

**IDRIS M. GAZIEV***Ufa State Institute of Arts named after Zagir Ismagilov, Ufa, Russia*  
ORCID: 0000-0003-0317-9168, gazievidris60@gmail.com

## Early 20th Century Tatar Gramophone Recording: Ibragim Adamantov\*

In the beginning of the 20th century one of the frontiers of the cultural life of Russian society were the activities of gramophone companies. The gramophone record, presenting itself as a new means for disseminating mass information, reflects the Tatars' urban musical culture. Up to the present day the early recordings of the first Tatar Up to the present day the early recordings of the first Tatar performers have remained insufficiently studied. A number of revealed sources have given the author the opportunity to bring for the first time into scholarly discourse the gramophone recordings of Ibragim Adamantov – a popular performer of Tatar songs from the beginning of the previous century. Adamantov is the stage pseudonym of the Tatar journalist, theatrical figure and translator Ibragim Kuli (1885–1936). The stigma of the “enemy of the people” (he was rehabilitated in 1957) has for many years erased the traces of the artistic activities of the brilliant representative of the progressive Tatar intelligentsia. Study of Adamantov's gramophone records becomes a part of the revival of the good name and artistic legacy of the singer whose voice was recorded by the “Gramophone” company, the firms “Favorit-rekord” and “Lyrophone.” The artist's repertoire includes specimens of Tatar solemn lyrical specimens of Tatar extended lyrical songs and the cult music of Muslims urban songs and couplets. The introduction of Adamantov's gramophone recordings into the field of the field of research opens up new pages of the history of gramophone recordings of Tatar music.

**Keywords:** Tatar music on gramophone recordings, gramophone record, “Gramophone,” “Zonofon,” “Lyrophone,” Tatar song, performers of folk songs.

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**И. М. ГАЗИЕВ***Уфимский государственный институт искусств им. Загира Исмагилова*  
*г. Уфа, Россия*  
ORCID: 0000-0003-0317-9168, gazievidris60@gmail.com

## Татарская грамзапись начала XX века: Ибрагим Адамантов

В начале XX века одной из граней культурной жизни российского общества становится деятельность граммофонных компаний. Граммофонная пластинка, выступающая новым средством массовой информации, отражает городскую музыкальную культуру татар. На сегодня ранние записи первых татарских исполнителей остаются малоизученными. Ряд выявленных источников даёт возможность автору впервые ввести в научный оборот граммофонные записи Ибрагима Адамантова – популярного исполнителя татарских песен начала прошлого века. Адамантов – это сценический псевдоним татарского журналиста, театрального деятеля и переводчика Ибрагима Кули (1885–1936). Клеймо «врага народа» (реабилитированного в 1957 году) на долгие годы стёрло следы творческой деятельности яркого представителя передовой татарской интеллигенции. Рассмотрение граммофонных записей Адамантова является частью возрождения доброго имени и творчества певца, чей голос записывали компания «Граммофон», фирмы «Фаворит-рекورد» и «Лирофон». Репертуар артиста включает образцы татарской протяжной лирики и культовой музыки мусульман, городские песни и куплеты. Введение в исследовательское поле граммофонных записей Адамантова открывает новые страницы истории грамзаписи татарской музыки.

**Ключевые слова:** татарская музыка в грамзаписи, граммофонная пластинка, «Граммофон», «Зонофон», «Лирофон», татарская песня, исполнители народных песен.

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The social and political transformations which took place in Russia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries presented a moment of breakthrough in the sphere of culture as well. These changes found their reflection in all the varieties of artistic activity: literature, theater and music. The efflorescence of cultural life was aided by the technological achievements getting a foothold in the beginning of the 20th century: the cinematograph and the developing Russian film production, as well as the activities of gramophone companies. The gramophone made its way into Russian urban way of life, becoming an integral part of the Tatars' culture. Music, drama, theater, poetry, folklore – all of these manifestations of a dynamically developing society at the confluence of the centuries were reflected in the gramophone record. Essentially, the gramophone became, along with the press, an absolutely new means of mass information of the beginning of the 20th century.

