

Turkish Music in the Greek American Experience

—Joseph G. Graziosi

In February 1925, the prominent New York recording company Columbia published a catalog of 78-rpm records for the Greek American immigrant market.¹ The catalog cover featured a painting of three male musicians dressed in the traditional mainland *fustanella* playing *laouto*, *santouri*, and violin, with a female singer dressed in the formal attire of the Attica villages. The catalog is titled “Δισκοί Ελληνικοί (Greek-Turkish) Records.” The inside page announces, “Καταλογος Ελληνικών και Τουρκικών Διπλών Δισκών Φωνογράφου Columbia (Katalogos Ellinikon kai Tourkikon Diplon Diskon Fonografou Columbia, Catalog of Greek and Turkish Double-Sided Phonograph Discs Columbia).” That Columbia should give equal weight to both Greek- and Turkish-language songs in this early catalog directed to a Greek market might seem incongruous to some people today, especially given the long 1912–1922 decade of war between Greece and the Ottoman Empire (the First and Second Balkan Wars, World War I, and the 1919–1922 Greco-Turkish War with its subsequent Mikriasiatiki Katastrofi or Asia Minor Catastrophe). It did not seem so at the time, as the following personal recollections will show.

Among the thousands of 78-rpm records in the vast collection of the late Dino Pappas (Constantine Papakonstantinou) of Detroit, pride of place belonged to a very rare disc, “Kiaghidkane,” an instrumental *tsifteteli/çiftetelli* with Zurna Naci Bey accompanied by *nakkara* drums, recorded circa 1910 on the Odeon label in Istanbul (at the time still officially known as Constantinople/Konstantiniyye). This record was among the very few personal possessions brought to the United States by Pappas’s mother when she emigrated from the Samatya/Psomathia district of old Stamboul around 1919. Her own parents had been internal migrants from the Turcophone Greek community of Urgup/Prokopi in Cappadocia. Although known primarily as the owner of the largest collection of recorded Greek music in the United States, Pappas had also amassed a huge collection of Turkish recordings, both songs recorded among immigrants in the New World and songs recorded in the Old World.

Columbia



ΔΙΣΚΟΙ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟΙ
(GREEK - TURKISH)



RECORDS



Figure 55. “Δισκοί Ελληνικοί (Greek-Turkish) Records,” 1925. Catalog, Columbia Phonograph Company, New York. Courtesy of Joseph Graziosi.

While living in New York City in the 1980s, I came across several collections of old 78s that belonged to elderly and deceased Greek American immigrants that included several discs of Turkish vocal and instrumental pieces. While perusing the white elephant table at a Greek festival at the Annunciation Church in Manhattan’s Upper West Side, I came across several 78s recorded in the United States, including a few Turkish sides, some written in old Ottoman script, with the Armenian violinist and singer Kemany Minas. Upon inquiring, I learned that these recordings had belonged to a recently deceased prominent member of the church and past Philoptochos president, who had been born on the island of Tenedos (now Bozcaada), Turkey.

About the same time period, I found and bought at the festival of the Saint Barbara Greek Orthodox Church of New Haven, Connecticut, an old 78 with the songs “Aman Doctor” (*sheba* or *saba canto*) and “Neva chifte telli gazel” (an *amanes*) in Turkish, recorded by the singer and oud player Tom Stathis or “Kirkilisiotes” in New York City on the Columbia label in June 1921. As his artistic nickname makes clear, he was an immigrant from the town of Kirk Kilise (Saranda Ekklisies in Greek, now Kirklareli) in Turkish Thrace—which is also the hometown of my maternal grandfather. Interestingly, the original founding families of the Saint Barbara community were monolingual Turkish speakers from the town of Permata/Bermede in the Aksehir region of central Anatolia.³

As a final note, I was allowed to record onto cassette from several discs that had belonged to George Cardamenis, an immigrant from Constantinople who first settled as a confectioner in Indiana and later ran a coffeehouse/social club in Los Angeles. The latter was frequented by Greeks from the greater region of Constantinople (including the Marmara islands and both the Thracian and Asia Minor shores of the Propontida, or Sea of Marmara). According to his son, Fedon Cardamenis (my aunt’s husband), these old 78s were kept at the coffeehouse and played by the patrons on an old jukebox. Perhaps 40 to 50 percent of the discs contained Turkish songs. Unfortunately, these cassettes warped beyond easy listening before they could be digitized, and my cousin, who inherited the original collection, threw them out with the trash during one season’s spring cleaning—the fate of a large percentage of family record collections.

The above personal recollections demonstrate that among early Greek American immigrants, or at least a substantial percentage of them, Turkish song and music were held in high regard. For many immigrants from former Ottoman Turkey—whether Anatolia or Thrace, urban or rural—Turkish songs were a familiar aspect of home culture. For these Greeks, whether monolingual or bilingual Turkish speakers or monolingual Greek speakers, Turkish songs and their accompanying music were familiar and recognizable, often more so than the rural songs of mainland Greece that immigrants brought from the Morea, Roumeli, Epirus, or Thessaly.

