

**FOLLOWING THE BLACK SPIRAL: OLD VOICES, NEW LIFE
(TOWARDS THE HISTORY OF THE EARLY COMMERCIAL
GRAMOPHONE RECORDS IN BULGARIA)***

Ventsislav Dimov¹

**Professor, Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", Faculty of Journalism and
Mass Communication; Institute of Art Studies, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences**

**ПРАТЕЊИ ЦРНУ СПИРАЛУ: СТАРИ ГЛАСОВИ, НОВИ ЖИВОТ
(КА ИСТОРИЈАТУ РАНИХ КОМЕРЦИЈАЛНИХ
ГРАМОФОНСКИХ ПЛОЧА У БУГАРСКОЈ)**

Венцислав Димов

**Професор, Универзитет „Св. Климент Охридски“ у Софији, Факултет за
новинарство и масовну комуникацију; Институт за уметничке студије,
Бугарска академија наука**

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ABSTRACT

The earliest surviving sound evidence of music and musicians from Bulgaria is on commercial gramophone records from the early XX century. Although unique sources for ethnomusicological and historical research, these commercial recordings are little known and almost unexplored. The proposed text sets out to collect and describe information on the first decade of commercial gramophone recordings in Bulgaria. The basis for the research is sound evidence from scholarly and museum archives and private collections; music company catalogues, labels on gramophone records, discographies; and supporting information – texts and advertising images from newspapers, memoirs and memoir literature as primary

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1 v.d.dimov@gmail.com

and secondary sources. The sought ethnomusicological approach is achieved through a combination of different research methods: ethnographic, historical, discographic, cultural, anthropological. The results of the research present the role of commercial recordings in musical and popular culture in Bulgaria in the years leading up to the First World War, cultural life, musical history, musicing, intercultural interactions, the cultural choices of Western and local, Slavic and Balkan, traditional music in non-traditional modern contexts, art music in popular contexts, and the role of professional musicians.

KEYWORDS: Bulgarian gramophone records, record industry, music archives, ethnomusicology, print/online catalogues and discographies.

АПСТРАКТ

Најранији сачувани звучни извори о музици и музичарима из Бугарске налазе се на комерцијалним грамофонским плочама с почетка 20. века. Иако су јединствени извори за етномузиколошка и историографска истраживања, ови снимци мало су познати и готово неистражени. Текст има за циљ да прикупи и опише информације о првој деценији комерцијалних грамофонских снимања у Бугарској. Основа за ово истраживање су звучни извори из научних и музејских архива и приватних колекција; каталози музичких компанија, етикете на грамофонским плочама, дискографије, као и пратеће информације – текстови и рекламне слике из новина, мемоари и мемоарска литература, као примарни и секундарни извори. Сврсисходан етномузиколошки приступ остварује се комбинацијом различитих истраживачких метода: етнографских, историјских, дискографских, културолошких, антрополошких. Резултати истраживања представљају улогу комерцијалних снимака у музичкој и популарној култури у Бугарској, у годинама које су претходиле Првом светском рату, у културном животу, историји музике, музицирању, интеркултуралним интеракцијама, културним изборима Западног и локалног, словенског и балканског, традиционалне музике у нетрадиционалним модерним контекстима, уметничке музике у популарним контекстима, те улогу професионалних музичара.

Кључне речи: бугарске грамофонске плоче, плоче на 78 обртаја у минути, грамофонска индустрија, музички архиви, етномузикологија, штампани/онлајн каталози и дискографије.

INTRODUCTION: THE “GREAT REMEMBERERS” A CENTURY LATER

Twenty years ago, when I began to study the sound evidence of local musical culture, commercial gramophone records from the first decades of the twentieth century were on the periphery of the interests of Bulgarian ethnomusicologists. This was due to the characteristic limitation of national schools of music and folklore studies to the so-called “authentic” rural folklore, to the musical traditions of one's own ethnic group.

The earliest surviving recordings of traditional music from Bulgaria, made for scientific purposes by Bulgarian scholars (Rayna Katsarova), date from 1938 (Dimov 2021). The earliest recorded sound evidence from Bulgaria is on commercial gramophone records from the beginning of the 20th century, ie they are registrations of local music and musicians made 30 years before the first field recordings of researchers. Their quality as the earliest and most unique historical sources, little known and almost unexplored, is just one of the reasons why commercial recordings from Bulgaria are worthy of scholarly interest today. I have highlighted some aspects of their scholarly value in previous publications: commercial recordings are early evidence that can, together with scholarly recordings, give a fuller picture of the traditional music of the Bulgarians (Dimov 2005). Gramophone recordings are part of the media music and culture industry and, as a sounding historical “freeze-frame” of dynamic popular culture, still await their ethnomusicological and anthropological readings (Dimov 2006; Dumnić Vilotijević 2018: 96). They are sonic testimonies of intercultural interactions in the recent past, show the role of professional musicians - from ethnic minorities (Gypsies, Turks, Jews), migrants and foreigners – in the development of Bulgarian musical culture (Dimov 2008); illustrate regional cross-border contacts and exchanges in Slavic and Balkan contexts (Dimov 2007; 2009; Pennanen 2007); recorded music of Balkan diasporas abroad (Spottswood 1990; Kunej, D. and R. 2017). Commercial gramophone recordings are a screen at the crossroads of Western and Eastern, foreign and local, urban and rural; they are signs of the encounters of professional (music-literate) musicians and the bearers of the oral tradition, and on the other hand, of professional musicians and their local audiences. These qualities beg the question: why do the “Great Rememberers” (to use the phrase associated with Alan Lomax's series of fieldwork commercial recordings - see Lydon 2012) continue to stand marginalized and forgotten by ethnomusicology? This article does not aspire to provide a definitive answer, but will attempt to describe the sonic and discographic, musical and verbal evidence for the first decade of the history of gramophone recordings in this country. Commercial recordings on 78 rpm shellac discs /at 78 rpm/ as sonic evidence from scholarly and museum archives and private collections; music company catalogues, gramophone record labels, discographies; together with accompanying information - synchronous and asynchronous evidence of functioning and reception, such as texts and promotional images from newspapers, memoirs and memoir literature – are the primary and secondary sources (Pennanen 2000; 2005) that frame the object. I will seek knowledge about it in the field of ethnomusicology, which includes the cultural, social,

historical, societal, community and human dimensions of gramophone recordings. The information is incomplete and fragmentary: sound testimonies are few and do not correspond to the companies' catalogues, which are largely inaccessible; the lack of either can be compensated for by close observation of printed periodicals that contain advertisements for gramophones and recordings; by analytical readings of participants' recollections of the processes; or by archival documents. The aim is to achieve as complete a picture as possible of commercial recordings and their functioning in Bulgaria in the years leading up to the First World War, which will in turn illuminate important aspects of cultural life, musical history, human and community music-making, cultural choices at the Western and local levels, and the life of traditional music in non-traditional contexts in a time of late modernity in peripheral South-Eastern Europe.