The distribution and popularization of the gramophone among the Tatars, the study of early recordings of the first Tatar performers, the chronology of gramophone records, the recordings of the first Tatar performers, the repertoire of Tatar musicians, among them, singers, – all of these have not been given due attention among scholars. The author has introduced into scientific discourse the topic of gramophone records with recordings of the first Tatar performances from the beginning of the 20th century: Kamil Mutygi-Tukhvatullin, Mariam Iskanderova, Mirfaiz Babadzhанov, Khusain Yusipov.

During the course of the search for materials, the author brought to light a number of sources related to another early 20th century popular performer of Tatar songs, Ibragim Adamantov. His name was mentioned in the Russian pre-revolutionary press in connection with his performances in various literary-musical evenings, in published lists of gramophone records and in comments of his contemporaries. Unfortunately, at first it was not possible to find any information about Adamantov. However, the author's acquaintance and communication with Maryam Ibragimovna Akhmetgalieva, a Kazan-based member of the Journalist's Union, produced a positive result in this search. Knowing that one topic for studies of the author of the article was the history of Tatar gramophone recordings, Akhmetgalieva informed her that Ibragim Adamantov was the stage pseudonym

of the Tatar journalist, theater worker and translator Ibragim Kuli (1885–1936), her uncle, the elder brother of Maryam Ibragimovna's mother, Ummugulsum Gabdelvakhitovna. Particularly under this name of Ibragim Adamantov ('adamant' is an archaic name for 'diamond'), Kuli performed in literary-musical evenings and made his gramophone recordings.

Ibragim Kuli (Ibragim Gabdelvakhitovich Kuliev) was born on September 9, 1885 in the city Bua of the Simbirsk gubernia (presently – in the Republic of Tatarstan) into a family of a sales representative. After completing studies at the madrasah "Mardzhania" in Kazan in 1904, Ibragim carried out the responsibilities of a proof-reader in the publishing house "Karimov Brothers." After completing studies at the Kazan Magistral School [1, p. 30], Kuli worked in various years in the newspapers "Kazan mokhbire" ("Kazan Herald"), "Yoldyz" ("Star") and "Koyash" ("The Sun"), where the journalist's first articles were published. After the October (Bolshevik) Revolution Kuli became the executive secretary of the newspapers "Kyzyl bairak" ("The Red banner") and "Eshche" ("The Worker").

From the end of 1921 until his arrest in December 1932 Kuli worked at the Tatar state book publishing house, wrote articles about Gabdulla Kariev, Khusain Yamashev, Ibragim Teregulov, as well as reviews of theater productions. Together with writer Gaziz Gubaydullin (G. Gaziz), Kuli prepared and published the voluminous "Tatar Calendar," which stood several editions. Thus, the calendar for 1923 included articles about the October Revolution, questions of education and enlightenment, articles about Gabdulla Tukay, Gabdulla Kariev [Ibid., p. 45]. Kuli engaged in translations, compilations of dictionaries jointly with other authors (Ismagil Ramiev, Mukhitdin Kurbangaliev, Rizautdin Gazizov) [3, p. 141].

On December 22, 1932 Kuli was arrested as "a participant of the nationalist insurrectional organization, the Peasant Ittifak." He was soon released, but on August 23, 1935 he was arrested for a second time. This time he was accused of being a "participant of a counterrevolutionary literary group creating anti-Soviet works." Kuli was condemned by the Especial Council of the NKVD of the USSR to three years of labor camp and sent to the ITG (Karlag) [4, p. 388], where he died on January 31, 1936 (the Dolinka village of the Karaganda Region). After having been accused of participating in a right-

wing Trotskyist nationalist, terrorist, diversionary group, on May 11, 1938 in Kazan Kuli's son Salikh Ibragimovich, director of the Kazan College of Communication Service was shot [Ibid.]. The Kulis, father and son were rehabilitated in 1957.