It was not just the Anatolian Greek who might have an affection for Turkish song. It seems that Turkish and Ottoman music was known and widely popular in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Greece. In June 26, 1886, the demoticist⁴ Athenian newspaper *Rambagas* published an article “Ατ Αθηναί διασκεδαζόν” (Athens Entertains), in which the writer describes how the Constantinopolitan Greek female singer “Hanende” Foteini had captured the attention and excitement of Athens nightlife—especially with her rendition of the Turkish song “Memo.” The article includes the refrain in Turkish of the main song and describes how the song became a great hit among Athenians in general. Significantly, Foteini is accompanied by an orchestra of clarinet, violin, santouri,

COLUMBIA TURKISH DOUBLE RECORDS 15

10-Inch—75c. (Instrumental, cont'd)

ΜΕΛΩΔΙΑΙ ἐπὶ ΒΙΟΛΙΟΥ
VIOLIN SOLOS

E 4526 { Ταξιμ Οὐσάκ, διὰ βιολίου, ὑπὸ Ἀθαν. Μακεδόνα.
Taxim Oushak, violin solo.
Ζεϊμπέκικο, Ἀϊβαλί, διὰ βιολίου, βιολονσέλου καὶ κυμβάλου.
Zeibekiko Aivali. Violin, 'Cello and Cymbal.

ΜΕΛΩΔΙΑΙ ΕΠΙ ΒΙΟΛΟΝΣΕΛΟΥ, ὑπὸ Χ. Σάντπη
'Cello Solos, by H. Sandby

E 3476 { Ἐσπερινὸ τραγοῦδι. Esperino trayoudi.
'Αντάτζιο. Adagio.

ΦΥΣΑΡΜΟΝΙΚΑ ὑπὸ Μ. ΤΣΙΓΓΑΝΙΔΟΥ
Accordion Solos

7001 F { Ἡ Κρητικιά. E Kretikia.
'Ἡ Βλάχα. E Vlaha.

Turkish Records

M. PAPAGIKA, Soprano, Oriental Orchestra accompaniment

12-Inch—\$1.25 (Folk Songs)

E 5283 { Chanacale. Canto.
Sinanai. Canto. E 5272 { Kioutsouk Hanoum.
Memo. (Minas Effendy).

10-Inch—75c.

E 9030 { Ben Yarimi Giordoum.
Dareldime Tzitzim Bana. (M. Steele). E 4878 { Ne itsoun saidin.
Hetzaz taxim. Violin Solo.

KEMANY MINAS EFFENDI, Oriental Orchestra accompaniment

12-Inch—\$1.25

E 5272 { Memo. (Kemany Minas E-
fendy).
Kioutsouk Hanoum. (Papagika). E 5169 { Mavili Cantosou.
Sheker Oglan Cantosou.

E 5168 { Halima Cantosou.
Tsifte Telli Ghazel, Nenny (Garabet Eff.)

Figure 56. “Δισκοὶ Ἑλληνικοὶ (Greek-Turkish) Records,” 1925. Catalog, Columbia Phonograph Company, New York, 15–16. Courtesy of Joseph Graziosi.

and laouto played by well-known Peloponnesian musicians of the time. The above article is included in the appendix to Thodoros Hatzipantazis’s 1986 book *Tis asiaticos mousis erastai* (The Lovers of the Asian Muse), subtitled *The Flourishing of the Athenian Café Aman in the Years of the Reign of George I: A Contribution to the Study of the Prehistory of Rebetika*. It describes in detail the long-term, twenty-year popularity of the musical nightclubs known as *cafés aman* in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. These clubs, named after the highly melismatic couplets sung to a variety of Ottoman and Arabic named modes (*makams*) and featuring the exclamation “aman,” hosted traveling singers and musicians

16		COLUMBIA TURKISH DOUBLE RECORDS	
10-Inch—75c.		(Folk Songs, cont'd)	
E 4696	{ Denizli Cantosou. Bulbul Olsam (Garabet Eff.)	E 3786	{ Bulbul Cantosou. Oushak Gazel.
E 4250	{ Karshuda Kurd Evlery. Nazarimda Yine Afak.	E 3745	{ Conialy Cantosou. Nine Nine Cantosou.
E 4249	{ Eghin Havassi. Seni Giordukje.	E 3744	{ Sabah Ghazel, Tambourile. Ispahan Sharki. (Garabet Eff.)
M. MARIE STEELE, Soprano, Oriental Orchestra accompaniment			
E 7171	{ Shemi Husnun Sharki. Nare.	E 7422	{ Severim Tzanim Kibi. Canto. Yeni Tsifte Telli.
E 9030 { Darelidime Tzitzim Bana. Ben Yiarimi Giordoum. (M. Papagika).			
V. BOYAJIAN, tenor, clarinet and Oud accompaniment			
32000 F	{ Darelmadja Yiok. Canto. Martinim Omouzoumda. Canto.	32001 F	{ Neva Gazel. Telegrafin Tellerine. Canto.
TOM STATHIS, KIRKILISSIOTIS, tenor, Oud accompaniment			
E 7364 { Aman Doctor. Neva Tsifte Telli Ghazel.			
M. COULA, Soprano, Oriental Orchestra accompaniment			
12-Inch—\$1.25			
E 5153 { Hovarda Cantosou. Hidzaz Canto, Koymazmin. sin.			
10-Inch—75c.			
E 3387	{ Hiouzam Canto, Merhamet. Kesik Kerem Ghamzadeyim.	E 3327	{ Zabekiko Vary. Chifte Telli.

from the port cities of the Ottoman Empire. These troupes were composed of a variety of ethnicities—Greek, Turkish, Armenian, Arab—accompanied by female professional singers who often doubled as *defi* (tambourine) players and costumed dancers. These visiting musicians were also on occasion joined by local Greek musicians. The *café aman* would feature songs typical of the urban traditions of the Ottoman Empire, most often sung in Turkish but also supplemented with songs learned locally sung in Greek and even Albanian.