The ambitions of this study are to complete the picture of early gramophone recordings in the Balkans, which have already been the subject of research in individual countries and cultural zones: Serbia (Aleksandrović 2008; Lajić Mihajlović and Belić 2016; Dumnić Vilotijević 2018; 2019: 195–196), Bosnia and Herzegovina (Pennanen 2003; 2007), Slovenia and Croatia (Kunej, D. 2014; Kunej, D. and R. 2017; Diskograf 2022).

THE RISE OF THE RECORD INDUSTRY AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE GRAMOPHONE IN THE BALKANS

The rise of the commercial recording industry in the world started at the beginning of the twentieth century. According to Malm, it was mainly based on sales of “hardware” – gramophones and phonographs – and the accompanying sales of “software” – recorded music on cylinders and records. At the outset, the recording industry was concentrated in a few companies, because of the restrictive effect of patents. In the USA, the dominant companies were the Victor Talking Machine Company, founded in 1901 and developing the interests of Berliner (later RCA), the Columbia Phonograph Company (later CBS) and the Edison Company, which mass produced cylinders. In Europe, the industry was dominated by the British Gramophone Company, founded in 1898 (later EMI) in England; the German Lindstrom Company (later Polygram); Deutsche Grammophon, founded in 1898 in Germany; and the French Pathe Company, founded in France in 1897. There were also smaller concerns operating in Europe a century ago, but most of the modern transnational corporations are direct descendants of these 6 early companies (Gronow 1983: 54–55; Malm 1992: 350–352). The first Major Record Labels owed much of their success to technological innovation – they were also manufacturers of entire systems of recording technology. For the customer, they offered both recordings and listening equipment. The music industry includes recording equipment, the mastering process, the circulation process, advertising and sales. By the 1910s, the Berliner gramophone record had become dominant; in just 10 years it had taken over the world, and there was hardly a country where recorded music and musical apparatuses were not sold

under the Gramophone Company label (Gronow 1983: 55–56). The gramophone did not require any special handling skills, it could be used by anyone, anywhere, and as the technique improved and the recorded repertoire expanded, the demand grew and the price decreased. Record companies soon found that in order to sell gramophones, they also had to produce records aimed at potential customers. In Western Europe and the United States, the light and art music of the elites, who were the potential customers of the still expensive gramophones and records, were a relatively homogeneous repertoire of international musical styles (dance music, opera arias). In other parts of the world, however, the market wants recordings of local music and companies are working in this field (Malm 1992: 350–352). Where they do not have branches and offices, companies look for local partners and send agents to seek out and record prominent local artists to ensure market success.

This is the case with commercial recordings in the Balkans. The Gramophone Company, founded in 1898 in London, is the local market leader. Records are distributed in Hanover at the factory of Deutsche Grammophon-Aktiengesellschaft (DGAG), the company's German subsidiary. The Balkan countries, as secondary markets, are run by the Gramophone Co's division in Austro-Hungary (Vienna and Budapest); in states such as Greece and Bulgaria the company has no office or branch, it is served by local agents – businessmen who have the task of scouting out the most popular local artists to be recorded by a team of travelling “experts” – recording engineers (Perkins et al. 1976; Gronow 1981: 251–254; Pennanen 2007). Recordings are most often made in the major cities of the Balkans (the capital cities), where the company's experts arrive with the recording equipment and the discs to be recorded; local artists are usually recorded in a suitable room of a local hotel or theatre, after which the matrix are pressed in Hanover, where the Gramophone Company's largest factory is located.

The Balkans were part of the Gramophone Company's movement to the Orient, as Pekka Gronow names and describes it: the pioneers were Americans William Sinkler Darby and Fred Gaisberg, who travelled to Russia, India and other Asian countries and made thousands of recordings (Gronow 1981). Fred's brother William and the German engineers Max and Franz Hampe followed in their footsteps (for more detailed data on recording sessions from this period see: Perkins et al. 1976: 83–84; Pennanen 2007: 128–132; Kunej, D. 2014). Observations on advertisements and newspaper advertisements related to recording sessions and issued gramophone records in the Balkan countries show the names, occupation and role of some of the local representatives of major record companies between 1905 and 1913 (see more in: Pennanen 2007: 112; Kunej, D. 2014: 134; Pavlović 1909; Palić 1913).

GRAMOPHONE COMPANY AND THE FIRST RECORDINGS OF BULGARIAN ARTISTS

The European branches of the Gramophone Company in the first years of the century opened their partners in Bulgaria. Initially these were merchants, distributors of gramophones and gramophone records, such as the merchant Max Weber (Ruse-Sofia), who offered gramophones and records in 1903, not yet of Bulgarian artists (*Vecherna Poshta* IV/840, 8. 7. 1903; Mir X/137900, 4. 1. 1904). A year later, advertisements for records, now “in Bulgarian”, appeared in the press by the same local representative of Deutsche Gramophon (Ibid. V/1007, 14. 5. 1904; the advertisement was repeated in the following weeks and months – see no. 1010, 1015, 1020, etc., the addressees now being two different representatives, Veber and Grauer). In the same year, advertisements appeared in the Sofia newspapers for Grauer's newly opened shop in the capital city of Sofia (on the central Alexander Square, next to the famous “Cherven Rak” locale), which advertised itself as “huge, special for gramophones and records ... which play music, songs and declamations” of such quality that “one would think one was in a concert hall and in some first-rate opera house” (Ibid. V/1035, 12. 7. 1904). In memories of the cultural life of Sofia, this establishment is described as a “luxurious brewery”, a center of the “highlife”, where the Guards Orchestra played – one of the first Bulgarian orchestral formations recorded by the Gramophone Co.; and Grauer's shop as a catalyst for the mass market penetration of gramophone records, as prices fell and the quality of needles, records and recordings rose (Kanazirski-Verin 1947: 95–96; Kostentseva 1979: 283).