Ibragim Kuli, a brilliant representative of the young progressive Tatar intelligentsia of the beginning of the 20th century, has left a perceptible imprint in the history of Tatar journalism, literature and culture. He communicated closely with the outstanding Tatar writers, journalists, musicians and actors of his time and for many years was connected with the activities of the Tatar theater. Kuli took on the role of one of the active pioneers in the formation of the Tatar club-theater activities. His collaboration with the emerged theatrical troupe "Sayyar" and his search for repertoire brought Kuli to the first translations of Russian plays [3, p. 140]. In Kuli's translations the works of L. Kiryanov, S. Shimansky and G. Drigilli were acted out on stage [5, p. 66, 67]. Kuli's devotion and love for the theater were so great that sometimes he carried out the responsibilities of a souffleur in the productions of the theatrical troupe "Sayyar" at the "Eastern Club" ("Sherek kluby"). A number of photographs has been preserved in which Kuli was depicted together with theatrical actors.

During that period Kuli, who had a low baritone voice of a pleasant timbre, performed under the pseudonym of Ibragim Adamantov as the performer of songs set to contemporary poets and Tatar folk songs. His friend, founder of Tatar dramaturgy, Galiyasgar Kamal (1878–1933), having known about this, brought into the plot of his comedy "The Secrets of our City" ("Bezneng sheherneng serlere") the singer Ibragim Adamantov. Thereby Kamal highlighted the popularity of this singer among the people.

Ibragim Adamantov's gramophone recordings are especially interesting. Analysis of the published catalogues of the gramophone records and the lists of records in the Tatar periodical press has made it possible to establish that Adamantov's voice was recorded by the company "Gramophone" and the firms "Favorit-rekord" and "Lyrophone." On July 21–22, 1909 in Kazan the representatives of the "Gramophone" company headed by agent Ivre Kholms carried out a session of Tatar recordings. This immense sessions, according to the data of the "The Orient Catalogue" of the British discographer Alan Kelly, included over eighty recordings of Tatar performers [6]. At first hand "the well-known Tatar singer (baritone), performer of folk songs and art songs" Ibragim Adamantov made ten recordings for the gramophone company "Zonofon" – the daughter enterprise of the "Gramophone" company.

In this session our attention is drawn by recordings of two compositions in performance of Ibragim Adamantov. For the first time in Tatar gramophone recording of the beginning of the 20th century the genre of the composition has been defined as an art song ("romans" in Russian): "The Captive" ("Makhbus"), an art song (Galiyasgar Kamal) (No. X-4-102824), and "The Dream" ("Tosh"), an art song (Galiyasgar Kamal) (No. X-4-102825). Basing himself on the Tatar oral folk song tradition, Galiyasgar Kamal in 1908 wrote the poem "The Captive" in the style of the bait genre, which immediately became immensely popular among the people. According to writer Galimzhan Ibragimov, "...Galiyasgar Kamal is endowed with a heartfelt singing style. His *dastan* named 'Makhbus' was known by heart by the entire Tatar youth. He did not leave the stage for over fifteen years" [2, p. 267].

In the article "Our Music (Gramophones)" ("Muzykamyz [Grammofonnar]") the well-known Tatar journalist, poet Sagit Syuncheley also mentioned Adamantov's gramophone recordings: "The voice of Mr. Ibragim is staid, albeit not fully organized in full. Adamantov has one song – 'The Dream.' This particular song he can be proud of"<sup>1</sup>.

As part of Ibragim Adamantov's gramophone repertoire we find the so-called "hymns of the Shakarids," which were popular among the Shakarids in the beginning of the 20th century, – *sada*: "The First Sada" ("Berenche sada") (No. 4-102828) and "The Second Sada" ("Ikenche sada") (No. 4-102829), released on the records of the "Zonofon" company. Information has been disclosed about the recording of four duets of Ibragim Adamantov with singer Garif Sahib: "The Sakmarian" ("Sakmar") (No. X-2-104014), "The Boot" ("Bashmak") (No. X-2-104015), "Oh, Innocent Child" ("Ai, narasyi bala") (No. X-2-104022), "Love" ("Makhabbat") (No. X-2-104023).