Returning to the 1925 Columbia catalog, Turkish songs and instrumental pieces take up three and a half pages just before the index. The abovementioned

song “Memo” is listed on E-5272 as sung by the Armenian violinist Minas Effendy. The reverse side is “Kioutsouk hanoum,” sung by the well-known and prolific recording artist Marika Papagika, accompanied by her husband, hammered dulcimer (cimbalom) player Gus Papagikas, with Nikolaos Rellias on clarinet and Markos Sifnios on cello. Reflecting the multiethnic personnel who played, composed, and supported Ottoman urban music in its home milieu, the recording artists featured in this catalog include the Greeks Marika Papagika (originally from the island of Kos), Mme. Koula (Kyriaki “Koula” Antonopoulou, originally from Constantinople), Tom “Kirkilisiotes” Stathis (originally from Saranda Ekklisies, or Kirk Kilise in Thrace), and Marie Steele; the Armenians Kemany Minas, Vahan Boyajian, Karekin Proodian, Hanende Sinem Effendi; and others.

Although not included in the 1925 Columbia catalog, the female singer Amalia Baka, a Romaniote Jew originally from Ioannina in Epirus, is included as among the three most famous Greek recording artists in the United States along with Marika Papagika and Kyria Koula. She started her recording career as Amalia Hanoum, with six Turkish songs for the Armenian-owned independent Pharos label in the early 1920s (Baka 2002, liner notes).

Among these early songs recorded by Greek artists were several that were widely known and popular: “Chanacale, canto” and “Ben yarimi giordoum” by Marika Papagika; “Dareldime tzitzim bana” by Marie Steele; “Aman doctor, sheba [sabah] canto” by Kirkilisiotis; and “Gamzedeyim, sarki” by Amalia Baka (Kyria Amalia or Yianiotissa) on the independent Greek Record Company label out of Chicago. “Chanacale” was inspired by the Dardanelles campaign during World War I and quickly spread in popularity among many ethnicities of the former Ottoman Empire. Today it is treated in republican Turkey as a patriotic anthem, which makes it ironic that this recording, one of the very earliest of the song, features a Greek singer and Greek musicians. Greek lyrics were later added both with a meaning parallel to the original Turkish, in a folk version preserved in Thrace, and a later 1940s Greek American recording “Dos mou tin efhi sou” with Amalia Baka. In October 1940 in New York, the clarinetist Kostas “Gus” Gadinis and the accordionist John Gianaros would record an instrumental version, “Tsanakale,” as a *syrtos*. In the 1930s in Greece, the song was recast with Greek lyrics and more *rebetiko*-type content; as “Katinaki mou yia sena,” it was recorded by several of the era’s top vocalists and became a major success.

Marie Steele’s “Ben yarimi giordum,” a *karsilamas*-dance type, would later be recorded in Greece in Turkish by the oud player Agapios Tomboulis (of Constantinopolitan Armenian origin), and then, circa 1955, in Athens with Greek lyrics by Duo Stamboul. “Dareldime tzitzim bana” would enjoy great success later in 1930s Greece with the addition of Greek lyrics, recorded as “Hariklaki” by both Roza Eskenazi and Rita Abatzi, and today it is still among the best-known tunes in the so-called Smyrneika genre. “Aman doctor” would also enjoy great success both

in its original Turkish version and with the early addition of Greek lyrics parallel in meaning to the Turkish. It appeared on several Greek American recordings by Marika Papagika, Amalia Baka, George Katsaros, and, in the 1940s, with Virginia Magkidou, in recordings titled “O yiatros” or “Ah yiatre mou.”

These songs are usually described on the labels as *canto*, a term most associated in Turkey with the songs, music, and style of playing of the European-inspired musical theaters that began to flourish in late nineteenth-century Constantinople. Most of the theater owners, managers, and singers were of Greek or Armenian ethnicity. In the early American recordings, the term is used more broadly: it seems to refer to urban-style songs in general, those not strictly associated with Ottoman art music. This later would be most frequently represented in American-based Turkish recordings by the song type *sharki*, which developed in the mid-nineteenth century. It was associated with music clubs often called *gazino*, in which suites called *fasil* were introduced by an instrumental classic Ottoman form, a *peshrev*, followed by a series of *sharki* songs (with or without *taxim* and *gazel* [amanes] interludes), and finishing with another instrumental form called *saz semai*. Unusual among Greek American recordings of Turkish songs is Amalia’s “Gamzedeyim,” a famous *sharki* composition by the Armenian Tatyos Efendi.

The years subsequent to Columbia’s 1925 catalog would see the meteoric rise of the most successful Greek recording artist for Turkish music in America. Achilles Poulos, born in 1893 in Balıkesir in western Anatolia, immigrated to the United States in October 1913 and first settled in New York City. Trained as a tailor, Poulos was a singer and oud player of high caliber and, though relatively short, 1926–1929, his recording career as a featured artist produced approximately ninety sides in Turkish, along with several others in Greek, and these mostly in the urban Ottoman style. He recorded for Columbia and Victor as well as the Armenian-owned Parsekian and Pharos labels. Poulos collaborated closely with other practitioners of Ottoman music, including the Armenian violinist Nishan Sedefjian and the oud player/vocalist Markos Melkon (born Melkon Alemshehrian), who was also an immigrant from western Anatolia—Smyrna (İzmir) in this case—and with whom he developed a close friendship.⁵

Poulos recorded in many genres, including *sharki* (“Seouyletmen beni,” “Ashta gel rizam”); *kanto/canto* (“Djivali giorvedjin,” “Cahve yemeni,” “Bolshevik kizi,” “Yeni halime,”); *turku*, a form indicative of village/rural folk song (“Kioroglou turkiosou,” “Emine”); and *gazel*, usually titled by the musical mode in which it develops (“Mahour,” “Segiah,” “Sırf hidjasker”).

