mi [sandın a canım]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[karcıgar]	şarkı
11050	<i>Gösterip ayyâre [lütfun bizlere bigânesin]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[mahur]	gazel/ şarkı
11051	<i>La roza [enfloresse?] (Yahudice)</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicaz]	
11052	<i>Niçin gücendin [sen bana nigâr]</i>	Nasip Efendi	[hicaz]	kanto

11053	<i>Elmalı[ya yangınım ben]</i>	Nasip Efendi		kanto
11054	<i>Mavili [= Aman, aman, rast geldim iki tane?]</i>	Agopos Efendi		kanto
11055	<i>Zamanı var ki [her bezmim anarsın]</i>	Agopos Efendi	[hüzzam]	şarkı
11056	<i>Dalvorik (Dalvorighi) (Ermenice)</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11057	<i>Im siréli [zavagounkis] (Ermenice)</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11058	<i>Azad Asdouas (Ermenice)</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11059	<i>Ali Paşa (Rumca)</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11060	<i>Aldanıp [umma güzellerden vefâ?]</i>	Agopos Efendi	[hicaz]	şarkı
11061	<i>Bu gün deli [divâneym tükendi âhü-zârım?] Bu gün dil-i [divânededen tükendi âhü-zârım?]</i>	Nasip & Hovrik Efendiler	[nihavent]	kanto
11062	<i>Zizernak (= Dzidzernag) (Ermenice)</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11063	<i>Her zaman bir olur mu [ey hünriz nigâhim]</i>	Agopos Efendi	[karcığar]	kanto/şarkı
11064	<i>Düştü gönlüm [bir dilbere?] Düştü gönlüm [çâr-ı nâçâr?] Düştü gönlüm [havâ-yi dildâre?] Düştü gönlüm [sana şimdi ey peri?] Düştü gönlüm [, sen gibi bir zâlime?] Düştü gönlüm [şimdi sen mehpâreye?]</i>	Agopos Efendi	[ferahnak] [dügâh] [bestenigâr] [rast] [dügâh] [eviç]	şarkı şarkı şarkı şarkı şarkı şarkı
11065	<i>Moranika (Ladino/Judeo-espagnol?)</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11066	<i>Harmanlar aşdı</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11067	<i>Ey felek [bağ-i cihan-ı?] Ey felek [bari bırak ki yanayım?] Ey/Ah felek [ne için koydun beni bu hale?] Ey felek [tesiri yok mu nale-ü efganımın?] Ey felek [yeter by cefta-i?] Ey/Ah felek [yıktın dil-i âbâdımı?]</i>	Agopos Efendi	[hicaz] [karcığar] [saba] [hicaz] [saba] [hicaz]	çiftetelli gazel şarkı kanto şarkı kanto şarkı
11068	<i>Nineciğim</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11069	<i>Leylâklar[ın altında gülüm ah o dün akşam?]</i>	Agopos Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
11070	<i>Beslemiş</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11071	<i>Sevdalıdır [yine gönül sevdalı]</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
11072	<i>Gönül bağlandı [yine bir güzele]</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[hicazkâr kürdi]	şarkı
11073	<i>Aşkı sevdaya</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi		
11074	<i>Kararı söndü [ikbâlim, ümidim hâkisar oldu]</i>	Nasip Efendi		
11075	<i>Beğendim seni [efendim geçmem aslâ ben]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[ferahnak]	şarkı
11076	<i>Yağmur yağar [beyim aman taş üstüne]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[ferahnak]	şarkı
11077	<i>Hoş yaratmış [bâri ezel]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[ferahnak]	şarkı
11078	<i>Pek cüda düştüm [gülümden]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hüseyni]	şarkı
11079	<i>Selânik'ten çıktılar</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11080	<i>İlkbahara doyum olmaz</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11081	<i>Çalıma bak, efe[de, haydindi efede]</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[rast]	şarkı
11082	<i>Kakülünü çözersin</i>	(H)ovrik Efendi	[mahur]	şarkı
11083	<i>Bir yâr sevdim çok cilveli</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11084	<i>İptilây-ı derd-i [aşka/aşkın, var mı doktor çaresi]</i>	Agopos Efendi	[hicaz]	şarkı
11085	<i>Atımı bağladım [ben bir meşeye/ormana?]</i>	Agopos Efendi		şarkı
11086	<i>Zeybek havası</i>	Kemani Salih & Kanuni Nasip & Udi Sisak		zeybek (instr. dance)
11087	<i>Çiftetelli</i>	Salih Efendi		çiftetelli (instr.?)
11088	<i>Klefi (Rumca)</i>	Salih Efendi		instrumental?
11089	<i>Tatyos'un hicazkâr (kürdi) peşrevi</i>	Salih Efendi	[hicazkâr (kürdi)]	peşref (instr.)
11090	<i>Panorama (Rumca)</i>	Agopos Efendi		
11091	<i>İndim gittim [Diyarbakır düzüne?]</i>	Karakaş Efendi	[hicaz]	şarkı/köçekçe
11092	<i>Miralay Neşet Bey'in [nutku]</i>	Muhtar Bey		nutuk