Until 1904 there were no newspaper reports or advertisements for gramophone recordings of Bulgarian performers and repertoire. This circumstantial evidence of the beginning of Bulgarian recordings in 1904 is confirmed by the information about the first recordings made of Bulgarian performers with Bulgarian repertoire contained in archival sources/source groups, generated by record company Gramophone²: reported by recording engineers, index cards, and other record company files, such as matrix numbers and the recording dates. These data, confirmed by the Gramophone Company Matrix Numbers survey (Perkins et al. 1976: 79–88), indicate that the company's representative William Sinkler Darby visited Sofia between January and April 1904 and made the first recordings, followed by Max Hampe (Sofia recordings – November 1905, Sofia and Varna – October or November 1906), Charles Scheuplein (Sofia – 1907), Frederick Gaisberg (Sofia – September 1909) and Franz Hampe (Sofia – August 1910). Male singers recorded in Sofia during this period included L. Herzfeld,³ Tz. Brashlyanov,⁴ D. Tz. Ivanov,⁵ Marko Ivanov,⁶ Naim

2 I owe a debt of gratitude to Risto Pekka Pennanen for his assistance and access.

3 “Bezhanets”, “Macedonia”, “Bashtinia”, “Devoyko mila”.

4 “Stoyan mami duma”, “Mama na Stoyan duma”, “Strahil voyvoda”, “Na drum legnah”.

5 “Bulko, Bulko”, “Grozdanka po dvor hodeshe”, “Karanfilke mome”.

6 “Makedonska pesen”, “Pesenta na polkovnik Yankov”, “Pesen na Stoyan voyvoda”, “Zhenil se Petar

Uziep,⁷ P. Dimitrov,⁸ M. Stoyan – tenor,⁹ Naki Efendi - Bulgarian.¹⁰ Female singers have also been recorded: R. Panayotova,¹¹ Nataliya Dimitrova,¹² Ruszha Todorova,¹³ Sofia Ruzmanova,¹⁴ Ivanka Ilieva with "Sofiyski Shop" orchestra,¹⁵ Kina Dimitrova – Leskovetz,¹⁶ S. Radeva - Leskovetz.¹⁷ Soloists – instrumentalists have been recorded in Sofia: Gyorgi Petrov – tambura solo,¹⁸ Vasil Stamenov – Leskovetz, ocarina¹⁹, Ivan Hristov – Slatina, gaida,²⁰ L. Zvadimirov.²¹ Some of the recordings register orchestral formations. I Bulgarsko Tamburashko Drushstvo;²² N Tz V. Eskadron;²³ Orkestra na Grigor Nikolaev;²⁴ Orkestra V. Shvertner.²⁵ The records also contain speech – talking humorous: Vladimir Lukov.²⁶

The names of the first musicians to make recordings appear in the earliest of our known catalogues of Bulgarian records, Grammophon's, from May–December

voyvoda", "Pesenta na Toma Davidov", "Pesenta na Marko voyvoda", "Ne plachi, mayko, ne zhali, che stanah azi komita", "Pesenta na Tsvetko voyvoda", "Zadade se burya strashna".

7 "Snoshti minah pokray vas", "Momiche malak dyavolo", "Ley se Dunave".

8 "Ya razturi Tsveto mome", "Pile pishti, Milke le", "Delchev Voyvoda", "Biko, bash bayraktarino", "Zarekoh se", "Ah, Dimitro lyo", "Shto me machish dusho Yano", "Chernyu Valkana dumashe", "Mayka", "Ne plachi, ne zhali".

9 "Zaplakala e vdovitsa", "Manush voyvoda", "Dafinka platno pereshe", "Dimitar Stoyanki dumashe", "Mamo, molya ti sa", "Hayde ne plachi".

10 "Pomoli se Boga, voyvoda", "Kak ne ti e zhalno, voyvoda", "Ot Balkan sleva", "Petli mi peyat", "Ne sedi, Dzhemo", "Sbogom veche", "O, zhiv e toy, zhiv e", "Balgarsko pleme" – marsh, "Ne zhali, Maleno mome", "Shto mi e milo", "Otvori, Lenko", "Militse", "Dafka", "Tunan kisi", "Dinche, Dinche".

11 "Bulko, bulko", "De e momiche, mama ti", "Nani, nani" – L. Karavelov.

12 "Sirache sam, pak nikogo nyamam", "Pesen za resavkite".

13 "Tsenkinite ochi", "Anke dushichke".

14 "Sadi moma kray more loze", "Napli sa stariya Asan aga".

15 "Chakam, chakam tsela nosht", "Az sam moma anglichanka", "Trendafil mirishe", "Az sam moma idealna".

16 "Kaval sviri na polyana", "Ot san sladak koy me budi".

17 "Ot planina sliza mamo, ovcharche", „Ovcharche, mlado pastirche".

18 "Boryano, Boryanke", "Nova cheshma se zapravi".

19 "... horo", "Tsafnalo e belo kokiche" – horo, "Mari Dimitro le, mlado momiche".

20 "Slatinsko horo", "Rachenitsi", "Zabrazhdaniya".

21 "Horo prez kraka".

22 "Prosti", "Kitka", "Shumensko horo", "Svishtovsko horo", "Paydushko horo", "Shumi Maritsa" – marsh, "Shumi Maritsa" – natsionalen himn, "Napred, ti, balgarino".

23 "Yunatsi" – Hohola, "Tsaribrodsko i Paydushko hora", "Staro balgarsko horo", "Shumi Maritsa" – marsh, balgarski natsionalen himn, "Smyana na karaula v Dvorettsa", "Karanfilke mome" – Kautski, "Rachenitsi i Dupnishko horo", "Tarsila mayka sina svoya" – marsh.

24 "Rabotnicheska pesen", "Otdavna behme dvama naedno", "Radomirsko horo", "Rusensko horo", "Rachenitsa", "Sofiysko horo", "Ey ti, krachmarino", "Siyka si dvori meteshe", "Tamara" – ot piesata "Borislav", "Az sam roden v nedelya".

25 "Paydushko horo", "Balgarski motivi", "Rapsodiya" ot Pipkov, "Konarska kitka" ot Shtros, "Balgarski pesni" ot Shtros, "Balgarski pesni ot Hohola", "Balgarski narodni rachenitsi", "Uchitelski marsh".