One of Poulos’s most famous pieces was “Nedem geldum americaya” (Why Did I Come to America?), which was recorded twice on different labels. Musically, it is more characteristic of eastern Anatolia than his native western Anatolia; the time signature, *curcuna* (10/8), would have been quite familiar to his Armenian colleagues, although it also appears in Ottoman classical and

semiclassical pieces. In fact, Poulos recorded several tunes of eastern Anatolian and Armenian-Kurdish origin, such as “Palandygen-Harpoor”—the town and region of Harput being the place of origin of many Armenian immigrant musicians. One of the most popular Turkish songs that Poulos recorded was “Adalar saedine,” which also exists in Arabic, and some believe that the tune originated in the Syrian city of Aleppo. In the same time period as Poulos’s recording, the song appeared in Greece as “Matia mou,” first recorded by the Constantinople-born Dalgas (Antonis Diamantidis). The tune was adopted and stylistically adapted to an urban Cretan Rethymno genre that flourished in the interwar years, nowadays usually called *tabahaniotika*. On Crete, the melody is known as either “Halepianos manes” or “Ta vasana mou herome,” from the famous recording by the *boulgari* player Stelios Foustelierakis.

Indicative of his origins in western Anatolia, Poulos recorded several songs in the *zeybek* (*zeibekiko*) dance form, two of which, “Aptal havasi” and “Chakiji,” would remain standards in the Greek American community into the twenty-first century, although they were usually performed as instrumental pieces rather than as songs featuring vocals. Another traditional Asia Minor zeybek, “Pergamos” or “Bergama,” was recorded under the title “Tabanjassi belinde” and classified as a canto. This might have happened because the addition of lyrics to a traditionally instrumental tune probably occurred in the urban musical theaters and music clubs.⁶

A few sides were recorded in both Greek and Turkish by a Soutlana Poulou, who may have been Poulos’s relative. Poulos had traveled from France in 1929, accompanying his niece, Soutlana Casteliotou (later Costas), to America. She was listed as an “artiste” on the ship’s manifest, which might indicate that Soutlana Poulou was an adopted stage name. Poulou recorded two versions of the famous Constantinople kanto in *çiftetelli* dance form, “Kadife,” once in Turkish as “Kadife yasdigim yok: bahrie cifte telli” and once in Greek as “Kadifes,” both on the Pharos label.⁷

After Poulos’s short but prolific recording career, in the late 1920s recordings of Turkish songs by Greek singers slackened off considerably. However, as many surviving family collections show, interest in Turkish song and music continued. Major recording companies—Columbia, Odeon, and Victor—would include Turkish song categories in catalogs published both in Greece and America.⁸ Surviving catalogs show that the songs were recorded both in Turkey and in Greece. Most of the artists recorded were Turks, for example Hafız Burhan Bey, who collaborated closely with the Greek Istanbul oud player Yorgo Bacanos (Yiorgi Batzanopoulos) and his brother, lyra player Aleko Bacanos. But they also included Greeks, such as the Cappadocia-born Theodoros Dermitzoglou, whose recording of “Kasap misak” enjoyed renown, especially among Armenian Americans.⁹

In the 1930s and beyond, many Armenian and other former Ottoman subjects would continue recording Turkish songs. Among the most well-known among



A. ZERVAS, Violinist
for METROPOLITAN and BALKAN Records

BALKAN Turkish Records

- 4001 OGLAN YALANLAR DUZME, Marko Melkon-Ince Saz Takimi
NAZLI KADIN, Marko MelkonInce Saz Takimi
- 4002 CAPKIN CAPKIN BAKARSIN, Marko Melkon...Ince Saz Takimi
HANIM OYUNU, Marko MelkonInce Saz Takimi
- 4003 OGLAN OGLANMarko Melkon
CIFTE TELLİ, Ut İleMarko Melkon
- 4004 HALIS ARAP KIZI, Ince Saz Takimi - M. Melkon, Ut
Garbis, Kanun - Zervas, Keman
BEYAZIN ADI VAR, Esmerin Tadi Var, Ince Saz Takimi - M. Melkon, Ut - Garbis, Kanun - Zervas, Keman
- 4005 CİLE BULBULUM CİLE, Ince Saz Takimi, L. Matalon
Garbis, Kanun - Zervas, Keman - Veedi, Klarinet
NICIN BAKTIN BANA OYLE, Ince Saz Takimi, L. Matalon - Garbis, Kanun - Zervas, Keman - Veedi, Klar.
- 4006 NIHAVENT SARKI, Yanaklarin Gul Olsun, M. Melkon,
Garbis, Kanun - Zervas, Keman - Arif Veedi, Klarinet
Trambuka - Ince Saz Takimi
- USAK SARKI GUZELSIN, Bir Gul Gibi, Marko Melkon
Garbis, Kanun - Zervas, Keman - Arif Veedi, Klarinet
Trambuka - Ince Saz Takimi
- 4007 SEVDASI VAR BASIMIZDA ...Haydini Hoplarla Gel
Garbis, Kanun - M. Melkon, Ut - Zervas, Keman
A. Veedi, Klarinet - Trambuka
- CAMLARDA BEKLE BENI, Garbis, Kanun - Marko Melkon, Ut - Zervas, Keman - Veedi, Klarinet - Tramb.
- 4008 KONYALI NANI BENİM ELLİ ...Dirhem Pastirmam
Louis Matalon, Ince Saz Takimi - Garbis, Kanun - Ut
Can Papa, Klarinet - Trambuka
- AYVA YOLLA YAR YOLLA BİR, Sevdalı Yar Yollla
Louis Matalon, Ince Saz Takimi - Garbis, Kanun - Ut
Can Papa, Klarinet - Trambuka