Where were these recordings made?

The recording location of these recordings is not mentioned on the labels, but Constantinople seems the most likely option. Although Salonica might also be an option, I put my money on Constantinople. The 1912 Turkish Premier Record catalogue was printed in Istanbul. [see Fig. 5]

The few surviving Turkish Premier Record labels do not show a location in the '6 o'clock position', as was common practice among other record companies. In most cases these place names indicate recording locations, but they may also refer to locations where the artists came from.

When were these recordings made?

Although no original company documents have survived, there are a number of clues which enable us to determine with a reasonable degree of accuracy when approximately these recordings were made.

(1) In an advertisement in the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of **1 February 1912**²³ the release is announced of recordings in as many as fifteen languages. Among those recordings is Turkish and Armenian repertoire. [see Fig. 3]

(2) According to an article in the **January 1st, 1912** issue of the Hungarian music journal *Zenekerkeskedelmi Közlöny* 120 Turkish recordings had been made by Antal Greiner for the First Hungarian Record Factory.

The inevitable conclusion is that these Turkish recordings must have been made **prior to 1 January 1912**.

But we have another important clue:

(3) Recording **11092** (*Miralay Neşet Beyin [nutku]*) by Muhtar Bey undoubtedly refers to the Italian-Turkish war, which lasted from October 1911 to October 1912, and provides us with a rather accurate *terminus post quem* for these Turkish Premier Record recordings.

The Tripolitania and Cyrenaica region (present-day Libya) was the only area in North Africa not occupied by the British or the French and still formed part of the Ottoman empire. Italy was keen on acquiring this foothold in Africa and on 28/29 September 1911 it sent the Ottoman government an ultimatum.

Miralay [= Colonel] Neşet Bey, the deputy-governor of Tripoli, took up the command of the Ottoman army and heroically defended the city against the Italians.

The war ended in October 1912 and by the first Lausanne Peace Treaty Tripolitania came into Italian hands.

So, we have one *terminus post quem* (28/29 September 1911) and two *termini ante quem* (1 January 1912).

The Turkish Premier Record recordings must have been made within this time window, in other words, sometime during the period **October-November 1911**.²⁴

Looking for more exact recording dates, I asked a researcher in Istanbul to check the *Osmanischer Lloyd*, a German-language newspaper in Istanbul, which had a daily column listing new arrivals of guests at major Istanbul hotels. These lists are in no way complete and contain only a limited selection of names, but it was worth a try. In the past I was able to trace a number of recording engineers to the very Istanbul hotels where they had checked in on such and such a day. The researcher checked the period June 1911 – January 1912, but the name *Antal Greiner* or *Greiner Antal*²⁵ did not come up...

The **complete** 1912 Turkish Premier Record catalogue can be viewed at www.recordingpioneers.com.

→ Go to the section marked **ZULA/ZOYAA**

→ Click on **RECORD CATALOGUES**

→ Click on **PREMIER RECORD**

→ Click on **ARROW (▶)** to go to the *next* page

→ Click on **ARROW (◀)** to go to *previous* page

→ When you click on **TOGGLE** the *modern Turkish version* pops up

→ To return to *original* screen click again on **TOGGLE**

Did Premier Record venture further east?