26 "Evrein moli ministara za sluzhba", "Evrein prodavach na igli", "Smeshni razkazi".

1908. The catalogue includes a total of 138 records, of which 91 are of “international repertoire” (English, French, German, Italian, Russian, Serbian, Romanian, Turkish) and 47 records of Bulgarian artists and repertoire. Among the Bulgarian recordings there are recordings of military orchestras. The music of the 1st Cavalry of the N.C.V. Regiment with Kapellmeister T. Hadzhiev. Small orchestras with Western string and wind instruments have been recorded: 12 records of the orchestra of the band “Shop” with Kapellmeister N. N. Krastev from Sofia. Among the records there are registrations of choirs: 2 records of the Choir of the Sofia Musical Society “Sofia-Yuch Bunar”; 4 records of a Serbian orchestra with a choir under the direction of Mr. Petar Velkov from Sofia. There are more records that have registered male and female singers – soloists: 3 records of Mrs. M. Dr. Popova from Sofia; 3 records of Mrs. E. Pancheva from Sofia; 3 with songs by M. K. Dryanovsky, baritone from Ruse; 2 with songs by Mr. Mar. Kasabov, bass from Sofia; 1 to Mr. Iliya Madjarov from Sofia; 3 to Mr. Iv. Yovchev an “independent artist” from Sofia, 2 by Mr. Naum K. Takov, “the blind” from Sofia, 1 to G. Kitanov, Kyustendil. Duets with and without accompaniment were recorded: 2 by the duet Yur. Spirov – Iv. Dimitrov, Sofia; 1 record with recordings of the duet Yur. Spirov and Iv. Dimitrov from Sofia; 1 with one song of the duet of Spirov and Dimitrov, and one song of M. Dr. Popova; 3 records with recordings of a male duet in accordion accompaniment – Iv. Dimitrov, At. Stefanov and T. Petrov. The Bulgarian part of the catalogue also includes 2 records with funny stories by the national theatre artist Geno Kirov (Gramophon, 1908).

PATHÉ, FAVORITE, ODEON... AND MORE EARLY RECORDS FROM BULGARIA

A few years after the first advertisements for Gramophone Company turntables and records, advertisements for other competing companies appeared in Sofia newspapers. “The latest innovation in Paris – the Pathé phonograph, with a sensitive diaphragm, without a needle, has 20,000 songs in all languages” was offered to the Bulgarians from the representative of the company Kr. M. Dilovski from Orkhanie (today Botevgrad) (*Vecherna Poshta* VIII/12275, 22. 12. 1907). Pathé’s advertisements in the following years testify that, together with the new sapphire-needle gramophones from representative Kr. M. Dilovsky and Co. (now in Sofia) offered new records “with the latest registrations in Bulgarian, Turkish, etc.” (Ibid. IX/3221, 04.8.1910 and following). In 1910 Poliphon gramophones were advertised to the Bulgarian public by the chief representative for Bulgaria and Serbia, Marko Alkalay (Ibid. IX/3158, 1. 6. 1910 and following). In the same year, the new Euphon funnel-less gramophone began to be advertised in Sofia (Ibid. IX/3192, 4. 8. 1910 and following).

According to Vergili Atanasov (Atanasov 1967: 140), one of the first Bulgarian singers whose performances were recorded on a record by a foreign company in one of the rooms of the Hotel Bulgaria in Sofia in 1904 was Dimitar Popivanov – a graduate of the Prague Conservatory, at that time a music teacher, later an opera singer, professor, one of the founders of the Sofia Opera and the Music Academy. Popivanov's name is

not to be found among the catalogues and archives of the Gramophone Company, but a popular scholarly book claims that in 1904 Pathé-Marconi sent three assistants equipped with “the best equipment” who, at the suggestion of their local consultants – Czech Kapellmeisters – called Popivanov, a music teacher, from Pleven. After some coaxing and rehearsals, he sang the folk song “Maika Stoyana lulyala” to the metal bugler. It is said that this was the first Bulgarian song on a gramophone record – recorded on a wax matrix in Sofia and reproduced in Pathé’s factory in Paris (Tsonev 1968: 292). I own a record, recorded in Bulgaria in the first decade of the twentieth century, which shows that educated musicians, bandmasters of military bands, were recorded by Pathé, which produced discs for the Bulgarian market in France (*Pathé*, 56979 G.R. No. 16822 / No. 58485 G.R. No. 16823. Paidushko Rusensko – Mus. VI. regiment. Ruchenitsi – Muz. Brevete Disque s.g.d.g). The record can most probably be dated to 1907–1908, when the Kapellmeister of the Musik VI. Tarnovo Regiment stationed in Sofia was Ventseslav Kautsky, popular at the time for his concerts before large audiences, at which his kits and the choir mentioned were performed (Kanazirski-Verin 1947: 83–84). It is known that the French company began to seek markets in the East after 1903, when it made its first recordings in Russia, and in 1907 it built a factory in Moscow that circulated the matrices made in France; Pathé records and gramophones were favored for their non-replaceable sapphire-tipped needle (Zheleznyi 1989: 61–62). The Bulgarian record is of the same type (no paper label, with white incised Cyrillic lettering on the shellac, played inside-out) as those made for Russia, and the popularity of the Pathé label is indicated by the transfer of the name from the specific brand to the broader, locally popular name for shellac disc playing devices in Bulgaria and Russia: *pathephones*.

Lyubomir Petrov, researcher of the early spread of the gramophone in the Plovdiv region, comments on some early commercial recordings of Bulgarian performers made in Bulgaria and reproduced on gramophone records, part of the collection of the Ethnographic Museum in Plovdiv. One of the first to record Bulgarian renaissance and folk songs in 1906 was the baritone Alexander Kraev (Petrov 1974: 122). A series of records with labels in the colors of the national flag with Bulgarian performers – St. I. Beshkov, the brass band of the 8th Seaside Regiment, and the Varna City Choir, registered in Varna in 1906 or 1907, are part of the museum’s collection (Ibid. 1974: 122). Memories of the participants in these recordings confirm facts about early recordings made by Odeon Records: the music teacher at the Varna Male Gymnasium, Stoyan Beshkov, a singer, choir conductor and songwriter, sang about 10 songs popular at the time with the Cathedral Choir.²⁷ It is logical that the German company Odeon Records, which after 1904 began to record performers from Turkey, Asia, South America and Europe (Rust 1980: 77), should then look for a place on the Bulgarian market with records specially labelled for it.