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- 4009 AMAN KASAP, L. Matalon, Ince Saz Takimi - Garbis
Kanun - Keman - Ut - Can Papa, Klarinet - Tramb.
SALLA SALLA MENDİLİNI ...Louis Matalon, Garbis,
Kanun - Keman - Ut - Can Papa, Klarinet - Tramb
- 4010 BAGLAMAMIN DUGUMU, Ince Saz Takimi ...Garbis
Kanun - M. Melkon, Ut - A. Zerva, Keman
GELİN GELİN, Ince Saz TakimiGarbis, Kanun
M. Melkon, Ut - A. Zerva, Keman
- 4011 EGE ZEYBEGI, Modern Turk Orkestrasi ...T. Agabey
HARMANDALI, ZeybekModern Turk Orkestrasi
- 4012 TAVAS ZEYBEGI, Modern Turk Orkestrasi ...T. Agabey
SARI ZEYBEK, Modern Turk Orkestrasi ...T. Agabey
- 4013 ÇAKICI, Zeybek, Modern Turk Orkestrasi...T. Agabey
ARABAMIN ATLARI, Karsilama, Modern Turk Orkestrasi - T. Agabey

METROPOLITAN Spanish Records

VICTORIA HAZAN — *Turkish Melody*
NICK DONEFF — *Orchestra Trio*

- 3001 MEKEMİ Y ME İFNLAMIVictoria Hazan
NON RIYAS CON MIVictoria Hazan
- 3002 UN ANIO AYVictoria Hazan
MIS PENSERIOS, GazelVictoria Hazan
- 3003 UN DIA YO BEZI Victoria Hazan
TODAS MIS ESPERANSASVictoria Hazan
- 3004 LAGRIMAS VERTERE Victoria Hazan
SEDA AMARILLA SONVictoria Hazan
- 3005 CANTE POR LA VICTORIA (Victory Song) V. Hazan
SABAH GAZEL - NO AY LUZVictoria Hazan

BALKAN Spanish Records

SPANISH ORIENTAL

- 6001 VEN CANARIO, Jack Mayesh Oriental Orchestra-Violin
Ut - T. Kappas, Kanoun
PORQUE NOME AMATES, J. Mayesh Oriental Orchestra
Violin - Ut - T. Kappas, Kanoun
- 6002 NO SEAS CAPRITCHOZA Jack Mayesh Oriental Orch.
Violin - Ut - T. Kappas, Kanoun
DE TUS LAVOIS CORRE MIEL ... J. Mayesh Oriental
Orchestra - Violin - Ut - T. Kappas, Kanoun
- 6003 ONDE QUE TOPE UNA QUE ES PLAZIENTE ...Jack
Mayesh Orch. - Violin - Ut - T. Kappas, Kanoun
MOSTRAME GRACIOZA, Jack Mayesh Oriental Orch.
Violin - Ut - T. Kappas, Kanoun

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Figure 57. Metropolitan Kaliphon Balkan general catalog, 1937. Balkan Record Company, New York, 14–15. Courtesy of Meletios Poulipoulos.

Greek Americans would be the already mentioned Markos Melkon. In 1937 he recorded the song “Oglan Oglan” for Victor. The rousing tsifteteli would become quite popular and remain a standard among many Greeks through the 1970s. Melkon recorded dozens of songs both in Turkish and in Greek—having grown up in Smyrna, he was fluent in both. Victoria Hazan, a Sephardic Jew from Kasaba just east of Smyrna, also recorded in Turkish, Greek (“Omorfo hariklaki,” “I trata,” “Na se haro hasapaki”), and her ancestral Ladino. Although few Greeks were Turkish-language vocalists on recordings during that period, they remained prominent as accompanying musicians. Among them were the clarinetists Gus Gadinis and John Pappas, violinists Alexis Zoumbas and Andreas Poggis, *kanun* player Theodore Kappas,¹⁰ and others. At least two of the above, Gadinis and

Zoumbas, were born in territory that at the time was Ottoman but was eventually incorporated into Greece as a result of the Balkan Wars. The former was from Siatista, Macedonia, and the latter from Epirus. Both were experts in the folk music of their native region and were knowledgeable about Ottoman and Turkish music. Also prominent in the mixed ethnic orchestras was the Bulgarian-born violinist Nick Doneff, who often appeared on Greek recordings as simply Nikos D. These musicians were regularly featured in the 1940s and early 1950s on several smaller ethnic-owned labels such as Metropolitan, Virginia, Kaliphon, Me-Re, Balkan, and Pharos. Based in New York City and owned and operated by the Albanian Ajdin Asllan and the Greek John Gianaros, the Balkan Record Company became the chief venue for Turkish-language recordings.

The mixed ethnic orchestras flourished not only in the recording studios but also in the increasingly prolific ethnic music clubs in New York, Chicago, Boston, and elsewhere. Greek, Turkish, Arabic, Armenian, and other types of music, often generalized as Middle Eastern, attracted not only immigrants and their offspring from the eastern Mediterranean but also a growing mainstream American audience. The flourishing of these clubs can be attributed to the general economic stability won by the first generation of Greek and other eastern Mediterranean Americans and reflects a continuing pride and participation in their cultural heritage.