Adamantov's subsequent recordings were made in November 1909 in Kazan by representatives of the German gramophone firm "Favorit rekord." In the section "male solo" the singer recorded "Sada I" (No. 1-275055) and "Sada II" (No. 1-275056). Furthermore, there are "solos" of Ibragim Adamantov – the recording of the songs "Ashkazar" ("Ashkazar") (No. 1-275057) and "Journey" ("Safar") (No. 1-275058) accompanied by a violin. Here we also discover three audio recordings of Adamantov, one of which, "A Sales Representative, Comical Couplets" ("Prikashchiklar, kolke") (No. 1-277001), was performed with the accompaniment of a harmonica. The audio numbers of the performer, representing the typical repertoire of the pre-revolutionary singers of satirical songs, judging

by their titles, deride riches, greed, drunkenness, hampering the growth of society: “The Drunk and an Earthquake. A Comical Narrative” (“Iserek Hem zilzile. Kolke”) (No. 1-277002), “Merchants. A Comical Story” (“Baylar. Kolke”) (No. 1-277003), “The Son of a Merchant. A Comical Story” (“Bay betche. Kolke”) (No. 1-27-7004).

Adamantov’s gramophone recordings were also made for records of the German firm “Lyrophone.” In the “Catalogue of two-sided records of the new Kazan Tatar recording of the ‘Lyrophone’” the singer was represented as a “well-known performer of folk songs and art songs (baritone)”<sup>2</sup>. It must be mentioned that the titles of all the compositions recorded by Adamantov on the records of the “Lyrophone” coincide with the titles of the recordings on the records of the “Zonofon”: “The Captive, an art song by Galiagar Kamal” (No. 6019), “The Dream, an art song by Galiagar Kamal” (No. 6020), “Ashkazar” (Bashkir folk song)” (No. 60-21), “Let this City Perish, Child” (“Korsun, balam, bu kala”) (No. 6022). The recordings also present the male duo (*ike ir tavyshy*) of Ibragim Adamantov and Garyif Sahib: “Love, a Tatar folk song” (“Mekhebbet, tatar khalyk zhyry”) (No. 6024), “The Shoe” (“Bashmak”) (No. 6024), “The Waters of Sakmar” (“Sakmar su’y”) (No. 6026), “Salim babay, a legend” (“Selim babay, khy’yaliy”) (No. 6023).

The ambiguousness of the attitude towards gramophone recordings by Tatar performers has also been reflected in the evaluation of Adamantov’s recordings. Thus, in the newspaper, “The Herald of the Truth” (“Bayanel’khak”) under the pseudonym “One Tatar” (“Ber tatar”) an anonymous author writes: “On the records which have recently appeared on sale in musical stores we have become acquainted with the surnames of Messrs. Ibragim Adamantov and Garyif Sahib. These gentlemen have until now been distinguished by their ability to feel and to sing Tatar folk songs rather beautifully”<sup>3</sup>. However, by analyzing the recording of the song “Salim Babay, a Legend,” the author levels criticism at performers who “sang the text of a well-known early song with a different melody, as a folk ditty, thereby altering the entire meaning of the song and the depth of its content”<sup>4</sup>. Let us mention that this is one of the devices in the performance practice of Tatar singers – the transference of texts well-known songs onto new melodies. This is a sort of search for new song forms peculiar to the emerging urban musical culture. In the gramophone repertoire of popular singers Kamil Mutygi-Tukhvatullin, Khusain Yusipov and Mariam Iskanderova we find such examples.

Ibragim Adamantov in duo with singer Akhmed Latif recorded on gramophone records “Lyrophone”

two specimens of genre of the cult music of Muslims – “Tarauikh, in the fast season of Ramazan (sacred singing)” (“Teravikh [tesbikh Ramazanda]”) (No. 6027) and “Takbir, Prayer of Kurban-Bairom (sacred singing)” (“Tekbir, Korban beiremende”) (No. 6028), indicated in catalogues and on labels of records as “Sacred Singing” (“Giybadet koe”).