27 “Mari Deno”, “Lukovitsky Momi”, “Gaida”, Rubinstein’s Russian art songs “Azra” and “Svatba” by Dargomyzhsky; and conducted the choir, performing two songs from Dobri Hristov’s kit “Pusti momi zheravnenki” – see *Polet* XII/20, 16. 5. 1977.

One of the companies associated with Gramophone Co. that distributed records with Bulgarian repertoire and artists in the first decade of the 20th century was the American Zonophone Record. In the archives of the Institute for the Study of Arts – BAS there is a Zonophone record with a green label and recorded by P. Zhivkov from Vidin, bass, songs “Cherney Goro, Cherney Sestro” and “Fair Song” performed.²⁸

Bulgarian repertoire recorded in the early twentieth century by the engineers of the Gramophone Company, with performances by the opera singer Konstantin Mihailov-Stoyan, the gadulka player Boncho Georgiev and his son Ivan, and the orchestra of Grigor Nikolaev, also circulated by the Czechoslovak Gramola record company. It was formed in 1922 in Czechoslovakia, a country newly established after the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as one of the new subsidiaries of the London-based Gramophone Company. Gramola record, a subsidiary of the Gramophone Company, had offices in Prague and Vienna and a record pressing plant in Usti na Labě, founded in 1926 (where Supraphon records would later be made). Together with Electrola, a German company founded in 1925, also a subsidiary of Gramophone, the two circulated records made by the Gramophone Company before World War I – records by Enrique Caruso, Leo Slezak, and others (Friedman [-]). Among the records preserved in the Archives of the Institute for the Study of Arts - BAS, there are two with the Gramola label with recorded Bulgarian folk songs by the opera singer Konstantin Mihailov-Stoyan: “Manush Voyvoda” and “Hayde, ne plachi, mila mome” (Gramola record, Catal. No. 10-12404, Matr. No. 13754 / 13755) and “Zaplakala e vdovitsa na Makedonskata granitsa” and “Zaplakala e gorata” (Gramola record, Catal. No. 10-12302, Matr. No. 13752/13753). They are of the type circulated in the second half of the 1920s in old recordings of the Bulgarian opera singer made between 1908–1909 (the label identifies the artist as “the 1st Bulgarian opera singer” – Mihailov-Stoyan was among the founders of the first Bulgarian Opera Society, which he led until his death in 1914 – see Andreev 1967).

Among the records with the earliest recordings of folk music from Bulgaria are those with the label Favorit Rekord. The Favorit stock company was founded in Hannover, Germany, in 1905-1906. The Bulgarian series has a black label with small stars above the inscription. The Favorit records were recorded by: the “Shop” orchestra, the singers Dorothei Vasilev, Tsonka Vasileva, Milan Sirakov, Sofitsa Kuzmanova, Maryika Kovacheva, Natalia Dimitrova; the bagpiper Slavi Velev; unknown zurna and drum players, gypsy bagpipe and zurna players. Favorit Rekord is the only company from the early twentieth century that inscribes the date and place of the recording on the label of the records. For example, the two records from the Ethnographic Museum in Plovdiv with recordings of songs sung by Dr. Nedkov, accompanied on the piano by Angel Bukoreschliev (“Ne plachi, mayko”, “Milkano Mome”, “Moyta bashtinia mila” and “Otdolu idat Seymeni” – Favorit Rekord, Cat. No. 1-105-524/525), have the date and place recorded on the label: June 10, 1910 in Plovdiv (Petrov 1974:122).

Lyubomir Petrov, a researcher of the early distribution of the gramophone in Plovdiv, found a rare example in Bulgaria of a local businessman who did not work

for any of the major companies recording and issuing records. In addition to the records found in the archives of the Ethnographic Museum, Petrov substantiates his discovery with data from the collection *Memories of the Musical Life of Plovdiv*, where there is information that the first recordings in this city were made in 1908–1909 in front of the equipment of the local trading company Kuyumjian. The singer P. Malchev, known as a performer of romances and arias, was surprised with the offer to record folk songs and recorded four of them, which were circulated by the commercial firm “Sarkiz Kuyumjiyan”, which developed a new activity (the press advertising at that time presented the firm as an “Anglo-Bulgarian company” with branches in Sofia, Ruse, Varna and Plovdiv for industrial goods and fashion items – (*Vecherna Poshta* X/3245, 29. 9. 1910) because of the great demand for records with Bulgarian folk music. Instead of the company's label, the labels in black bear the inscription “An assortment of Bulgarian folk songs”: “Haidut Velko” and “Marinite ochi”, performed by P. Malchev (baritone), Matr. No. 17018/17019; “Velo mome” and “Stoyan mami dumashe”, performed by P. Malchev. Malchev (baritone), Matr. No. 17026/17027 (Petrov 1974: 123–125).

THE BULGARIAN REPERTOIRE

Observation of the repertoire recorded in Bulgaria by Bulgarian artists during the first decade of commercial recording is largely consistent with the picture of early recordings in neighboring Slavic countries. As has become clear, the first sound recordists were foreigners, emissaries of major Western companies, who made their recordings in the largest Bulgarian cities, where it was more convenient to travel and more profitable to find artists who would attract local audiences. In the early years of the gramophone industry, the main consumers of gramophones and records were members of the local middle and upper classes, who had the means to purchase the expensive equipment of the time – before 1910, the price of a simple gramophone was as much as the monthly salary of an elementary school teacher, and by the 1930s it had fallen to 2–3 daily wages for a worker (Georgiev 1983: 272). Both Western and Bulgarian audiences were bombarded with advertisements, comparing the feeling of recorded music as an experience of “first-rate opera” and gramophones as equating their owners with aristocrats, lords of the world's palaces – a full-page newspaper advertisement featuring images of “Their Majesties” recommended that local audiences buy the Gramophone Co's Lord and Monarch gramophones, along with records by world stars Caruso, Chaliapin, Melba, Adelina Patti (*Vecherna Poshta* V/1035, 12. 7. 1904; *ibid.* IX/2636, 6. 1. 1909). But the targeting of high artistic tastes followed the tried-and-tested tactic of companies seeking out local artists and repertoires that would be popular with the target group of gramophone “hardware” and “software” in the new territories: since Gramophone Co. catalogues already contained recordings by world stars like Caruso and Chaliapin, local catalogues had no need to repeat their songs. Bulgarian opera singers were recorded with a local repertoire – folk songs (more urban than rural), but arranged and harmonized songs and dances. The emic-concepts that express the inner musical face of the “first Bulgari-