By the mid-1950s and through the 1960s, the center of the Greek music scene in New York was the corner of West Twenty-Ninth Street and Eighth Avenue in Manhattan, a neighborhood called “Greek Town.” There, clubs with names such as Port Said, Egyptian Gardens, Britania, Arabian Nights, Ali Baba, and Kifissia not only hosted the many American-based immigrant musicians but also sponsored visiting (often quite long-term) musicians and singers from Greece and elsewhere. Turkish and Greek tunes predominated. They were played both in a style and with orchestration reminiscent of the older urban Ottoman traditions, sometimes still referred to as *incesaz* or *psila organa*, or in a style and orchestration informed more by the contemporary late rebetika/laïka scene of 1950s Greece with a bouzouki-based orchestra. Often the two would mix. In fact, in several 1950s recordings, popular contemporary laïka compositions from Greece would be reinterpreted with violin, oud, and kanun rather than the usual bouzouki, baglamas, and guitar. Virginia Magkidou’s “Bir Allah” and Roza Eskenazi’s “Ase me ase,” both zeibekika, are examples of this.¹¹ The clubs would inevitably feature one or more belly dance shows with a long medley of tunes (Turkish, Greek, Arabic), usually progressing from fast to slow, to taximi, to drum solo, to fast again—and often with a coda in the karsilamas dance rhythm of 9/8. A fine example is the medley “Belly Dancer’s Delight” on the first volume of Alec-tor’s *Greek Town USA* series (1960). It featured Greek musicians Bebis Stergiou (bouzouki), Stelios Lazarou (violin), and Tassos Halkias (clarinet), and Turkish

kanun player Emin Gunduz. The introductory melody, which became a standard, was an instrumental version of the Turkish song “Bahcelerde ben gezerim,” recorded earlier by Markos Melkon and Nick Doneff.

In the 1960s, a few Turkish songs became well known and standard in the Greek American repertoire, notably the karsilamas dance tune “Rampi rampi” but also songs such as “Adanali” and the older “Oglañ oglañ.”¹² These and others were included on several 1960s LPs with mixed ethnic orchestras playing a mixed generalized Middle Eastern and Greek repertoire. Among the LPs were Gus Vali’s *All Points East* and *All Ports East*, Cretan lyra player Harilaos Piperakis’s *Mr. Lyra in Port Said*, and big band-sounding LPs by Peter Kara (*Music of Greece*) and Mike Hart (*Night Life of the Greeks* and *Greek Fire*). The Turkish singer Cihan Isak recorded two LPs of Turkish songs; one of them, *Flame of Istanbul*, featured the Greek musicians Petro Loukas Halkias, Vasilis Saleas (clarinet), Elias Plata-nias, and Stelios Lazarou (violin), as well as Armenians, Turks, and Arabs. Several of these same musicians as well as others were also featured on the Balkan LP *Love to Istanbul* with the Turkish singer Lütfi Güneri.

Many Turkish songs became well known in Greek America through the back door, so to speak, as originally Turkish songs given Greek lyrics. As noted earlier, this trend, observable quite early,¹³ had already become standard in the recording studios of Greece in the late 1920s and 1930s and became increasingly more common in the post-World War II era among Greek Americans. Turkish-language songs flourished in Greece around 1960 with a series of RCA 45-rpm records featuring singer Ali Ugurlu and violinist Dimitris Manialis, available as imports in Greek American record stores, as well as a series of Turkish songs recorded by the extremely popular laiko singer Stelios Kazantzidis.¹⁴ It seems, though, that the origin of numerous Greek “copies” of Turkish songs released in the 1950s and 1960s was unknown to many if not most Greek Americans, who were then second and third generation. Examples include one of the era’s most recognizable “Greek” songs, “Nina nai nai” (“Siko horepse koukli mou”),¹⁵ as well as such songs as “Fige fige,” “Mia melachrini,” “Mes tis polis ta stena (Karapiperim),” “Exo dertia ke kaimi,” and many others. In fact, Greek hits included not only songs of Turkish origin but also songs from Egypt and other Arab countries, as well as Indian and Hindu cinema compositions (Abatzi and Tasoulas 1998).¹⁶

This highlights the fact that Greeks drew musical inspiration from neighboring peoples and countries. This is especially true in terms of countries to its east, with whom they shared a common musical subculture. Although there are many stylistic permutations in local guise, the music (especially in its urban forms) was and is familiar enough that Greeks and most other post-Ottoman peoples are comfortable with each other’s tunes and melodies.

I will end this short introductory survey of Turkish song and music in the Greek American community with the decade of the 1970s. As a young follower

of the Greek and Middle Eastern music scene in the greater Boston area, I frequented the many venues including restaurants, clubs, and rooms that offered a variety of Greek, Turkish, Arabic, and Armenian song, such as the Averof, Sheraton, Athenian Corner, Bishops, and others. Shared songs were heard frequently, such as when an Armenian oud player might sing “Ushakli kiz” in Turkish one night, while a bouzouki player might sing the Greek version, “Mia melachrini,” another night. An Arab American might sing Manolis Angelopoulos’s hits “Ta mavra matia sou” and “Ta filia sou einai fotia” in Greek because the majority of the patrons were more familiar with the Greek versions, even though the originals were in Arabic.

In many ways, the intersection of Greek and Turkish (and to a lesser extent Arabic and Armenian) song in America throughout the twentieth century kept alive the cosmopolitanism of the old Ottoman Empire long after the empire’s demise, with the attendant horrors accompanying the forced separation of peoples and the rise of exclusive nation-states. Turkish song itself never rose above a marginal level in terms of the size of the repertoire in the complex of Greek American music as a whole. But its influence and inspiration have remained strong and profound, contributing significantly to popular urban music usually referred to as *laïka*. Future studies may find it fruitful to examine this phenomenon when considering issues of Greek American identity.