I would like to add a three-page document from the EMI Music Archives (see Fig. 17-19) which makes mention of **Premier Record** in a different context. It is a letter from **Frederick Tyler**²⁶, the representative of The Gramophone Company in **Tiflis** - present-day Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia - to **Will Gaisberg** of The Gramophone Co Ltd. London, dated **4 May 1911**. The letter refers to the 1911 recording session that was being carried out by Edmund James Pearse, one of The Gramophone Company's recording engineers, in the Caucasus and Turkestan region²⁷.

Apart from mentioning Pearse's activities in the region, the letter also refers to the competition, **Pathé**²⁸ and **Premier Record**, albeit in a rather vague way. We sorely miss the relevant context and in order to fully understand the implications of what Tyler writes about the activities of Premier Record in those regions, we need more correspondence from that period.

LABORATORY.

18527

The Gramophone Company Ltd.

Tiflis, 21/4th May 1911. 191
Golovinsky Prospect. № 9.

W. Gaisberg Esq.
The Gramophone Co Ltd.
London.

Dear Mr Gaisberg,

Mr. Pearse and I returned to Tiflis three days ago from our trip in Russian Turkestan and Mr Pearse left on the following day, accompanied by our traveller, for Vladikavkas and Petrovsk.

He will return to Tiflis in about 10 days time and go on to Kutais.

I note the requirements of the Recording Department as regards artistes payments but cannot for the moment send you the official forms filled in as I have none of them here. As soon as Mr Pearse returns I will see that the required particulars are sent unless, as may happen, that Mr Pearse has already forwarded same.

I am however sending you enclosed particulars of all payments so far made and also an estimate of the total cost of the trip as far as regards artistes payments.

From this you will see that the total trip works out at about Rbs 4284-50 against my estimate of Rbs 4000. I consider this is very good, taking into consideration that I have included two payments of Rbs 500 each which are simply advances on account of royalty contracts and as such should hardly appear on the list.

The peculiarity of the trip in Russian Turkestan is that in the majority of cases we were unable to get hold of those artistes whom we had in mind before starting on account of the exaggerated value they now place on themselves owing to the advances which have been made to them by the Pathe and Premier Record people.

It seems to me however that it is our records which have made the

reputation of these singers, who previously sang for us for very small sums and now talk in thousands of roubles. I therefore decided that it was not worth while on this occasion to bother with them even if I had had the money necessary to satisfy them but to leave them in vain hopes and take a few new artistes who could be got for a reasonable figure. There is no fear of either the Pathe or the Premier giving them the sums they are now asking and it will be a good and necessary lesson for them in the meantime.

I am confident that if another trip is made in the course of the next two years they will come running round asking to sing.

The main object of the trip was of course our contract artiste, Mulla Tooohi and from him we have got 40 numbers.

If we were unsuccessful with artistes who had previously sung for us we were extraordinarily successful in getting the services of two of the best known singers in the district who have been the aim of all the Talking Machine Companies who have recorded in the neighbourhood for the past five or six years, viz, Levi of Buchara and Abdul Aziz of Samarkand. With Levi I made a contract for three years at Rbs 1000 per annum. This man is the favorite singer of the Emir of Buchara and I had to get the Emir's permission for him to sing. (This was done with the help of the Russian Political Agent in Buchara) I am confident from advance orders already received for the first issue of the records that we shall easily more than cover the whole cost of the contract by the first years sales as I intend to issue the records as D/S Red Label to retail at Rbs 4-00 each.

As for Abdul Aziz he has even a greater reputation than Mulla

The Gramophone Company Ltd.

Tiflis, 191
Golovinsky Prospect. № 9.

Toochi and as his contract is on the basis of Kops 10 for 10 inch and kops 15 for 12 inch, with an advance of Rbs 500, I shall be disappointed if we do not have to pay him at least Rbs 1000 per annum in royalties. Neither of these singers have ever made records before so that we have an absolutely clear field in front of us and as we now possess records of the three most noted singers of the whole district we can laugh at the competition for a long time to come. Our sales in this territory have already increased by more than double during the past twelve months and I am confident that before the end of the year they will again be doubled with the help of this recording.