an modernity”, according to Lozanka Peycheva, are: “original songs in folk spirit”, “Kapellmeister's medleys”, “composer's arrangements”; the local repertoire is in fact not so much folk, traditional music, as a type of folklorism (2008: 47–57; 2019: 73–87; 176–192). Similar tendencies can be observed in early gramophone recordings by Slovenian, Croatian, Bosnian, and Serbian artists. “Folk music” was recorded by opera singers, actors, and chamber vocal ensembles that followed the aesthetics of Western music, and as a result the recorded repertoire contained more folklorism and romantic nationalism behind the labels “folk” (Pennanen 2007: 138–141; Kunej 2014: 147–149).

The first recorded voices and repertoires were of famous local singers and chamber formations, representatives of the city intellectuals: opera singers (Konstantin Mihailov-Stoyan, Alexander Kraev), figures of musical enlightenment – teachers, composers and conductors (Dimitar Popivanov, Stoyan Beshkov, Angel Bukoreshliev), duets of singers, choral formations of probably note-literate amateurs (Choir of the Sofia Music Society “Sofia Yuch-Bunar”). Some of the songs recorded are folk songs, but harmonized and sung in piano accompaniment (“Zaplakala e gorata” and “Manush voyvoda” – the theme of the songs recorded by Konstantin Mihailov-Stoyan is haydushka-romantic and ballad-heroic, the opera singer is accompanied on piano in the recording by his accompanist Vyara Stoyanova; the Dimitrov-Stefanov duet records popular folk songs with an urban intonation, such as “Momiche malak dyavolo”, accompanied by accordion). Many of the songs recorded as folk songs are original, of the “sung poetry” type (“Ya naduy dyado kavala”, recorded by Mrs. Dr. Popova – based on poems by Hristo Botev; “Nani, nani”, recorded by R. Panayotova – based on the poems of Lyuben Karavelov; “Ne plachi, mayko” – sung by Dr. Nedkov, accompanied on piano by Angel Bukoreshchliev – based on a poem by Hristo Botev). An example of folk songs recorded by members of the urban intelligentsia are Elena Pancheva's performances recorded in 1906 on two Gramophone records donated by the singer's grandson, the composer Vladimir Panchev, to the Institute for the Study of the Arts. Elena Pancheva was born in Tulcha, Northern Dobrudzha, into a wealthy merchant family. From a young age she lived in Sofia, was educated in the Sofia highlife, then graduated from a boarding school for noble young ladies in Kyiv, where she studied music. Her heirs know that she was musical and famous as a singer. Although she never lived in a village, she loved and performed Bulgarian traditional village songs. The songs she recorded for Gramophone are “Tamburice, moja dengubice” and “Dano, Danice” (Gramophone Company – GC 3-13771/13772) and “Ya, vikni, Slavke, zapey” and “Radke le, konakchiyke le” (Gramophone Company – GC 4-13030/13031). The impressive musicality of the Panchevi family and the inherited tradition are a testimony to the attitude of the Bulgarian intelligentsia of the early twentieth century towards folklore, which will find new expressions in the next generations (Valchinova-Chendova and Naydenova 2008: 12–13).

Many of the early gramophone recordings are of orchestral formations of professional, note-literate musicians who found realization by performing art and military music (Music of the NTSV's Lieb-Guard Squadron with Kapellmeister Alois Matsak, Music of the First Cavalry Regiment with Kapellmeister Todor Hadjiev, Music of the Sixth Infantry Regiment with Kapellmeister Ventseslav Kautsky). The repertoire recorded on gramophone records by the military bands, which is placed under

the labels “Bulgarian” and “folk”, is eclectic – urban songs of rural origin; medleys of rural, revival and urban melodies; melodies popular from the practice of military bands, etc. (Valchinova-Chendova 2000: 111–112). The discography of early recordings gives access to the repertoire current in those years with the suggested titles of “folk tunes”: “Kitka”, “Kitka ot hora i pesni”, “Makedonsko horo”, “Rachenitsa”, “Selska svatba”, “Boryano, Boryanke”, “Nova cheshma se napravi”, “Tsaribrodsko i paydushko hora”, “Staro balgarsko horo”, “Shumensko horo”, “Mari Dimitro, le”, “Slatinsko horo”, “Naroden buket”. The people's favorite dances are not so much the local village dances as the traditional dances of the whole Balkans, inherited from the Ottoman past or brought across the Danube: “Kokonsko horo” (Kokoneshte), “Kasapsko horo” (Kasapiko, hasap avasi), “Svishtovsko horo”. In the memoirs of the journalist Georgi Kanazirski-Verin, he describes the taste of the audience of the early twentieth century for military music, marches, medleys, sound pictures: “The people of Sofia did not have very refined musical taste. On the small elevated platform in the City Garden opposite the War Ministry, the military music of the 6th Infantry Regiment, conducted by Kautsky, was played twice a week. When he knew the brass band was playing potpourri from Aida or from Traviata, the listeners were not very attentive, but if any ruchenitsa or horo was played, countless listeners with smiling faces gathered around the music. And Kautsky was obliged to put two or three hora or as many ruchenitsi dances in each of his programmes. The Paidushko horo was especially liked... These musicians patiently, playing folk music, gave us a little Western-European music by the spoonful every hour, and increasing the dose gradually, got used to where to listen to art music, and even did it quite pretentiously. Today there is already a real musical audience formed in Sofia” (Kanazirski-Verin 1947: 83–84).