Notes

1. The catalog in its entirety was reproduced and included as a supplement in the periodical *Laïko Tragoudi*.

2. The titles of recordings will appear as on the label. The orthography does not necessarily match that used in modern Turkish, especially since many recordings were made prior to the switch from the Arabic to Latin alphabet for Ottoman and modern Turkish.

3. This information is taken from personal family histories, for instance the Bilides family.

4. Demoticism refers to a linguistic and cultural movement in Greece that championed the common vernacular spoken language (demotic) for writing over the artificial, purified, and archaizing language (*katharevousa*)—although it did accept certain *katharevousa* phrases into demotic. Demotic Greek became the official standard in 1976.

5. Poulos’s personal history was found in documents through Ancestry.com. His relationship with Markos Melkon was recounted by Melkon’s daughter, Rose, in liner notes to the CD *Marko Melkon* (Traditional Crossroads 4281). Special thanks to all those who over the years have sent me copies, cassette or digitized, full or partial, of their personal libraries of Achilleas Poulos 78s: Dino Pappas, Charlie Howard, Dean Lambros, and Stavros Kourousis.

6. “Aptal Havasi” was also recorded in Turkish in Greece in the late 1920s by Smyrna-born Lefteris Menemenlis and Constantinople-born Dalgas. Several instrumental pieces were subsequently recorded in Greece in the 1920s and 1930s. Later, Greek lyrics were recorded by Roza Eskenazi and Duo Stamboul, but it became familiar mostly as an instrumental piece in versions by Andonis Sakelariou and orchestra in New York in 1928 and in the 1940s by Greek American clarinetists Kostas

“Gus” Gadinis and John Pappas. The circa 1960 recording with violinist Stelios Lazarou on volume 1 of Alector’s *Greek Town USA* series was a standard among Greek Americans for many years. In Greece, the Hellenized title “Aptalikos” (Giorgos Mitsakis’s 1961 bouzouki solo “Aptaliko”), for both the tune in question and the rhythmic type in general, gradually became more widespread than the Turkish “Aptal havasi” (The Crazy Man’s Tune). In Turkey, this term is not known for the tune. What Greeks know as “Aptal havasi” most Turks know as either “Kordon zeybek” or “Karsi yaka souk suyu.” The latter is the title used by Gus Gadinis, probably in imitation of the version by the famous Turkish clarinetist Sukru Tunar, whose recording was imported and made available in the United States.

Songs such as “Chakiji,” “Tsakitzi,” and “Cakici,” better known among most Turks by their initial words “Izmirin kavaklari,” extol the virtues of the Zeybek fighter and bandit Chakirdjali Mehmet Efe, who was considered a hero among the poorer Greek and Turkish peasants in western Anatolia. Other early recordings, sung in Turkish, include those by the Smyrna-born Lefteris Menemenlis, the Edirne-born Jew Haim Efendi, and, in the United States, by the female Shekar Hanim and later in the 1940s by the Armenian Ashot Yergat accompanied by the Greek kanun (*kanonaki*) player Theodoros Kappas. Instrumental versions were recorded by clarinetist Gus Gadinis and accordionist John Gianaros in the 1940s, and then in the 1960s by clarinetist Nick Rassias for the LP *Night Life of the Greeks*, and on bouzouki by the famous players Kostas Papadopoulos and Lakis Karnezis accompanied by clarinetist Tassos Halkias on volume 1 of the LP *Bouzoukee Boulevard* on the Alector label. Around 1953, Roza Eskenazi recorded the tune with Greek lyrics and Turkish refrain accompanied by the clarinetist Sukru Tunar in Istanbul for the New York–based Balkan Record label, which aimed at the Greek American market. In the 1930s, “I Stellitsa” was an earlier attempt to record the tune with Greek lyrics in Athens. It was written in the form of a dialogue between Roza and the singer Kostas Nouros, with lyrics totally unrelated to the *efe* bandit leader Tsakitzi. It did not seem to have much success. Another version with Greek lyrics, also extolling “Tsakitzi,” was recorded in Greece in the 1960s by laïko singer Vangelis Perpiniadis.

Many versions of “Pergamos” were recorded both in Greece and America. They included an instrumental version, “I pergamia,” with Alexis Zoumbas on violin and Louis Rassias on cimbalom on the small National label; a very early vocal version, “Chiotissa,” with Greek lyrics sung by Kyria Koula circa 1920 in New York; another Greek vocal version, “Ousak smyrneiko,” with Leonidas Smyrniaos in New York around 1927; and a later version, “Aman aman chiotissa,” sung in Greek by Markos Melkon.

7. In the late 1920s and 1930s, several Greek-language versions of the song were recorded in Greece, mostly among Asia Minor artists such as Roza Eskenazi, Marika Politissa, Vangelis Sofroniou, Dalgas, Grigoris Asikis, and Dimitris Atrades, as well as in Istanbul by Kyria Pipina (Despina Kallergi). The lyrics of these versions differed in several places, although they seem to have drawn on older known couplets. More than likely, the tune was already well known, but mostly as the instrumental piece “Bahriye çiftetelisi.” In the post–World War II United States, Virginia Magkidou recorded a version in Greek, “Den boro na katalavo,” with the addition of a vocal amanes, and Markos Melkon recorded a version in Turkish with its standardized text. In Greece, the tune was also later adopted into some regional folk musics; on the island of Naxos, for instance, it is interpreted as a syrto, the main dance of the island, rather than as a tsifteteli.

8. Full and partial Greek record catalogs from Greece can be found at the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.