I calculate that Mr Pearce will have finished all the work here by about the 20th to 25th May (old style) and will then be able to leave for Moscow. I regret very much that we could not get through earlier but the Trans-Caspian trip took rather longer than I had anticipated as it took two or three days in each town to round up the artistes and bargain with them before we could get to work.

With kindest regards.

Yours very truly.

Frederick Tyler

Fig 17/18/19: Letter Frederick Tyler to Will Gaisberg

Having read the letter I was not sure I understood the contents correctly.

We know that *Pathé's* recording engineer Thomas John Theobald Noble did extensive recording in the Caucasus and Turkestan (Tyler's territory) between 1910 and 1913, since he wrote a series of articles for the English trade journal *The Talking Machine News* and the American trade journal *Talking Machine World*.²⁹ But what about *Premier Record*? What exactly were they up to in Russian Turkestan?

I sent copies of the letter to **Christian Zwarg** asking him for his opinion:

Chris, attached you'll find three scans of a letter. I would like to know what you make of it. The key question is: "Did Premier Record make recordings in Tyler's area or was it just plans or preparations which did not materialize in the end? What's your impression?"

Christian got his teeth into the job and here is his interpretation of Tyler's letter:

As I understand it, the situation is as follows:

At some point in time between the previous (1909) and the current (1911) Gramophone Co. recording sessions in Russian Turkestan, agents of both Pathé and Premier seem to have promised large sums of money to artists (unnamed in the letter) who had previously been contracted to the Gramophone Co. if they agreed to record for Pathé or Premier. Probably, this had happened very briefly before Tyler's report, as the actual Pathé/Premier recording sessions apparently still hadn't taken place.

When Pearse and Tyler arrived for their new Turkestan session (in April 1911), many of their former contract artists suddenly asked for astronomical sums (presumably as much as, or somewhat more than, the Pathé and Premier people had promised them), and they reacted by turning these people down and preferred to record other artists instead who still agreed to acceptable payments. Tyler doesn't seem too unhappy about this as they had been able to retain the services of their most important contracted artist Mulla Toochee (40 new recordings as Tyler says), and also succeeded to make exclusive contracts with two of the most famous singers of the area who had never made any records for other companies before (and as it seems had not given in to Pathé's and Premier's promises), one Levi and one Abdul Aziz. Tyler doubts that Pathé and Premier would actually pay the promised sums, if and when their recording sessions eventually would come to pass at all, and predicts that the former Gramophone Co. artists, after having been duped by Pathé and Premier, would beg to be allowed to record for Gramo again under the old contractual conditions within a year or two.

Now that's fine as a narrative, but unfortunately I lack most of the data one would need to confirm or to debunk it:

1. The 1909 Turkestan etc. recordings are detailed in Kelly's suffix-L matrix listing, this should give at least a partial list of the artists Pathé and Premier were trying to lure away from the Gramophone Co. Certainly, one "Mulla Tulchi" is among them (long session starting at mx. 10010 L) who may well be the same man called "Mulla Toochee" by Tyler.

2. What I do not have, is a similar list of the 1911 sessions by Pearse (likely suffix-ae masters which Kelly hasn't published; we don't have a transcription of the HMV Oriental Catalogue either), to compare which of the 1909 artists are lacking from the later session, and so identify those that were demanding utopian payments and therefore were not recorded again by Gramo.

3. To close the case we would also need lists of the Pathé and Premier recordings actually made in the area during 1911 and/or 1912, to see whether these companies actually succeeded in recording the artists found in step 2 above, or if Tyler had been right in the end with his assumption that Pathé and Premier were merely making big promises to disrupt the work of Gramo with their established contract artists, but without a serious intent to actually pay these sums themselves. However, I hardly recall having seen even one Turkestan Pathé, and certainly not a single Premier disc from this country.

Who could wish for more?

As Tyler's letter suggests, Premier-Record was considering or had developed plans to make recordings in Russian Turkestan. If these plans ever materialized does not become clear from this letter. As so often is the case with a single letter, because the surrounding context is missing, we lack the necessary information to put the whole situation into perspective. All things considered I do not think Premier Record's recording engineer made it to Turkestan eventually.