Along with folk and “light” art music, early recordings included then-popular Western European music, which in the early twentieth century became associated with modern foreign dances, such as the *waltz*, *polka*, *Pas d'Espagne*, and *quadrille*, which audiences loved to hear and play, alternating them with hora and ruchenitsi dances (Kanazirski-Verin 1947: 98–102). Among such recorded examples are those included in the repertoire of military bands (Music of the 1st. Cavalry Regiment, the Music of the Leibguard of the National Cavalry Regiment), salon orchestras (Schwertner's Orchestra – a string orchestra led by a Czech musician, then playing in the restaurant-drinking house “Batemberg”, before him there were playing “Tamburashka Society”, their repertoire was Viennese waltzes, military marches, folk medleys), folk orchestras of modern Western instruments (Orchestra of the “Shop” troupe under the direction of the Kapellmeister N. Krastev): “Rozova dolina” – waltz, “Tonkinoaz” – march, “Proletno tsvete” – waltz, “Uchitelski marsh”, etc. A similar mixed repertoire was provided by the then fashionable tamburash orchestras, initially formed by Croatian migrants, which were soon made up of Bulgarian amateur musicians (First Bulgarian Tamburash Society – “Svishtovsko horo”, “Paidushko horo”, “Shumi Maritsa” – national anthem, “Napred, Balgario” – march).

Among the first recorded instrumentalists there were folk and town singers who accompanied themselves (Dorothei Vasilev - singer and violinist, part of the orchestra “Sofiyski Shop”, later made recordings of urban, revival and humorous songs).

Although few in number, at the beginning of the twentieth century commercial gramophone recordings recorded local rural traditional music and instruments: bagpipe (Ivan Hristov from Slatina), ocarina (Vasil Stamenov from Leskovets), gypsy formation of zurna players and bagpipers.

CONCLUSION: WHY IS IT NECESSARY TO EXAMINE AND COMPARE EARLY RECORDS?

Why is it necessary to examine and compare early records? Do commercial recordings and discography have a place in ethnomusicological research? This question has already been answered by researchers whose texts point to the value of commercial recordings of folk, popular, and more recently art music and the possibilities they offer for ethnomusicological, interdisciplinary, cultural, historical, and anthropological research (Malm 1992; Gronow 1996; Pennanen 2000).

The proposed article presents the early history of sound recording in Bulgaria, describing the sound and discographic, musical and verbal evidence for the first decade of the local history of commercial gramophone recordings. The Bulgarian case does not differ in principle from the model of entry of the record industry on the periphery of Europe and the Orient. According to Pekka Gronow, the global record industry grew from the early twentieth century until the First World War (2014: 32–33). Local markets are dominated by global companies that, in order to sell their turntables, through their regional branches and representatives record and distribute records with local music as a personalized repertoire (Malm 1992: 350–352; Gronow 2014: 37). In Bulgaria the first is the British Gramophone Company, followed by the French Pathé and the German Odeon, Favorit and others. There is a lack of complete and accurate information on the number of recordings and circulations of the early 78 rpm Records in Bulgaria, but it can be assumed that there are several hundred units with recordings of Bulgarian artists and repertoire: only Gramophone records described in Alan Kelly's On-line Database there are 575 recorded units from Bulgaria in the period 1903–1911 (Kelly 2021). At the beginning of the research on early commercial recordings in Bulgaria I pointed out several collections, the complex research of which is in progress: the sound archive of the Institute of Art Studies – BAS, Golden Fund of Bulgarian National Radio, Plovdiv Regional Ethnographic museum (Dimov 2005). To these scientific, museum and media collections should be added private collections (one of the richest Collection of Bulgarian 78 rpm Records is the American collector Larry Weiner, with whom I collaborate). My research of commercial gramophone records, as my first experience in Bulgaria, is in a field with many white fields. Although based on a fragmentary and mosaic base, it provides enough information to outline several features of the Bulgarian case and comparisons with the sound recordings in related and neighboring countries. During the first decade of commercial registration, Bulgarian registrations took place in major cities (Sofia, Plovdiv and Varna). Capitals and cities are the first places to record in other Balkan countries (Zagreb, Belgrade, Sarajevo, Ljubljana,

Thessaloniki, etc.). Among the early Bulgarian records there are dozens of registrations of traditional rural music, instruments (bagpipes, ocarina, zurna) and musicians not only from Sofia (catalogs specify for some musicians that they are from smaller cities: Kazanlak, Lyaskovets, Orhanie); some of these musicians and formations (zurnadzhii, bagpipes and zurna) are presented in the catalogs as gypsy musicians (Kelly 2021).

The observations confirm what has already been noted in ethnomusicological research of recorded music: the market interest of international companies makes commercial recordings of local music, fixed sound, albeit outside its natural contexts, a valuable object for ethnomusicological research (Ceribašić 2021: 327–328). The above confirms the view that 78 rpm shellac records are the largest sound archive in the world (Gronow 2014), which has not yet been collected, described and analyzed in Bulgaria. Among the nearest perspectives, as the next step in conducting research on Bulgarian early commercial records, I see the task of analyzing a visible and preserved in the scientific sound archive of the Institute of Art Studies-BAS collection of sound carriers, which is in the process of digitization. The earliest recorded sounds will be interpreted in the context of their functioning as part of the music industry (discography, catalogs, commercials) and through their public images in the print media. Publications in newspapers and memoirs which contain information about the reception (spaces and audiences, discourses of power relations, ethnicity, nationalism, identity, etc.) will also be the subject of research. Along with the sound and verbal sources, visual testimonies will be interpreted: records on gramophone records, advertising images, photos. Last but not least – the review will include the historical characteristics of the collections of records: when, how, by whom the archive was collected; the peculiarities of private collections and the personal keys to them in the figure of collectors.

Recordings and their accompanying documents (labels, catalogues, advertisements) are important sources for the study of discography, but not only that. Recordings are part of the music industry – their study will illuminate the local characteristics of the first steps and the development of the global cultural and media industry. Their functioning as the use of the gramophone and gramophone records clarifies the practices of musicing in Bulgarian towns and villages in the early twentieth century. Registered artists – singers, pipers and orchestras, professional and amateur musicians, from town and village – are a personal key to musical life then. The recorded repertoire and the dynamics of art and folk, of European and oriental idioms, of styles and genres of the rising world popular music and its local variants can be interpreted in relation to the transformations of the oral tradition, as well as to cultural exchanges with the traditions of the region's neighbors and European influences. Recordings and secondary sources of their functioning (journalistic publications, memoirs, memoir literature) can provide valuable evidence about the reception of early media music, its audiences, and the sonic spaces of celebration and everyday life. I agree with Rebeka and Drago Kunej's observation that old gramophone records represent only what was popular at the time they were recorded and are not influenced, unlike field recordings made for research purposes, by the synchronic interest of researchers who record only what they think is important (Kunej, R. 2013;

Kunej D. 2014). More resources and directions for readings can be added to this unexpected advantage: such as iconic images, symbolic capital, sources for historical anthropology, time machines, production of sound spaces, representations, etc.