9. Theodoros (Todori) Dermitzioglou was born in the Cappadocian town of Semendere, from which a significant number of Greeks emigrated and settled in Michigan in the early twentieth century. Several copies of “Kasap misak” are in the library of the Armenian Museum in Watertown, Massachusetts. Thanks to curator Gary Lind-Sinianian for making this and other duplicates available to me.

10. Theodore Kappas recorded earlier, in 1919, accompanying Jemal Bey (vocals, oud) and Avny Bey (violin) on four Turkish songs on the Victor label (Spottswood 1990).

11. “Bir Allah,” composed by Ioannis Stamoulis with lyrics by Haralambos Vasiliades, was first recorded by Sephardic Jewish rebetiko singer Stella Haskil in 1947. “Ase me ase me” (“Den thelis na me pandrefitis”), composed by Giannis Papaioannou with lyrics by Kostas Manesis, was first recorded by Sotiria Bellou in 1950. Eskenazi’s version with an *ala turka*-style orchestra was part of a larger series of recordings made by Balkan Records in Istanbul in 1953 or 1954. They recorded songs in Greek, Turkish, and both languages exclusively for the American immigrant and ethnic market. The recordings remained unknown in both Greece and Turkey until recently.

12. “Rampi rampi” was recorded by bouzouki player Giannis Papaioannou and singer Rena Dalia on the Nina label around 1955 as a 78-rpm record and was later reissued as a 45. Although sung in Turkish, it is obvious from Dalia’s pronunciation that she was not very familiar with the language. The song was also included on Gus Vali’s LP *All Points East* (United Artists, March 1960) and Mike Hart’s LP *Greek Fire* (probably 1966), and appeared as “Rambe-rambe” on the 1963 LP *The Glorious Greeks* (Crescendo GNP-89) sung by Nitsa Grezi and accompanied by Yacoubian and Company: Hrach Yacoubian (Armenian) on violin, Yiannis Stamatis (bouzouki), Notis Issichopoulos (accordion), and famous drummer Bobby Morris. The song was one of several recordings by Roza Eskenazi and violinist Dimitris Manisalis, organized by Tetos Demetriades and released on his Standard label with the American market in mind, most likely in the late 1940s or early 1950s; it was probably the first recording of this popular karsilamas in Greece. “Rampi rampi” was recorded in Athens by Duo Stamboul (a male/female duet of probable Constantinople origin), with Greek lyrics (“I fotia p’oucheis anapsei”), around 1953–1954, and subsequently reissued on the LP *My Greece: Music of Athens Today* (Capitol Records) in 1956. This LP included other Turkish songs recorded by Duo Stamboul with Greek lyrics.

“Adanali” was recorded twice by Turkish vocalist and kanun player Emin Gunduz on *Greek Town USA*, vol. 2 (Alector ALP 5005) and *Greek Fire*. It was released earlier, in 1943, in Greek as “Adanatopoula” by Amalia Baka, whom we first met in the early 1920s. As an instrumental piece, it appeared with other well-known Turkish tunes such as “Doktor Doktor,” “Kara Biberim,” and “Konyali” on the LP *Anatolian Feast* with Spero Spyros and his modern Anatolian ensemble (Near East) in the late 1960s.

“Oglan Oglan” was included as an instrumental piece on *Mr. Lyra in Port Said* (Aris Records) circa 1960 with the famous Cretan lyra player Harilaos Piperakis. It appeared on Gus Vali’s LP *All Points East*, sung in Turkish by Many Ayvas. Again it appeared as an instrumental piece on *Greece: Dimitri and His Ensemble* (Time Records) circa 1962, which probably included musicians Dimitris “Bebis” Stergiou (bouzouki), Tassos Halkias (clarinet), Emin Gunduz (kanun), and Stelios Lazarou (violin); and on *Greek Dance-Along with the George Stratis Orchestra* (Standard Colonial) in the late 1960s. “Oglan Oglan” was recorded with Greek lyrics as “Se zogafisa vlacham” by Roza Eskenazi in the mid-1930s, and with different Greek lyrics by Kaity Giuli, but still titled “Oglan Oglan,” on the 1963 Alector LP *Concerto for Bouzoukee*, vol. 2. It seems that none of the versions sung in Greek of the above songs overshadowed the popularity of the Turkish-language versions.

13. For example, the tsifteteli that is usually known today as “Tha spaso koupes” was recorded circa 1910 in Istanbul by Lefteris Menemenlis and Yiorgos Tsanakas, and the Smyrneiki Estoudiantina version was recorded in Turkish at about the same time or earlier as “Tchiftetelli cantosu satchalar perischam” by Caragach Efendi. In 1928, Marika Papagika recorded a slower Greek version in New York City, and about the same time Kostas Karipis recorded a version in Athens. Since its revival in the 1980s by the popular singer Eleftheria Arvanitaki, “Tha spaso koupes” has remained a favorite tsifteteli.

14. Stelios Kazantzidis was the son of Pontian and Anatolian refugee parents. His mother, Gestimani, was a native Turkish speaker from Alanya on the south coast of Turkey.

15. The song was introduced to a wider American audience via a live television performance in 1966 by Nana Mouskouri, Danny Kaye, and Harry Belafonte. It appeared on numerous LPs during the 1960s, either sung (e.g., volume 1 of *Greek Town USA*) or as an instrumental piece (e.g., *Golden Greek Hits* with Teddy Kotsaftis and His Orchestra).

16. Among the more famous Greek “copies” of Indian film songs was “Oso axizis esi,” one of Manolis Angelopoulos’s greatest hits.

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