I do not know if - apart from Tyler's letter - there are more documents from this same period in the EMI Music Archives that also refer to (planned) activities of Premier Record.

As for Zwarg's comment that he does not have a list of of Ted Pearse's 1911 Turkestan and Caucasus recording sessions, here then is that list, kindly sent to me by Alan Kelly:

Edmund James Pearse's 1911 recording trip to Turkestan and the Caucasus			
Recording Location	Recording Date	10-inch / 25 cm	12-inch / 30cm
Armavir (Russia)	1 Mar - .. Mar 1911	1833 – 1938 ae	
Tashkent (Uzbekistan)	.. Mar - .. Apr 1911	1939 – 1999 ae	142 – 145 af
Kokand (Uzbekistan)	.. Apr - .. Apr 1911	2000 – 2014 ae	
Samarkand (Uzbekistan)	22 Apr - .. Apr 1911	2015 – 2070 ae	146 – 155 af
Buchara (Uzbekistan)	.. Apr - .. Apr 1911	2071 – 2094 ae	156 – 181 af
Vladikavkas = Ordzhonikidze (Ukraine)	13 May 1911	2095 – 2126 ae	
Petrovsk = Makhachkala (Dagestan, Russia)	14 May 1911	2127 – 2174 ae	
Kutais(i) (Georgia)	20 May 1911	2175 – 2208 ae	
Tiflis = Tbilisi (Georgia)	27 May 1911	2209 – 2224 ae	
<i>Courtesy: Alan Kelly</i>			

(Russian) Turkestan is the old name of the region in Central Asia between the Caspian Sea and China, encompassing the countries along the *Silk Road*, such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Kirgizistan and Tadjikistan (major cities: Tashkent, Samarkand and Buchara). The **Caucasus** is the mountainous area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, nowadays encompassing countries like Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Chechnya

and a number of smaller states (major cities: Armavir, Vladikavkas, Petrovsk, Kutais(i), Tiflis and Baku).

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PhZ 9/41/1279 (8 October 1908)

PhZ 10/4/79 (28 January 1909)

PhZ 10/22/548 (3 June 1909)

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PhZ 11/12/338 (24 March 1910)

PhZ 11/18/443 (5 May 1910)

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EMI Correspondence (letter of 4th May 1911 in EMI Music Archives)

DISCOGRAPHY:

Original 78rpm releases:

6 Turkish Premier Records in the collections of Fikret Bertuğ, General Egyptian Book Organization, Aristomenis Kalyviotis, Hugo Strötbaum and Cengiz Şahin.
Where are the remaining 56 Turkish Premier Records?

CD Productions:

(1)
Turquie. Archives de la musique turque (1) - C 560081
Turquie. Archives de la musique turque (2) - C 560082
OCORA - Radio France

(2)
Masters of Turkish Music (1) - CD 1051
Masters of Turkish Music (2) - CD 1111
ROUNDER

(3)

Operetler, Kantolar, Fanteziler (1) - YK 96.43 - 1

Hafızlar, Gazeller, Şarkılar (2) - YK 96.43 - 2

YAPI VE KREDİ

(4)

Tanburi Cemil Bey (I) - CD 4264

Tanburi Cemil Bey (II) & (III) - CD 4274

Tanburi Cemil Bey (IV) & (V) - CD 4308

Tatyos Efendi (Kudsi Erguner Ensemble) - CD 4277

Tatyos Efendi : Vocal Masterpieces (Kudsi Erguner Ensemble & Melihat Gülses) - CD 4278

TRADITIONAL CROSSROADS

(5)

Karagöz'ün Şarkısı – CD 081

Kantolar (1905-1945) - CD 085

Gazeller (I)

Gazeller (II)

Gazeller (3) - CD 360

Türk Müziği Ustaları: ud - CD 324/325

Osmanlı Marşları - CD 150

İstanbul Laternası - CD 136

Mevlithan, Gazelhan ve Hanende Hafız Kemal Bey - CD 381

Gazelhan ve Hanende Hafız Burhan - CD 397

Türk Gölge Oyunu. Karagöz & Hayal Şarkıları – CD 437

KALAN (Arşiv Serisi)

This is only a random selection from a long list of re-issues from 78rpm records on the Kalan label in the Arşiv Serisi. These are without exception extremely beautiful well-documented productions. For a complete list go to www.kalan.com → albumler → arşiv serisi.