A vivid interest is aroused by the gramophone records themselves discovered during the research – a priceless source for studying the history of Tatar music on gramophone recordings. In Kazan, in one private collection the author unearthed the sole preserved “Zonofon” gramophone record of Adamantov introduced into scientific discourse. These two recordings of the singer denoted as “a solo for male voice” were carried out during the sessions of the “Gramophone” company in Kazan in 1909. On the label on one side of the record of the “grand” format there is a recording of the song “Ashkazar, a folk song” (No. X-4-102826), and on the other side there is the song “Kursun, balam” (“Korsyn, balam, bu kala,” “Child, let this City Perish”) (No. X-4-102827) accompanied by a piano. Both on the record and in the catalogues the name of the accompanist is not indicated. In addition to this interest has been aroused by the commentary of the well-known violinist Hilarion Kozlov (1861–1933), who made a great contribution into the musical culture of the Tatars in the beginning of the 20th century. In his “Historical Presentation” he asserts that the organizer of the gramophone recordings in Kazan was the well-known folk musician, violinist and pianist Gali Zaipin (1875–1918)<sup>5</sup>. According to Kozlov, the distinctive feature of the playing of Zaipin himself was that “he improvised on the piano in the form of various grace-notes, passages, arpeggios and played tremolos on note as a mediator on the mandolin”<sup>6</sup>. Upon an aural analysis of the recording of the song “Ashkazar” such a manner of playing is perceived. The presumption suggests itself that Zaipin could have been Adamantov’s accompanist.

The unavailability of Adamantov’s records is explained, first of all, by the fact that singers and musicians who became victims of repressions had all of their documents, books and musicians were confiscated from them, which were frequently destroyed. Even their names turned out to be under prohibition. This is vividly seen from the example of one of the very first representatives of the arising new Tatar culture, Ibragim Kuli-Adamantov. For numerous decades Maryam Akhmetgalieva’s closest relatives, namely, his nephews – the editor of the Tatar Book Publishing House and her brother Ilyas Akhmetgaliev – a major scholar, Doctor of Technical Sciences, Professor, have unsuccessfully

engaged in search for gramophone recordings of his uncle. The discovered gramophone record was copied, digitalized, with the labels photographed, and passed on to Maryam Akhmetgalieva.

Consequently, the discovered gramophone recordings of Ibragim Adamantov open up new pages in the history of gramophone recording of Tatar music.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Sagit Syuncheley. Our Music (Gramophones) // Yoldyz. 1914. 11 April. In the Tatar language.

<sup>2</sup> Catalog of double-sided plates of the new Kazan-Tatar recording. Joint Stock Company “Lyrophon.” Berlin S.W. 61. Kazan: The printing house of the House “Brothers Karimov,” 1909. 32 p.

<sup>3</sup> Tatar Songs on the Gramophone // Bayanelhak. 1909. August 25th. In the Tatar language.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Hilarion Kozlov. Historical report on the development of theater and music in the Tatars // Scientific Library named after N. I. Lobachevsky of the Kazan Federal University. Department of manuscripts and rare books. Fund 6, item 21. L. 58–92.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., item 22. L. 65.

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6. *The Gramophone Company Limited ZONOPHONE RECORDS. THE ORIENT CATALOGUE*. Compiled and edited by Alan Kelly. March, 2000. CD-ROM.

### About the author:

**Idris M. Gaziev**, Ph.D. (Arts), Professor at the Department of Vocal Art, Ufa State Institute of Arts named after Zagir Ismagilov (450008, Ufa, Russia), **ORCID: 0000-0003-0317-9168**, gazievidris60@gmail.com

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### Об авторе:

**Газиев Идрис Мударисович**, кандидат искусствоведения, профессор кафедры вокального искусства, Уфимский государственный институт искусств им. Загира Исмагилова (450008, г. Уфа, Россия), **ORCID: 0000-0003-0317-9168**, gazievidris60@gmail.com