Digitization processes in sound collections and archives and the philosophy of open access are a catalyst that can breathe “new life” into old recordings, open new doors to future research, and change the conservative mindset of the researcher.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Figure 1. The merchant representative of Gramophone Company Max Weber (Ruse-Sofia) advertises the turntables with information that he offers records in Bulgarian (*Vecherna Poshta* 26. 8. 1904).

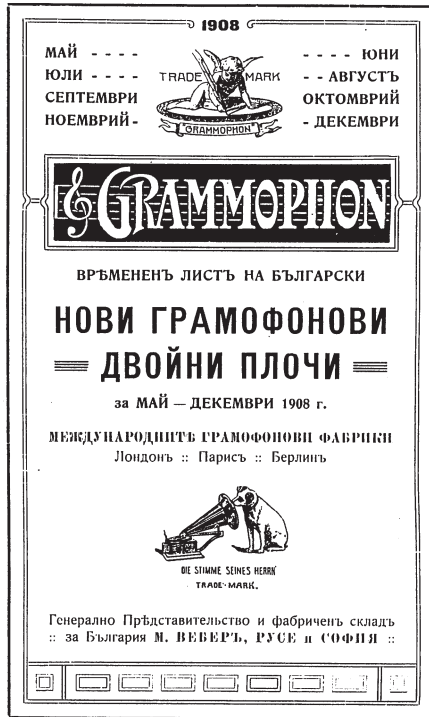


Figure 2. The Bulgarian catalog of Gramophone Company from May–December 1908.

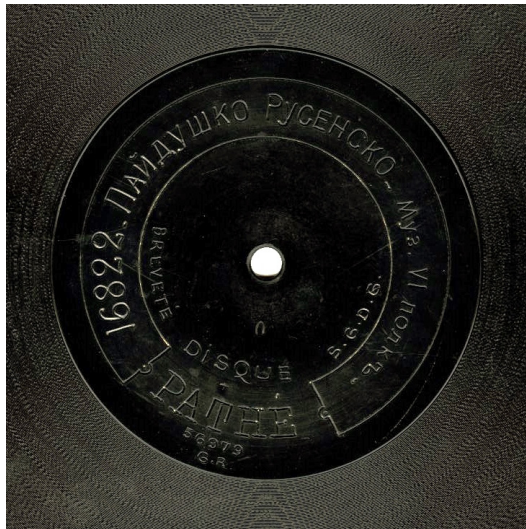


Figure 3. Pathé, 56979 G.R. No. 16822. Paidushko Rusensko - Mus. VI. regiment, probably 1907–1908 (Private collection of the author).

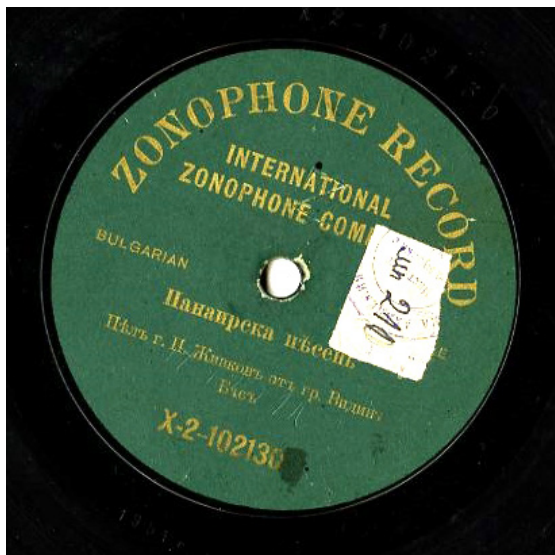


Figure 4. Zonophone, No. X-2-102130. P. Zhivkov from Vidin, bass, sing "Fair Song"; (Sound archive of the Institute of Art Studies – BAS).



Figure 5. Gramola record, No. 10-12302. Opera singer Konstantin Mihailov-Stoyan: "Zaplakala e vdovitsa na Makedonskata granitsa" (Sound archive of the Institute of Art Studies-BAS).

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ВЕНЦИСЛАВ ДИМОВ

ПРАТЕЋИ ЦРНУ СПИРАЛУ: СТАРИ ГЛАСОВИ, НОВИ ЖИВОТ
(КА ИСТОРИЈАТУ РАНИХ КОМЕРЦИЈАЛНИХ
ГРАМОФОНСКИХ ПЛОЧА У БУГАРСКОЈ)

(РЕЗИМЕ)

Најранији сачувани звучни доказ о музици и музичарима из Бугарске налази се на комерцијалним грамофонским плочама с почетка XX века. Иако су јединствени извори за етномузиколошка и историографска истраживања, ови комерцијални снимци су мало познати и готово непроучени. Овом приликом пажња је усмерена на сам почетак, на прву деценију комерцијалних снимања и публикација грамофонских плоча у Бугарској. Основа за истраживање су звучни извори – плоче из научних и музејских архива и приватних колекција, а обухваћени су и каталози дискографских компанија, етикете с грамофонских плоча, доступне дискографије и пратеће информације – текстови и рекламне слике из новина, мемоари и мемоарска литература, као примарни и секундарни извори. Сврсисходан етномузиколошки приступ остварен је комбинацијом различитих истраживачких метода: етнографских, историјских, дискографских, културолошких, антрополошких. Након контекстуализовања подсећањем на успон дискографске индустрије и појаву грамофона на Балкану, пажња је усмерена на компаније које су издавале плоче са снимцима бугарских уметника: *The Gramophone Company*, а потом и *Pathé*, *Favorite*, *Odeon*. Поменут је велики број музичара који су снимали плоче, указано је на процес професионализације, разматран је репертоар који су овековечили бројни солисти и ансамбли. У закључку је истакнута важност проучавања раних комерцијалних снимака, посебно у односу на развој популарне културе у Бугарској у годинама које су претходиле Првом светском рату, на (интер)културалне интеракције, изборе између западних и локалних, словенских и балканских елемената и квалитета. Ова продукција утицала је и на традиционалну музику у нетрадиционалним модерним контекстима и на уметничку музику у популарним контекстима.