For this study I am greatly indebted to **Klára Bajnai** and **Géza Gábor Simon**.

I would also like to thank the following persons for their valuable contributions:

Fikret Bertuğ, Murat Derin, Ruth Edge, Peter Endendijk, General Egyptian Book Organization, Pekka Gronow, Christiane Hofer (GHT), Aristomenis Kalyviotis, Alan Kelly, Ferko Öry, Cengiz Şahin, Cemal Ünlü, Arnoud Vrolijk, Cengiz Yolcu and Christian Zwarg.

ENDNOTES

¹ Another example of such a black label Premier-Record can be found on the website www.gramophone-anno.eu under *diszkográfia*.

² This situation lasted until those institutions came to realize they had something rare and valuable on their hands, which had to be handled with utmost care and should definitely not be lent to customers *abroad*.

³ *Phonographische Zeitschrift*, Jahrgang 10, No 2, p. 36 (of 14 Jan 1909)

⁴ On the website www.gramophone-anno.eu it says: *In the February 1909 edition of the same publication [= Phonographische Zeitschrift] a full-page advert informs the reader that the First Hungarian Record Factory had opened its Vienna outlet under the name of Premier-Rekord. Following this it is mentioned in the news as an agent, a subsidiary, a warehouse, and as an independent company. However, a Vienna branch of 'Premier Record', led by Ludwig Leitner, is already mentioned in an advertisement in the Phonographische Zeitschrift of 27 August 1908 (Jahrgang 9, No 35, p. 1028) and a small notice in the Phonographische Zeitschrift of 8 October 1908 (Jahrgang 9, No 41, p. 1279).*

⁵ European Turkey is now called *Trakya* (*Thrace* in English). Constantinople – now Istanbul - was and is straddling **two** continents: one part is in **Europe**, the other part in **Asia**.

⁶ Source: *Első Magyar Hanglemezzgyár: Premier Record* by Marton Gyula and Bajnai Klára. Jazz Oktatási és Kutatási Alapítvány. Budapest, 2008, page 278.

⁷ *Die Sprechmaschine*, Jahrgang 4, No 39, p. 1142 (of 26 Sep 1908).

⁸ *Phonographische Zeitschrift*, Jahrgang 10, No 22, p. 548 (of 3 June 1909).

In the *Phonographische Zeitschrift*, Jahrgang 9, No 8, p. 227 (of 20 Feb 1908) the new record factory is already (mistakenly?) being referred to as “*Erste Ungarische Schallplattenfabrik, Aktiengesellschaft*”.

⁹ It was not until late 1911 or early 1912 that a new label was introduced: ‘**Spezial-Record**’. A chestnut-brown label with on the upper half a colourful bucolic scene, showing a shepherd sitting under a tree playing a sort of double flute, and a nymph in flowing robes, with a floral wreath around her head, ‘dancing to his piping’. For examples of this label see Klára Bajnai’s website www.gramophone-anno.eu.

The new **Spezial-Record** label trademark was officially registered in Hungary on 15 May 1912 under No 24 538/I, but was already in use *before* that date, as evidenced by advertisements in the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 1 and 15 Feb 1912.

¹⁰ Judging from an announcement in the *Phonographische Zeitschrift* of 5 December 1912 (see *below*) the Viennese firm apparently continued to exist under its old name ‘*Premier Record Ludwig L. Leitner*’, although Ludwig Leitner had already been replaced by Emil Drucker as early as 1910.

¹¹ *Phonographische Zeitschrift*, Jahrgang 11, No 44, p. 991 (of 27 Oct 1910)

¹² *Phonographische Zeitschrift*, Jahrgang 13, No 5, p. 92 (of 1 Feb 1912)

¹³ *Phonographische Zeitschrift*, Jahrgang 13, No 49, p. 1163 (of 5 Dec 1912). According to Géza Gábor Simon the *First Hungarian Record Factory* stopped its activities on 7 September 1915.

¹⁴ For more information on **Max Winter**, **Carl Sandahl** and the curious recording career of

Ivor Robert Holmes see their files on www.recordingpioneers.com.

¹⁵ 122 Recordings means 61 doublesided record copies. That means approximately 1639 copies of each record. Hmmm, I dunno...

¹⁶ The rarity of the Turkish Premier Record copies can of course be explained by the fact that they stem from one single recording session and no doubt were available in limited numbers for a relatively short time. Afterwards Premier Record never ventured into Turkey again. In 1912 the Vienna branch was closed, followed by the liquidation of the Hungarian company in September 1915 (source: *Első Magyar Hanglemezgyár: Premier Record* by Marton Gyula and Bajnai Klára, p. XVI). Add to that two Balkan Wars and the subsequent First World War and the picture is complete.

¹⁷ Meanwhile Klára Bajnai and Géza Gábor Simon have set the record straight in their new book *Képes Magyar hanglemez-történet / Hungarian Recording History in Pictures* Jazz Oktatási és Kutatási Alapítvány (Foundation for Jazz Education and Research in Hungary). Budapest, 2012 (ISBN: 9789638796639)

¹⁸ On 1 January 1929 a new spelling was introduced. It was based on the latin alphabet, plus a few extra letters.

¹⁹ This diversity of the population of the big cities is reflected in the now-extinct comic theatre forms of those days, like *Ortaoyunu* (open-air theatre), and *Karagöz* (a kind of shadow-theatre, similar to *Wajang*). Apart from the main protagonists (Pişekâr-Kavuklu and Karagöz-Hacivat), people from all walks of life and from different regions in the Ottoman Empire are a regular feature in these plays and sketches. Not only several regional varieties of Turks, but also Greeks, Jews, Armenians, Gypsies, Kurds, Laz, Arabs, Albanians and even Europeans. Stereotype characters, each with his or her characteristic dress, behaviour and peculiar way of speaking Turkish.

Songs and instrumental pieces (intermezzos) formed an integral part of these performances.

²⁰ In 1934 the '*Soyadı Kanunu*' ('Law on Family Names') was introduced and all inhabitants of Turkey were obliged to adopt a surname.

²¹ See Etem Ruhi Üngör's *Türk Musikisi. Güfteler Antolojisi* (page 221 and 235).

²² There is mention of a **Muhtar Bey** in Sadi Yaver Ataman's book *Dümbüllü İsmail Efendi* (p. 18) and even a picture of him at the back of the book. But although the context looks perfect (*ortaoyunu - tuluat tiyatrosu - karagöz*, in short, comic theatre), I have reason to believe that this is not the same person.

²³ *Phonographische Zeitschrift, Jahrgang 13, No 5, p. 92* (1 February 1912)

²⁴ We can discount the month of December, allowing for a three- to four-week period of processing the recordings at the Budapest pressing-plant.

²⁵ Hungarians have this funny habit of writing the surname first and then the first name.

²⁶ For more info and picture see www.recordingpioneers.com under **Frederick TYLER**.

²⁷ The **Caucasus** comprises the region between the Black Sea and Caspian Sea. Major cities are Armavir, Vladikavkas, Petrovsk, Kutais(i), Tiflis and Baku.

By (Russian) **Turkestan** is meant the area in Central Asia between the Caspian Sea and China, encompassing the countries along the *Silk Road*, such as Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Kirgizistan and Tadjikistan. Major cities were Tashkent, Samarkand and Buchara.

²⁸ Pekka Gronow already mentioned Pathé's recording activities in the area in his article *The*

Record Industry Comes to the Orient (pp. 264-265).

²⁹ For an account of Noble's recording adventures see: www.recordingpioneers.com and look under **PIONEERS → Thomas John Theobald NOBLE** or **DOCUMENTS → PATHÉ**. Then click on **THREE YEARS' RECORDING TRIP IN EUROPE AND ASIA (1) & (2)**.

A number of his Pathé recordings can be viewed at:

http://gallica.bnf.fr/Search?ArianeWireIndex=index&p=1&lang=DE&f_typedoc=audio&q=path%C3%A9